

# Crossing Points: UK-Australia/ New Zealand/Pacific

Common interests, shared concerns



Essays

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# Forewords

# HELEN SALMON

## Director, British Council Australia

The UK and Australia were recently described to me as 'the two most distant but closest nations on earth'.

That is certainly my experience. Like so many before me, I went for a year abroad and came home 15 years later. Now wherever I live, I leave part of my life behind. My children are both Blackpool Pier and Bondi Beach, proud that they completely belong, and don't quite belong, in each.

Over a million UK citizens have chosen to live in Australia, and in return the largest segment of Australian expats made their home in the UK. Our societies are intertwined through friends and family, language and humour. Through science and education, history and sport. In our institutions and our constitution.

This edition of *Crossing Points* is an opportunity to reflect on our shared history, and to explore who we are now as modern and diverse nations. It also looks to our future in a changing technological, environmental and geopolitical landscape.

We are at a pivotal point in our relationship. Australia's twenty-eight years of continuous economic growth is attractive in the context of Brexit, and the UK will continue to be a key partner for investment and innovation. Australia is also an essential ally for the UK, an Asia-Pacific leader with strong ties to China as well as a trusted member of the Commonwealth, Five Eyes and G20.

Our bonds however run at a much deeper level. According to British Council research into values and perceptions, both young Australians and Britons rank equality and diversity as the number one value that the world should encourage. This is heartening, as we are two rich multi-cultural societies with a colonial history that still shapes our present, and we have much yet to hear and to understand about each other.

Our young people also agree on the most pressing issues for world action: poverty, extremism, terrorism, and climate change. The great challenges for the next generation will be global ones, and in order to face them international cooperation is essential.

The British Council creates the conditions for this collaboration. For nearly 75 years in Australia we have been connecting individuals and institutions in order to share knowledge and culture. We build a bedrock of mutual understanding, empathy and trust.

As a dual citizen I am conscious of the great mutual affection, the achievements, the untapped potential, and the complexities of our

relationship. As we negotiate closer economic ties, I hope that we will also seize this moment to look more closely at who we really are, and who we want to be.

## INGRID LEARY

### Director, British Council New Zealand

New Zealand, although small and on the other side of the world from the UK, is and will continue to be an important voice on the global stage. In the modern context, this multicultural, developed nation is known for asserting its independent view on important geopolitical issues, and taking a proud and staunch position on matters of freedom of expression, human rights, diversity and inclusion, and women's equality.

New Zealand's relationship with the UK was forged many decades ago, and the connections remain clearly visible today. We still share many of the same passions – a love of the arts and culture, delight in beating Australians on the sporting field, and an appreciation of comedy in a similar vein. Our people-to-people connections continue to grow with almost 60,000 young New Zealanders residing in the UK. If the same proportion of the UK population was to relocate, there would be a million young Brits living in New Zealand.

We can see new connections growing roots too, particularly around our two nations' expanding presence in the South Pacific. New Zealand and the UK share the values of open, fair and transparent societies, as well as a mutual interest in a stable Pacific region – a part of the world facing huge disruption from climate change and a shift in Asia-Pacific geopolitics.

New Zealand is home to some of the world's largest Pacific communities. Our most populous city, Auckland, is also one of the world's most ethnically diverse cities, with 42 per cent of its population born outside New Zealand. Now, one in five New Zealanders – around one million people – have Māori or Pasifika (Pacific Islands) heritage, and this demographic trend is growing. Pasifika is part of our cultural DNA, as a people whose home is surrounded on all sides by the Pacific Ocean.

Migration trends over the last 20 years have brought many new communities to New Zealand who do not share ancestry, or necessarily look to the UK for long-term mutual relationships. In this context, the British Council's work aims to help people from the UK and New Zealand better understand each other so that we can work together to address

global challenges. This has been our role over the past seven decades in New Zealand: creating space for the sharing of knowledge, the exchange of ideas, and the free discussion of issues.

It's work that continues in this edition of Crossing Points, where we look at the multi-dimensional relationship between New Zealand, the Pacific and the UK, the political and historical ties, and the way relationships of trust have been – and continue to be – shaped between our nations.

Shared values of social equality, diversity, inclusion, transparent governance and environmental sustainability are hugely valuable in a changing world. But they can't be taken for granted. No country can stand alone: we are only as strong as the relationships we make beyond our borders. At this time it is especially important that we take stock of those relationships and build strong and lasting connections for the future.



Australia is a Country  
Best Seen from Above

## STAN GRANT

### Global Affairs and Indigenous Affairs Analyst, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Australia is a country best seen from above. It is in the air that this land truly speaks to me. I was reminded again on a flight to the remote mining town of Broken Hill. Looking down from a plane, the country comes alive as a tapestry of brown, red, grey and green. It is dotted with spinifex, wild bush, jagged outcrops and bare, stark dead trees. Occasionally there are water run offs and windy creek beds, sometimes rivers or dams and lakes, but mostly it is dry, bone dry. The landscape truly resembles an Indigenous dot painting, and it reminds me again of how the First People of this land, a people who have lived here for at least sixty thousand years, truly see this place. They dream this place. This land has formed them: what is considered the oldest continuous civilisation on the planet.

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*By the time the British claimed this continent for their own, there were believed to be more than two hundred distinct groups – tribes, or nations – each with their own languages and ceremonies*

I draw my ancestry from ancient footprints on this land. Away back in time, people made the first open-sea journey in the history of humanity to find a new home here. By the time the British claimed this continent for their own, there were believed to be more than two hundred distinct groups – tribes, or nations – each with their own languages and ceremonies. To modern eyes it would be akin to Europe; separate peoples

with their own borders and political structures, trading and negotiating with each other.

Yet, when then Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook, planted the British flag in this soil in 1770, it was as if these people did not exist. The rights of Indigenous people were extinguished. Under British law, this was *terra nullius* – empty land. It was how business was done in the 18th Century, this was the doctrine of discovery – land not ruled by a Christian monarch was free for the taking. *Terra nullius* is the defining story of Australia; it is the myth that gave rise to the great injustice – what Indigenous people call the invasion and theft of their lands – from which all other injustice flows.

*Terra nullius* is Australia's unfinished business.

*Terra nullius* haunts Australia. There's a feeling in our souls that we don't quite belong, what has been called 'the whispering in our hearts'. We live squeezed into the cities, clinging to the coast. We love the outback, but we don't trust it. Sociologist Elspeth Tilley, calls it the 'disruptive, disturbing, chaotic, space': a place of 'white vanishing'.

From childhood we imbibe the myths of the outback, something lodged in our psyche from the old frontier: *Beyond here be monsters; if the animals don't get you the blacks will. Out here you die of thirst. Out here you walk for days and go nowhere.*

Australians are fixated on the darkness of this place: explorers perished; tourists murdered; children lost. They are written into our folklore. No crime rattles Australians more than those who simply disappear. The Beaumont children who half a century ago went to an Adelaide beach and never returned; Harold Holt, Australia's Prime Minister, who dived into the ocean and was never seen again; or Azaria Chamberlain, the baby who died in the wilderness at Uluru and sparked one of Australia's longest running and most notorious criminal investigations. I am drawn to something the writer Beth Spencer once said, that all those somehow swallowed up by this place 'inhabit this other space in the Australian memory', as though they strayed too far 'off the cultural map and disappeared into thin air'.

Our poets, our writers, our film makers all grapple with that question of belonging. The land is the central character in this national drama: *Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, Wake in Fright, Sweet Country* – all films that emerge from the vanishing place.

In her epic novel of the 1940s, *The Timeless Land*, Eleanor Dark imagines the first Governor, Arthur Phillip, wondering if this harsh country would ever accept the foreigners: 'As aliens they had come to it, and as aliens they would die in it'.

Tim Winton, his writing inseparable from his landscape, says this country 'leans in on you. It weighs down hard'.

Our writers know that the European presence here is disturbed, unable to break free of the act of invasion and dispossession. It is rattled by the myth of *terra nullius*. Australian scholar David Tacey sees Australia as immature, inauthentic. The land is ancient and powerful, he says. The spirit of place is 'social and geopolitical'.

Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs have called this 'Uncanny Australia'. Home is turned upside down, into 'something else, something less familiar and less settled'. Australians, they say, inhabit some Freudian space, being 'at the same time in place and out of place'.

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*This need to be 'at home', is deeply personal, it is political and social and legal. It is the space between white and black in Australia.*

This need to be 'at home', is deeply personal, it is political and social and legal. It is the space between white and black in Australia. Aboriginal people have never relinquished their sovereignty; never ceded their country or surrendered it in battle. There are no treaties or deeds of sale.

From the mid-19th Century, one legal case after another challenged British sovereignty. It is a paper trail that leads us into a shadowland – a hidden country – still utterly unknown to most Australians.

In 1836, lawyers for Aboriginal man Jack Murrell, charged with murdering another Aborigine, argued that he could be judged only under his own customary tribal law. The Chief Justice described it as an 'ingenious defence', but rejected it saying everyone in the colony was considered a British subject. The ruling extinguished Aboriginal rights.

Yet, a year later in 1837, the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Aborigines, stated that: 'The land has been taken from them without the assertion of any other title than that of superior force ...'

In 1841, in the New South Wales Supreme Court, Justice John Walpole Willis, sitting on another Aboriginal murder trial, wondered whether he even had jurisdiction in this case. He described the British as 'unwanted intruders': the 'Aborigines must be considered and dealt with ... as distinct, though dependent tribes governed by themselves by their own rude laws and customs'. The settlers, he said, knew that 'every part of this territory was the undisputed property of aborigines (sic)'.

But in the same year the British Privy Council sought to settle the matter of sovereignty once and for all. Aboriginal people had no rights to land. The Law Lords ruled that this country had been regarded as 'a tract of territory, practically unoccupied, without settled inhabitants or settled land, at the time when it was peacefully annexed to the British dominions'. It's a ruling that has formed the skeleton of Australian law. No court has dared rule against it.

In 1979, Wiradjuri man and law student Paul Coe had his case challenging Australian sovereignty dismissed by the High Court. But Justice Lionel Murphy rattled the bones of the Australian settlement.

'... the aborigines did not give up their lands peacefully; they were killed or removed forcibly from the lands by United Kingdom forces or the European colonists in what amounted to attempted (and in Tasmania almost complete) genocide'.

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*Look at the farms and properties in outback Australia, think again about our rural towns: so many of them carry Aboriginal names. It was as if the settlers were reminding themselves whose land this was even as the First People were being forced off.*

In 1992 the High Court finally struck down *terra nullius*, in the historic Mabo case. Torres Strait Islander man Eddie Mabo fought his way through defeat after defeat in lower courts to prove his birth-right to his ancestors' country, until he took his case to the highest court in the land. The justices saw this as a chance to erase the nation's great shame and acknowledge what is now known as *Native Title*. But the principle that Australia was 'peacefully annexed' remained; the court would not 'fracture the skeleton' of our law.

This is the story of Australia: the unresolved question of who truly owns this land. The historian Stuart Macintyre says our story is the story of 'a sleeping land finally brought to life'. To the British of the 18th and 19th Centuries it was a white story. They named the great cities of this new country – Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Hobart – after British politicians. Adelaide is named after a queen and Brisbane after a governor.

But I have long thought there is something else lurking in Australia, a trace of a story much older and etched more deeply into this land. It is a story that holds Australia in its grip even as Australians have sought to deny it. Look at the farms and properties in outback Australia, think again about our rural towns: so many of them carry Aboriginal names. It was as if the settlers were reminding themselves whose land this was even as the First People were being forced off.

Each Australia Day – January 26 – commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet from Britain. The day the foreigners came to stay. I feel the bones of my ancestors – black and white – buried in this land, and wonder if they can ever truly be at peace. Our history lives in me. My Irish ancestor came on one of the convict ships, and my Indigenous ancestors stood on the shore. I am born between the ship and the shore: it is the space where I become an Australian even though we are still not sure what being an Australian truly means.

More than two centuries after the British boats came there exists here still the pulse of an old heartbeat. It is what I hear when I look down from on high at my home below.

# Quantum Revolution

# MICHELLE SIMMONS AO

## Scientia Professor; 2018 Australian of the Year; Director of the Centre of Excellence for Quantum Computation and Communication Technology

Life is full of ironies. In my south-east London home, when I was a little girl, my older brother Gary, whenever I got a little too annoying, used to joke with me: 'One day I am going to buy you a one-way ticket to Australia'. As things turned out he didn't need to, because in 1999 I came here of my own volition; and in 2007 I became an Australian citizen.

Out of a couple of hundred students in my year at my South-East London comprehensive school, only 16 did A-levels (that's the equivalent of the HSC); and of those, only two passed.

Growing up in that time, in that part of England, you were not expected to go to university – let alone leave Britain and set up a life at the other end of the Earth.

For some reason, I always kept that plane ticket that brought me to Australia, and just a year ago I had it framed and sent to my brother for his 50th birthday. Ironically, and a little sadly for my father, my brother now lives in the US, and I live here – and I joke with Gary that I got the much better deal. Only it's not a joke.

I want to share with you why I came here, and why I choose to stay. I also want to leave you with a sense of why Australia is well placed to realise the next revolution in computing – *the Quantum Revolution*.

Working at Cambridge University, in the semiconductor physics group, I learned to design, fabricate and measure electronics devices: three completely different skill sets, a unique combination that makes you the master of your own destiny. But there also came a point when I wanted to find a more ambitious project to work on than the very fundamental physics they were doing there. I was drawn to the technological challenge of trying to create new devices that had never been made before, where each atom had to be put in place to engineer a particular effect – in essence, to create electronic devices at the atomic scale.

It was this that brought me to Australia.

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*To this day I am delighted with my choice, and firmly believe that there is no better place to undertake research. Australia offers a culture of academic freedom, openness to ideas, and an amazing willingness to pursue ambitious goals.*

Back in the 1980s, IBM invented a new kind of microscope – a scanning tunnelling microscope – which for the first time enabled humans to ‘see’ individual atoms. These are fabulous tools: giant stainless-steel contraptions that fill a room with a vacuum inside akin to that in outer space.

But seeing atoms was just the beginning. In the 1990s, IBM found a way to exploit this technology to actually move atoms around on a surface.

But it’s one thing to push a few atoms around and make a logo; quite another to take that technology and create an electronic device where the active, functional component is a single atom.

It was in the hope of realising this dream that, in 1998, I applied for fellowships in Australia and in Cambridge, and for a faculty position at Stanford in the US. As a young academic you are taught that the prestige of the institution you work at is very important. However, when I was offered the Australian fellowship, I accepted immediately. It was a decision that perplexed not only my colleagues overseas, but also many Australians. When I arrived here, people would ask me, ‘Why on earth did you come?’ But the choice was easy.

I did not want to stay in the UK. The structure was too hierarchical, and research problems somewhat esoteric. I didn’t want to just answer a fundamental physics question, I wanted to build something – something that might turn out to be useful. At the time, the British research system seemed too peppered with pessimistic academics who would tell you a thousand reasons why your ideas would not work.

American culture was more appealing than this, but it too had its limitations. The US offered a highly competitive environment where you would fight both externally and internally for funds and be beholden to a senior mentor.

Australia offered the freedom of independent fellowships and the ability to work on large-scale projects with other academics from across the country.

To this day I am delighted with my choice, and firmly believe that there is no better place to undertake research. Australia offers a culture of



academic freedom, openness to ideas, and an amazing willingness to pursue ambitious goals.

When I moved to Australia, electronics research in silicon was dominated by the semiconductor industry and focused on Moore's Law. Have you ever noticed that every year your computing devices are getting smaller and faster? Many years ago Gordon Moore, the co-founder of Intel, noted that the number of transistors on a silicon chip was doubling every 18 months to two years. In practice, this meant that each individual transistor had to be decreasing in size at the same rate. This led to a prediction in the late 1990s that by 2020 we would reach the level of individual atoms.

In recent years, we have used scanning tunnelling microscopes here in Sydney to pioneer a unique strategy to build electronic devices in silicon at the atomic scale. We have created a stack of world-first atomic-scale devices. We have built the world's smallest transistor, in which the active functional part is just a single atom, beating those industry predictions from Moore's Law by nearly a decade. Following this we fabricated the world's narrowest conducting wires in silicon, and all the elements of a quantum electronics integrated circuit.

These achievements have not just been published in the usual scientific places. They have also made it into the *Guinness Book of World Records* – as my son discovered one day to his great surprise while sitting in his school library.

On the back of these research successes in pioneering the completely new field of atomic electronics, we have attracted to Australia some incredible young scientists from all parts of the world – from Europe, the UK, the US and Asia – some of whom have also decided to make Australia their permanent home. Most exciting of all, though, is that we are now on a mission to build a complete prototype quantum computer for which all the functional elements are manufactured and controlled at the atomic scale.

The significance of this for Australia should not be underestimated. Today there is an international race to build a quantum computer, and the field is highly competitive – it's been called the space race of the computing era. Australia has established a unique approach with a globally competitive edge that has been described by our US funding agencies as having a two to three-year lead over the rest of the world.

Quantum physics is hard. Technology at the forefront of human endeavour is hard. But that is what makes it worth it. I strongly believe that the things that are most worth doing in life are nearly always hard to do.

When I was growing up in England, I liked doing things that were difficult – things that you had to try really hard to succeed at, but that gave you an immense feeling of euphoria when you did. So it's interesting to admit now that I actually gave up physics at O-Level, because I also really enjoyed biology, chemistry, history and English literature. Shortly into my O-level year, however, I knew I had made an awful mistake.

The consequence was that I ended up doing physics outside school, and it took me a while to catch up. The lesson I learnt was that you can always do the things you enjoy and find easy outside work. But deep problem-solving based on long-term acquired knowledge and technical skills requires consistent effort and is not so easy to pick up in your free time. For me, it was better to do the things that have the greatest reward. Things that are hard – not easy. And things that will continue to challenge you throughout your life.

There's a message here for our educators, our scientists and for all Australians.

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*If we want young people to be the best they can be – at anything – we must set the bar high and tell them we expect them to jump over it.*

If we want young people to be the best they can be – at anything – we must set the bar high and tell them we expect them to jump over it. My strong belief is that we need to be teaching all students, girls and boys, to have high expectations of themselves.

The foundations of research in Australia are extremely strong. Having established highly competitive research fellowships and highly collaborative Centre of Excellence funding schemes, Australia has become an increasingly popular destination for ambitious research projects. Ultimately, while research is an international endeavour, I am grateful for that Australian readiness to give things a go, and Australia's enduring sense of possibility. There will always be a bit of South London in me. I remain British as well as Australian. But I could not be happier to have made my journey all those years ago to live on the other side of the earth.

# Hinemihi: How a Grass Hut is Transforming Global Heritage

# ANTHONY HOETE

## Chair of Te Maru O Hinemihi; Director, What\_architecture

Once upon a time, in a place far, far away lived a chief called Āporo Wharekaniwha and his hapū (community), *Ngāti Hinemihi*. The hapū lived around the small village of Te Wairoa, close to the shore of Lake Tarawera.

When Europeans arrived in Aotearoa (New Zealand) they found an exotic new world: unknown species of flora and fauna included many flightless birds; a temperate sub-tropical climate offered respite from northern winters; and a unique geothermal landscape, of which the Pink and White Terraces formed part, was a monumental creation of volcanic activity. As a Garden of Eden, New Zealand was 'God's Zone' – after all, paradise has no snakes! The Europeans also encountered a new race of Indigenous people – the Māori.

*In traditional Māori society, space and place are inseparable. This connection can be heard in the pepeha (introduction), which Māori use to establish identity and heritage, and which tells a story of the people of a place.*

In traditional Māori society, space and place are inseparable. This connection can be heard in the *pepeha* (introduction), which Māori use to establish identity and heritage, and which tells a story of the people of a place. For Chief Āporo, his *pepeha* would recall not only his people – *whakapapa* (ancestors), *hapū, iwi* (tribe, *Tūhourangi*) – but also the landscape features of his place: *awa* (river), *maunga* (Mount Tarawera). Te Wairoa

was a constructed space of colonial encounter, a site created by the migration and subsequent interaction between Māori and European. Te Wairoa would grow to become an established settlement for 19th Century tourism where one could experience all this foreignness, conveniently, in one small place.

But this was the 1800s and getting to Te Wairoa took great effort. The ships that sailed from Europe to New Zealand undertook the longest journeys of migration in human history, lasting three or four months. From Auckland the tourist caught a steamer to Tauranga, rode the bridle track to Ōhinemutu, hired a coach to Te Wairoa, and paddled by canoe

across Lake Tarawera before setting off on foot up the Kaiwaka Channel, over the hill to the swampy shores of Lake Rotomahana to finally land at the Terraces. Exhausted, undoubtedly.

By 1880 Chief Āporo had decided that he too wanted a slice of this burgeoning tourist market. He decided to create a *whare* (house) that could fulfil both the traditional roles of a *whare whakairo* (carved house) as well as, just as importantly, entertaining tourists through accommodating *waiata* (song and dance).

In Māori culture a *whare* is more than mere shelter. It has a living presence beyond any metaphorical association that might be applied to a European building. A *whare* is not like an ancestor, it is the ancestor! This means that a *whare tipuna* (ancestor as building) has gender, and in this case the *whare Hinemihi* is a woman. As living heritage a Māori orator is obliged when speaking on a *marae* to address and extend greetings to the *whare tipuna* standing in front of him before engaging those gathered around.

One talks to the house before those at hand. From a Western perspective, talking to a building, like Doctor Doolittle talking to the animals, might be considered madness. Yet it is no longer appropriate to apply a Western perspective, with its seemingly well-intended heritage practices, to indigenous culture. Māori architecture, for example, has its own *kaupapa* (values), and so Hinemihi teaches us something about understanding architecture from a South Pacific rather than a colonising European perspective.

Chief Āporo's *whare* was *Hinemihi o Te Ao Tawhito*, (Hinemihi of the Old World). Carved from native totara wood, Hinemihi was completed in 1881 by Wero Tāroi and Tene Waitere. As a gesture towards his emerging status and wealth, Āporo added a final flourish to Hinemihi: instead of using traditional *paua* shells to depict eyes on the carved figures that adorned the *whare*, Āporo attached gold sovereigns. Hinemihi was now the House with the Golden Eyes.

Many periods of economic prosperity have had abrupt endings, and the golden age of tourism at Te Wairoa came to a sudden stop on the 10th June 1886 when Mount Tarawera erupted without warning, covering the landscape with magma and ash. The eruption claimed the lives of 153 people, but a fortunate few found shelter in Hinemihi. Among those taking refuge was the carver, Tene Waitere, and his family.

The scale of devastation was such that the remaining population of Te Wairoa left with Chief Āporo's Ngāti Hinemihi tribe, re-settling in nearby Rotorua (or Roto-Vegas as it is known today, with a nod to the continuing tourist trade).

The 19th Century was also a time of tremendous change in European landscape design. Collecting expeditions to all points on the globe resulted in an incredible influx of new plants and building exotica into the gardens of Victorian England. It was in 1891 that the fourth Earl of Onslow, who was approaching the end of his term as Governor of New Zealand, sought a souvenir to take back to Clandon Park, his mansion in England.

Earl Onslow drew up a bill-of-sale legitimising the purchase of the 23 carvings (that comprised Hinemihi) from Chief Āporo's son Mika. Easily dismantled and transported, Hinemihi was shipped and shipped to the United Kingdom.

This story of Hinemihi is a story of transience.

Originally reconstructed (badly) next to the ornamental lake at Clandon Park as a boathouse, Hinemihi was to move again in 1917. Soldiers from the Māori Pioneer Battalion, who were recuperating in Clandon House, discovered Hinemihi and, sensitive to her deteriorating physical state, relocated her opposite the main building.

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*As a colonial face-off the new location symbolically mirrored the historic, and at times confrontational, relationship between Pākehā (Whites) and Māori.*

Much like the traditional Māori greeting – the hongi – this spatial arrangement between large Palladian mansion (Clandon House) and small grass hut (Hinemihi) has cultural roots in a *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face) engagement. As a colonial face-off the new location symbolically mirrored the

historic, and at times confrontational, relationship between Pākehā (Whites) and Māori.

Yet the siting of Hinemihi in the garden of Clandon House was also positively transformative: today the grass lawn also serves as marae ātea (a rural form of public space specific to the South Pacific). The lawn allows for the traditional ritual of *pōwhiri* (welcome) and thereby anchored Hinemihi's shifting space to her new place. She has sat there for the greater part of her life. Hinemihi now has two meaningful historic settings: one in Te Wairoa and one at Clandon Park, with neither taking precedence.

In New Zealand, tribal narratives continue to reference the absent Hinemihi in oral commentaries as the ancestress of the *hapū* (community) and as a method by which to recall and consolidate *whakapapa* (genealogy). Despite the radical changes to the cultural, social, economic and geographic landscape of the UK over the past 130

years, Hinemihi continues to resonate with a distinctly Māori cultural identity. *Kia kaha!* (Stay strong, girl!)

Having fallen into a state of disrepair and neglect for most of the 20th Century, the future for Hinemihi is brighter thanks to her core Māori values being better understood. The Māori construct of Hinemihi as living heritage allows her, for example, to be spiritually in two places at once! Such a perspective can serve to placate and pacify otherwise competing political agendas. So how exactly?

*Two historically tied nations, the UK and New Zealand, can now develop a sustainable, mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnership between the National Trust – the legal owners of Hinemihi – and Ngāti Hinemihi of Tūhourangi, her spiritual owners.*

This story of Hinemihi's transience means she is susceptible to movement and exchange: her presence in the UK is due to a transaction, after all. The organisation I chair, *Te Maru O Hinemihi*, offers a pānui (proposal) that overturns and mitigates the perceived negativity of repatriation by recasting any future transaction as a positive opportunity for exchange.

Two historically tied nations, the UK and New Zealand, can now develop a sustainable,

mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnership between the National Trust – the legal owners of Hinemihi – and Ngāti Hinemihi of Tūhourangi, her spiritual owners. This is an alliance which puts two parties, Māori and Pākehā (White), on the same side of what is inevitably a long process of complex negotiations which could lead to her deteriorated carvings being sent on permanent loan in return for others carved to a fuller, original dimension being created.

As an exemplar project of future heritage, Hinemihi represents a common ground that connects her two places: Clandon Park and Te Wairoa. Thanks to this partnership both places would be imbued with her dual timeframes: her past as Hinemihi o te Ao Tawhito (old world) and her future Hinemihi o te Ao Hou (new world). This is not unlike the European concept of twinning towns: for example, Clandon's neighbour Guildford has been twinned with Freiburg im Breisgau since 1979. Clandon could be twinned with Te Wairoa for the reasons articulated here.

Such a partnership requires the exchange to be more than that of material: it is also about the exchange of knowledge.

In relation to material, in order to restore Hinemihi at Clandon Park to

her original dimensions (when she was 50 per cent longer and 25 per cent taller), replacement carvings are required, as the existing carvings have been drastically altered or have simply deteriorated over the past 127 years. This conservation process has already been initiated with an LBC (Listed Building Consent) for restoration igniting the necessary TLC (Tender Loving Care!). The 23 existing carvings have been removed and will need to be cleaned, documented and stabilised prior to transportation. This process can also inform the creation of replacement carvings, which will be unique with their own *mauri* (life force). The Māori diaspora living in the UK – including Ngāti Rānana (London Māori) – will ensure that any exchange is imbued with the highest cultural ambition. As a result, confrontation cedes to a win-win scenario.

What will the new carvings look like? Will they just be made from NZ native timbers or can we imagine British hardwoods, oak for example, being utilised? And who would carve them? The descendants of Hinemihi? Or could the knowledge of Māori carving be rigorously captured by esteemed institutions such as University College London's Institute of Archaeology, so as to become inclusive, allowing others to participate in an indigenous practice?

The creation for 'export' of a whare is unheralded. British stakeholders will be asked to participate in the formation of the new carvings as this shared narrative has multiple voices and influences. For example: in 1979, repairs to Hinemihi were undertaken by British specialists in restoring historic wooden buildings. The restorers had little visual material to refer to apart from old Burton Brothers photography taken a few days after the eruption, when her roof was covered in volcanic debris. Innocently mistaking several tons of rooftop ash for traditional English thatch, the restorers replaced the roof with a thick covering of Norfolk reeds. The replacement roof, however, need not be seen as 'error'. In *Māoritanga* (Māori way of life) craft can become crafty and assume a material intelligence. A thatched roof is created from natural local materials, much like Hinemihi. Although heritage organisations typically prioritise value on the 'original', there is a counter argument regarding features that arise out of accumulated history. Given that Hinemihi has today spent more time in the UK (127 years) than in New Zealand (eight years), value can also be assigned to the inheritance of a thatched roof as being a more authentic *korowai* (cloak) for Hinemihi than the 'original' shingles which were, at the time, a new building material in New Zealand. While purists might argue that this represents a dilution of the cultural object, the fabric of any living heritage means that change is always a given.

This conservation process of caring demonstrated through carving means heritage can be interpretative, inclusive, innovative and transformative. In writing these words I would like to recognise the



value of creative thought. Creative thinking can help unlock unwieldy processes. In the indefatigable pursuit of a design solution, creative thinkers remain resolute optimists. A good thing to be if you're looking for a happy outcome.

*[www.hinemih.co.uk](http://www.hinemih.co.uk)*

History is Written by  
the Victor: the Pacific

# STAN WOLFGRAMM MNZM

## Chief Executive Officer of Drum Productions, Cook Islands

*Kia Orana, Malo e Ielei.* My name is Stan Wolfgramm. I am a Tongan-Cook Islands-German, born and bred in New Zealand. I am presently working in Rarotonga, the largest Island of the South Pacific nation of the Cook Islands.

I grew up in New Zealand from the 1960s, during a time when Pacific Islanders had been encouraged to migrate, to support New Zealand's post-WWII development. The majority of these new immigrants were working class. My family worked in forestry and hydro dam construction, and then moved to the city where my father was a boiler-maker and my mother a switchboard operator at the telephone exchange.

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*My drive came from my desire to find my voice, my identity, my value, my place in a society that at that time did not recognise or celebrate it. I have been telling Pasifika stories in theatre, film, television, live events and festivals for most of my life.*

My schooling included almost nothing about the Pacific but much about the British Empire, from Captain Cook to Queen Elizabeth. Great things were taught about colonial history, and nothing much about mine. So here is where my consciousness began to stir as I became aware of my difference, and where I became somewhat of an observer in someone else's world.

Today I create platforms for Pacific people to be heard. I started a Pacific

theatre company over 25 years ago called Drum Productions, with the mission statement: *'To provide for Pacific people a valued voice in their own backyard'*. My drive came from my desire to find my voice, my identity, my value, my place in a society that at that time did not recognise or celebrate it. I have been telling Pasifika stories in theatre, film, television, live events and festivals for most of my life. Today I mainly produce my own initiatives and work alongside national, regional and global governments, corporates, non-governmental organisations and communities in partnerships. My work focuses on strategic communications and sustainable social economic development

modelling and implementation. Over the 25 years of Drum Production's work, our mission statement has never changed. In fact, it has become more relevant today than ever before, as a deafening clutter of global dialogue now reverberates across the Pacific.

What is this dialogue and what pressures does it bring to bear on the Pacific? What is the significance of the people of the Pacific in this dialogue? How do we shape it, and how do we make sure our opinions are heard?

Well this is where I lend my skills to help provide a Pasifika voice for Pasifika people. I believe it's a priority to establish a precedence for that Pacific voice – where does it come from and what does it mean? – reminding others and ourselves that we are the direct descendants of the voyagers who first discovered and settled this ocean continent. *We are the people of the Pacific.*

New Zealand Māori have a term – *Tūrangawaewae*. Literally *tūranga* (standing place), *waewae* (feet), it is often translated as 'a place to stand'. *Tūrangawaewae* are places where we feel especially empowered and connected. They are our foundation, our place in the world, our home. Understanding this embraces the spiritual right and responsibility that Pacific people have to take part in any dialogue regarding their place.

Again, supporting the importance of a Pacific voice: I had the opportunity to work with a wise man, David Simmons, ethnologist, historian, and writer on Māori and Pacific knowledge. I asked him, 'Why do we need to understand our history, our artefacts?' He replied, 'They are posts in the ground that let you know where you are. Without them, you have no knowledge of where you have come from, or where you are going'.

My ancestors were the first open water ocean-going culture in the world. The first to voyage out of sight of land, 200 years ahead of other mariners who were still coastal traders hugging the coastline. Pacific way-finders used the elements to develop a celestial navigational science and a technology that produced the greatest ocean exploration vessels. *I am the ocean, the ocean is me.* What's revealed in this statement is that conversations with Pacific people need to be regarded as a commitment from the past, to the present, to the future. We commit our lives, our families, our communities and future generations to this conversation. This is the consideration of legacy. Where others will come and go, we will never leave.

As people of the Pacific our unique sense of place and commitment allow a connection to something far greater than ourselves. And in seeing past ourselves we are afforded the opportunity to embrace the burden, and the honour to serve others. I am drawn to the Pacific because I want to help my people have a voice in their own backyard.

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*I am drawn to the Pacific because I want to help my people have a voice in their own backyard. Today the Pacific is more topical in western history than ever before.*

also defining.

Is this pressure new? Not really. Mounting pressures have been an ongoing historical account for Pacific people, from colonial diseases, missionaries, cultural genocide, prison colonies, annexation, resource mining, blackbirding, nuclear testing, dumping everything and anything, overfishing, plastic pollution, climate change, sea-bed mining, border crimes, criminal repatriation, obesity, depopulation, cyber crimes, and so on.

We should consider the recent proposals for a fibre optic cable under the Pacific as both a development benefit and a threat. I see it as the second wave of colonisation for the Pacific via high speed internet. This platform creates pressures from others who post their thoughts and definitions of the Pacific to the world. I see identity as a cornerstone to our house of collective will. Who we are as Pacific people can be eroded if others define us. We cannot let the external noise of internet dialogue define us or assimilate us into a portfolio of stereotypes, undeveloped or developing. But the opportunity is bountiful if we are able to define our own digital identity and tell our own stories. We need to build capacity here.

What is new in the Pacific landscape is, firstly, a growing global consciousness of the Pacific's environmental value to our planet. Here the pressures of conservation organisations, do-gooders, scientists, consultants, and NGOs is bringing a new industrial-sized storm of social developers into the Pacific.

Secondly, what's new is the Pacific's raised strategic and geopolitical value. Here governments seek security and political leverage. America wants clear access to Asia. All western Pacific nations want stable and complementary neighbours. China is expanding. Foreign policy tools employed for leverage are aid, trade relations, immigration policies, security monitoring, soft loans, scholarships, cultural exchanges, embassies, and so on.

So, let's take stock. We've learnt that the Pacific voice has increased with

Today the Pacific is more topical in western history than ever before. More dialogue and foreign engagement exist, due especially to a global focus on climate change, marine resources, plastic pollution and security.

Today's global dialogue in the Pacific is not only deafening, it is

a growing sense of a shared identity: 'Walking backward into the future' – understanding the past to help give us direction into the future. In the past we were defined as small island states; today we call ourselves the Blue Continent.

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*Today's Pacific community recognises the future lies in the coming together of individual nations to collectively make decisions for the future of the whole Pacific.*

Today's Pacific community recognises the future lies in the coming together of individual nations to collectively make decisions for the future of the whole Pacific.

Yes, the Pacific faces more pressure than ever before from a plethora of engagements in the region,

but the difference today is that the region has matured in the ways of the western world. A new generation of educated and experienced Pacific Islanders with the innate desire and capacity to serve their communities is sprouting up and engaging in the region's conversations. Unfortunately, commonly standing in their way are old political, operational and class structures, as well as nepotism. Votes are cast for popularity rather than policies. Women are held back, young people are kept in their place: spoken for and not with.

But action is winning out over empty talk, and results are being preferred to rhetoric. It's possible to develop an environment that is accepting of innovation and entrepreneurialism, and even new concepts of leadership and leaders.

Yet even today bureaucracy still stifles enthusiasm and true grassroots initiative. Watching grassroots practitioners trying to interpret documents written by first-world nations' governments can be a soul-destroying experience. Add a consultant and some form-filling, and the result is now unrecognisable to the farmer, the fisherman or the builder who began with a great idea.

As the saying goes, 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'. We can extend this to say, provide a place for him or her to call their own, to share knowledge and teach others sustainably, and they will protect the planet for generations to come.

Challenges or issues faced by developing nations in the Pacific, or for that matter developed nations, are not simple. We propose interested parties consider solutions that are multi-faceted to address not just end results but also contributing factors, to truly bring impact, promote change, and have a lasting effect.

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*Watching grassroots practitioners trying to interpret documents written by first-world nations' governments can be a soul-destroying experience. Add a consultant and some form-filling, and the result is now unrecognisable to the farmer, the fisherman or the builder who began with a great idea.*

To that end we have created a unique model of development titled *Te Ara – Cook Islands Museum of Cultural Enterprise* as a working example. (*Te Ara* in Cook Islands language means the path, the way, the journey). It is a cultural incubator that serves as a hub for education, social and economic development. It is self-funded and economically self-sustaining via sustainable tourism as well as the delivery of national, regional and global outreach programs. *Te Ara* operates as a social private enterprise supported by a dedicated not-for-profit charitable trust, the *Te Ara Charitable Trust*.

Our Objectives are:

- To bring together the communities of the Pacific to enhance business, trade and business knowledge-sharing for greater economic self-determination.
- To establish a cultural business incubator in the Cook Islands as a model of development. This will utilise the expertise of mentors 24/7 to educate local businesses and communities, using local resources to develop the trade of 100 per cent locally-made products.
- To be a hub for environmental sustainability and renewable energy innovation and practice.
- To develop local businesses, women (the main drivers of indigenous cultural industry), the elderly (the main holders of cultural knowledge), and youth (the future).
- To develop a successful model of sustainable social and economic development that can be repeated in other Pacific and developing nations.

Lasting, relevant solutions are more viable if they can be supported either by partners, collectives or communities following correct precedence and supporting grassroots drivers. The key structure to do this is the *Te Ara* model we have created. It supports and promotes a hub where value-based practices and resources allow development to happen. *Te Ara* not only facilitates growth initiatives by others, but it also leads inclusive

initiatives to final outcomes. It is motivated to ensure change, by having what we call 'skin in the game'. Our success is dependent on the success of our community. We eat from the same table.

The noise in the Pacific is deafening. Is it a disruptive threat similar to the past? Not if we don't let it be. Am I afraid? No, I'm frustrated. Will you give up? No – how can you give up who you are, and who your children will be?

The past was full of lopsided partnerships where the Pacific voice was disregarded. Today this fundamental of voice is where the greatest impact is being made, because a new generation is speaking out with a voice that grows louder and louder. It's an educated and experienced voice, a voice with political will, with governance and global expertise, with an innate understanding and a past, present and future commitment to the Pacific.

What's changed from those who have traditionally placed pressure on the Pacific are their replies to this new voice. Through necessity this dialogue is driving a new practice and a will to truly listen. That means a new era is upon us, with a capacity for opportunity that is far greater than ever before.



Sharp Power, Soft Power,  
Girl Power: An Australian  
Diplomatic Journey

# MENNA RAWLINGS CGM

## British High Commissioner to Australia, 2015 – 2019; Director General Economic and Global Issues, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Looking back over four years as the United Kingdom's High Commissioner to Australia, I think of a period of global change and uncertainty, but also one of progress on many fronts – and great personal fulfilment.

We are living through a period of accelerating change, in what Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper calls a 'contested world'. We've had terrible wars in Syria and Yemen, instability across the Middle East, and a refugee crisis in Europe. There have been terrorist attacks in Paris, Barcelona, London, Manchester, Sydney, Melbourne and Christchurch.

We've seen the rise of *sharp power* – an expression coined to describe the efforts by some states to move beyond influence to interference, and we have witnessed a growing sense of impunity among some actors within the international system. The erosion of the taboo around the use of chemical weapons, stretching from Syria to the streets of Salisbury in the UK; fresh attempts to acquire or develop nuclear weapons; atrocities committed against the Rohingya people in Rakhine province; and increasing attacks on media freedom, brought into horrific focus by the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

This turmoil has challenged our ability to predict events. The bookies got it wrong on the Brexit referendum and the Trump presidency. But so did many of the rest of us, reflecting the way that institutions and so-called 'elites' are sometimes adrift from the mood of the wider population.

Meanwhile, the planet has literally – as well as metaphorically – got hotter, recording the three warmest years globally on record during my time as High Commissioner. The world's coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, have suffered major bleaching events, with around a fifth of the world's coral lost over this period.

But despite all this bad news, I think we need to avoid a narrative that suggests humanity is on an irrevocable downward slide. As a diplomat, it is my job to maintain proportion and balance, resisting the drama and drag of 24/7 news reporting. And as British film director Richard Curtis

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*Girl power is on the up. As the first female career diplomat to do this job, I have been part of that shift, which is a seismic one.*

said recently, we should 'beware the romanticisation of bad things', and remember that humans' desire to do good in the world still far outweighs the bad.

One sign of hope is the way the world has responded to some of the disasters and atrocities that I've mentioned

– even if sometimes a little belatedly. Then there's the fact that the world is still capable of coming together to deal with the most complex challenges, such as in the Paris Agreement.

So alongside enormous suffering there is also progress – of the kind we tend to take for granted. Economic growth, rising life expectancy, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (with an estimated 80 million people lifted out of extreme poverty since 2015), and the end of some despotic regimes in Africa.

I find that taking a long-term view also helps. It's worth remembering that fewer than one in 100,000 people have died in combat each year since the turn of the century: that's one-sixth of the rate between 1950 and 2000, and one fiftieth of that between 1900 and 1950.

My point is that there is still room for optimism in the world. You just have to look for it. There are two things in particular that make me feel positive about the future.

The first is progress on gender equality, even though it has often been in the spotlight for the wrong reasons during my time in Australia. The #MeToo movement has highlighted a shocking underbelly of harassment and even assault within many of our societies. This has to stop.

And yet: the gender pay gap is shrinking, our public and private sectors are becoming more representative of society, and we are normalising female leadership, creating a new generation of role models for the women who come after us. A Prime Minister in New Zealand who has had a baby in office. The second British female Prime Minister. The first two female Foreign Ministers in Australia. And most importantly, the first female Doctor Who!

Girl power is on the up. As the first female career diplomat to do this job, I have been part of that shift, which is a seismic one. Women were not allowed to join the Diplomatic Service in the UK until 1947, due in part to resistance from the men within who argued it would be 'impossible' for women to be diplomats and have babies. And as recently as 1973, if a female diplomat got married she had to resign immediately.

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*Because over this volatile period the UK and Australia have emerged as two of the strongest voices upholding the Rules Based International System, working alongside other international partners.*

As a proud DiploMum I'm delighted to prove those old naysayers wrong! And I'm not alone: we now have 65 women in ambassadorial roles around the world, and over a third of the Foreign Office's senior managers are women. The story in Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is similar – if anything they are slightly ahead of us when it comes to female representation.

My second reason for optimism is the UK/Australia relationship. Of course I'm biased, and there are few things worse than an outgoing Ambassador marking their own homework. But there is solid evidence behind what might otherwise be considered a diplomatic platitude.

Because over this volatile period the UK and Australia have emerged as two of the strongest voices upholding the Rules Based International System, working alongside other international partners. The UK and Australia have leaned into each other, leveraging our like-mindedness to tackle complex issues on foreign policy, security and serious organised crime.

And as global power shifts East, Australia's role as a like-minded regional power becomes even more important in upholding our shared values and interests. In fact, I would argue that we are in an era of unprecedented closeness in terms of our relationship.

Someone once said that the relationship between the United States and Australia appears close; but in fact the similarities are superficial while the differences are fundamental. I obviously can't comment on that, but I am confident that the inverse is true for the UK/Australia relationship: the differences are superficial and the similarities are fundamental.

I have seen that time and time again during my posting. One might say that cricket alone creates a common language, as well as a friendly (up to a point) rivalry. But as countries we are woven together by countless familiar threads, from history and language to culture and tradition.

These create a unique bond, but more importantly in today's world, they create trust. For when we are suffering from what the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, describes as Trust Deficit Disorder, trust where it does exist is one of the most precious commodities in today's international system, just as silk was in ancient times. And it's worth nurturing.

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*Australia is at the opportunity end of the Brexit spectrum. A stronger economic partnership between our two countries to enable our flourishing trade relationship to grow even more is a top priority for the UK.*

According to the Lowy Institute poll of 2018, 90 per cent of Australians trust the UK to act responsibly in the world. A 2015 survey in the UK by Chatham House showed that Brits view Aussies most favourably, ahead of Canada, the USA and the Netherlands.

During those dark days in early 2017 when we faced successive terrorist attacks in Britain, the support and the empathy we got from our Australian friends was moving and remarkable. We

will not forget that. Nor that Australia was the only country outside of the Euro-Atlantic alliance to expel Russian intelligence officers following the Novichok attack in Salisbury.

Of course, Brexit has been a defining issue during my time in Australia.

Our exit from the EU will be a defining moment for my country – arguably the most important moment for British diplomacy since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although we will always remain close to our European friends, Brexit will mean that the UK's relationship with Europe and the rest of the world changes.

And here's the good news: Australia is at the opportunity end of the Brexit spectrum. A stronger economic partnership between our two countries to enable our flourishing trade relationship to grow even more is a top priority for the UK. This includes a future Free Trade Agreement once we leave the EU, but we're not waiting on that – our relationship is galloping ahead in any case.

For example, people-to-people ties are closer than ever: in 2017 there were over a million visits to the UK by Australians.

Geography is less of a barrier than ever before, thanks to the new Qantas non-stop flight between Perth and London. And from January 2019 our e-gates at airports (including Heathrow) will be open to incoming visitors from Australia (as well as the US, New Zealand, Canada and Japan).

These close personal ties underpin the bilateral trade and investment relationship. The UK is Australia's seventh biggest trading partner; and Australia is the UK's seventh largest export market outside the EU. We remain the second largest foreign investor in Australia and the second biggest destination for Australian investment overseas. We are also

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*Soft power: the ability to influence others through the power of attraction and ideas, whether via the British Council, the BBC, our 0.7 per cent commitment to development aid, or our leadership on climate change. The UK is a soft power superpower.*

developing partnerships in exciting new areas such as FinTech, space, science, the digital economy and renewable energy, as we work together to capture the opportunities of the fourth industrial revolution.

And if we are judging diplomatic success by outcomes as well as relationships, which we should, a high point of my posting was the decision by the Australian government to choose BAE Systems to design and build the next

generation of Australian frigates – the Hunter Class. For me, this is less about the commercial and industrial benefits, important as they are, than its significance as part of a multi-decade strategic defence partnership. This really matters.

It also speaks to a broader British intent which also serves Australian interests – captured in the idea of ‘Global Britain’ – and gives fresh focus to a wide range of international relationships and institutions: the UN, the Commonwealth, NATO, the G7, the G20.

The combined impact of all of this is to propel the UK back into this part of the world, with a sharp up-tick in ministerial interest and visits; and the deployment of maritime assets. And in 2019 we will establish three new diplomatic posts in the neighbourhood – in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu – which will make the UK the most-represented European country in the South Pacific.

My time in Australia has convinced me that we need a less formal, less stuffy, less reverent, more ambitious, more flexible, more digital type of diplomacy. Less protocol and politeness; more direct talking and a focus on outcomes. In other words, perhaps diplomats can all be a bit more Aussie.

We also need to think about what I call ‘fusion diplomacy’, which means using all the tools in the diplomatic toolbox to achieve results. Hard power and soft power. Development assistance as a way to secure our national interests – as well as for the moral good. Public campaigns as well as private negotiations. And of course soft power: the ability to influence others through the power of attraction and ideas, whether via the British Council, the BBC, our 0.7 per cent commitment to

development aid, or our leadership on climate change. The UK is a soft power superpower.

And increasingly, we can use soft power to influence hard issues – such as ending sexual violence in conflict, or promoting media freedom. It's also an effective antidote to the deployment of sharp or coercive power by some of our competitors. For it celebrates the fruits of freedom, by showcasing innovation, diverse and multicultural societies, and a willingness to take risks and try new things.

Finally, as diplomats we need to build trust. I think diplomacy has the potential to be part of the answer to that Trust Deficit between people and institutions. But at the moment it can be seen as part of the problem, and diplomats – in that old put-down – viewed as 'honest people sent abroad to lie for their country'.

I will conclude with a particularly British point. I've served in a number of countries – Ghana, Kenya, Israel, the US, and now Australia – where we Brits come with a lot of baggage. I believe that how we wear our colonial past will define how successful we will be in creating partnerships that enable us to move beyond our history without denying it.

I have found it personally hard at times to come to terms with the impact of exploration and colonialism on Indigenous peoples in Australia. I carry that with me, not in the sense of letting it weigh me down, but as an inspiration to work with the grain of Australian society in pursuing better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

So I am incredibly proud of the work we do with Richard Potok and the Aurora Foundation to get Indigenous students into top British universities. Since 2010 we have supported 30 talented Australians to undertake further study in the UK, so they can return to their country and have a positive impact – in their communities and beyond. Of course, there is much more to be done; but it's a start.

I will forever be a strong advocate for the UK-Australia relationship: its moment has come. Together we can navigate the uncertainty and risks in this turbulent world, but also seize those positive opportunities. Because it is optimism about the future rather than nostalgia about our past that defines the 21st Century partnership between our two nations.

*(This essay is based on a speech given at the National Press Club of Australia.)*

# Towards Social Justice



## LOUISA WALL

New Zealand Member of Parliament for Manurewa; proposer of the NZ Same-Sex Marriage Bill; represented New Zealand in both netball and rugby union

Aotearoa/New Zealand is one of almost 90 per cent of countries around the world that at various times have been invaded by the British (according to a recent book). The Dutch explorer Abel Tasman 'discovered' New Zealand in 1642, and through the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi the country was claimed by the British in the name of Queen Victoria. Today New Zealand is one of 53 Commonwealth countries, and one of the 193 member states of the United Nations.

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*New Zealand's legal system derives from 'Mother England', and our values and practices – as a young nation defining itself in a turbulent world – should be seen in that context.*

New Zealand's legal system derives from 'Mother England', and our values and practices – as a young nation defining itself in a turbulent world – should be seen in that context. In addition, and despite the theoretical separation of church and state, the culture imposed on New Zealand by Britain was heavily informed by traditional Christian principles – some of them archaic and in need of reform.

New Zealand began its journey of embracing same sex marriage equality in 1986 when we decriminalised sexual relations between men aged 16 and over. No longer would men having consensual sex with each other be liable to prosecution and a term of imprisonment. By contrast the United Kingdom Sexual Offences Act of 1967 only decriminalised homosexual acts in private between men, and insisted that both parties had to have attained the age of 21. In NZ, as in the UK, sex between women was not illegal, but many lesbians suffered the same social discrimination as gay men, and were staunch supporters of the homosexual law reform movement.

The campaign for homosexual law reform gained support beyond the gay community and included wider issues of human rights, freedom from discrimination, and the pursuit of social justice.

*In 1948 the country again played an important and effective role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is not surprising, given that New Zealand led the world in enabling women to have the right to vote. That happened in 1893; it took the UK another 25 years.*

New Zealand homosexual law reform should be seen in the context of the country's role in international human rights. The New Zealand delegation, led by Prime Minister Peter Fraser, was formally involved in the establishment of the United Nations. In 1944, when the United Nations Charter – the organisation's founding document – was being developed, New Zealand pushed for a stronger focus on human rights. In 1948 the country again played an important and effective role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is not surprising, given that New Zealand led the world in enabling women to have the

right to vote. That happened in 1893; it took the UK another 25 years.

We think of these human rights journeys as linear: progress from one human rights enlightenment to another, in the process eliminating societal divisions exacerbated by colonisation, sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, transphobia and anti-migrant and anti-refugee campaigns.

Today it seems as if in many parts of the world that progress is neither linear nor inevitable. The journey is, rather, regressive, and belies a body politic characterised by self-interest and power at all costs.

This 'power at all costs' mentality has seen the propaganda of White supremacy — the view that White people are racially superior — and neo-Nazism, explode. A 2016 report from George Washington University's Program on Extremism found that White nationalist organisations have seen their follower numbers on Twitter grow by more than 600 per cent since 2012. The Anti-Defamation League in the United States has reported a 182 per cent increase in activity of these groups in the year from 2017.

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*New Zealand has a long and proud history of implementing laws that address issues of fundamental human rights. Our approach has been to enter into dialogue with our citizens and to develop consensus across the political spectrum for such law reform.*

But there is a countervailing trend – a collective commitment to global peace and security through the establishment of a global community, fostering cooperation between nations in order to solve economic, social, cultural and international humanitarian crises.

New Zealand has a long and proud history of implementing laws that address issues of fundamental human rights. Our approach has been to enter into dialogue with our citizens and to develop consensus across the political spectrum for such law reform.

Internationally, we fundamentally believe in and implement the rule of law and international treaties as a display of our commitment to the United Nations (UN) and its Charter. The UN Charter committed us:

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in a century has brought untold sorrow to mankind;
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small;
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

New Zealand has continually challenged itself to ensure that everyone is equal under the law. Within the context of marriage equality we determined that the Church can discriminate (as guaranteed by our Bill of Rights commitment to freedom of religion), but the State should not and cannot. The Church and State have, at different times, refused to marry people who have been divorced, refused to marry people of different faiths, and refused to marry people of different races. Those restrictions have changed, because they were not fair and just.

Women were not able to be guardians of their children upon a divorce or separation – a law was needed to change that. For women to own property required law changes as recently as 1884. A woman was able

to obtain a divorce from her husband only if there was another reason alongside adultery, such as extreme cruelty, desertion, or incest; while a man could obtain a divorce immediately on the basis of his wife's adultery. Our history is peppered with examples of discriminatory, unequal and unfair laws. Marriage equality at its core was essentially about ensuring that the law did not exclude two people from obtaining a marriage licence because of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Today there is greater mobility between nations, and a greater opportunity for interaction and shared experiences. In order to meet our moral and ethical obligations as parliamentarians we need to prioritise our international obligations and ensure that the human rights set in place so many years ago are continually progressed.

Human rights can and must underpin the actions we take as a nation both internally and externally. The realisation of fundamental human rights and responsibilities means we are all free to be who we are. And in being embraced to be who we are, then are we critical enough and compassionate enough to fulfil our human rights responsibilities to modify any practices that are proven to harm any other human being?

Worldwide peace and security depend on the decisions and actions of individuals. Those individual actions are the starting point for collective actions – by families, communities and nations – and ultimately for global action from organisations like the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

# What's the Point of a Festival? International Connections and Community

# KATH M MAINLAND CBE

## Executive Director, Melbourne International Arts Festival

I am a self-confessed Festival junkie. My entire career has been in Festivals and major public events. Three and a half years ago I moved to Melbourne to take up the role of Executive Director at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, having been Chief Executive of the Fringe in Edinburgh for seven years. Edinburgh and Melbourne are both great festival cities. Australia has a major international Festival in every state. In the same way that the British Council fosters relationships between people of the UK and people of other countries and cultures, so too are Arts Festivals all about international connections.

Festivals provide context. The critical mass of a Festival means you can give a small-scale event a level of resonance and meaning that it may not otherwise realise. For example, at the Melbourne International Arts Festival in 2018 we presented *Flight* – a moving and profound work about migration and refuge by Scottish company Vox Motus – which was very apt for this time and this place (and adapted from a book by a Melburnian author). In the context of a Festival it allowed the compelling story to have real relevance.

Festivals are also very good at building audiences. They can create a mood that draws people out of their comfort zone. Over time, they build a relationship with, and gain the trust of, their audience. The audiences are up for new, for exciting, for challenging experiences, and will often immerse themselves in a Festival by seeing multiple performances over the course of a programme, building large, loyal audiences who take risks and develop sympathetic, considered responses to challenging work. This benefits the cultural ecosystem, developing audiences for the sector more broadly. It makes Festivals the best place to showcase international artists.

Festivals provide a powerful platform for local artists – allowing them to benchmark themselves against their peers, and to see and learn about what is happening internationally. For example, in the Fringe in Edinburgh we had artists from almost 50 countries, taking part in the same event. So, for Scottish artists – a small, beautifully formed bunch, from a small country – the ability to witness that, to meet and talk to those artists without leaving their doorsteps, was an incredible thing. That's as true in Melbourne, a much bigger city, because we are so far away. The work being benchmarked is interesting too because you're also allowing all the artists who take part to take risks with their work and their practice.

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The power of providing both the platform and ability to benchmark is well understood by those in the know. When the powerhouse that is Carla Van Zon (a veteran Artistic Director of both New Zealand and Auckland Arts Festivals) was at Creative NZ, so well did she understand this that she championed a showcase of New Zealand work to take to Edinburgh, building a whole professional development program around it,

understanding that it would have taken years, and thousands of miles of travel, to have the same impact on those artists.

So what is a perfect Festival show? There is no one answer. Of course, we're looking for quality (arguably subjective!), but also something that resonates with the community to which we belong. Different countries have artists who are at the top of their game in their chosen genre. For example, we brought Jess Thom, from *Tourette's Hero* in the UK to Melbourne Festival, from Edinburgh. That was a great example of an extraordinary artist coming out of the incredibly strong UK scene of disability arts, which exists in large part because of the Unlimited Festival program that was linked to the London Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. Jess was unknown in this part of the world, but the Festival, and her strong work, brought her a new audience, and local artists working in that field were also able to learn from her practice. She was also able to meet the Victorian Government Minister for Disability, who also held the portfolios of Creative Industries and Equality. The scene here is now strengthened by those connections and a new audience for *Tourette's Hero*.

We not only seek what will resonate in this place, but also how we can amplify what already exists, both established and emerging. For example, Melbourne has a very strong dance scene, with world-class dance artists practising and making work here. To capitalise on this, in 2017 we commissioned a new piece by Lucy Guerin – the incredible world class choreographer from Melbourne – but rather than doing that in isolation we brought contemporary choreographer Faye Driscoll, an artist right at the cutting edge of dance in New York with her piece *Thanks for Coming*, and put those two works together in our program, in addition to building an entire program of workshops and talks for the audience (including the dance artists in the city).

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bringing Giancarlo Menotti from Spoleto to found the first Melbourne Festival more than 30 years ago, and the desire of John Truscott (who took up the directorship following Menotti's departure) to give Melbourne a glowing, vibrant heart.

Although we grew out of high arts and Italian community, we're now trying to hold a mirror to the whole of our diverse city. To that end, we have been working with our partners to build a Mandarin speaking audience – recognising that Mandarin is the second most spoken language at home in Melbourne. Stars from China (including the National Theatre of China and the extraordinary Yang Liping) have delighted audiences at the Festival in recent years and we have been delighted to see the auditoria filled with culturally diverse faces.

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Governments have long understood the concept of Festivals as agents of social change, as instruments of regeneration and moments of great civic celebration. From the founding of the Edinburgh International Festival more than 70 years ago as a 're-flowering of the human spirit' to bring together the people of war-torn Europe, to Melbourne's passionate Italian community

Festivals provide opportunities for rebuilding and healing too. In 2017 we premiered *Bangsokol, a Requiem for Cambodia*, with Cambodia Living Arts – the first symphonic piece to reflect on the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge. It's a performance dedicated to memory, reconciliation and peace. A moving score – with Cambodian and Taiwanese as well as western instruments – by Him Sophy, sits alongside an incredible movie by Rithy Pahn. Both artists lived through the expulsion from Phnom Penh. We worked with AsiaTOPA – who commissioned the work – to



build an audience from the local Cambodian community, who, along with an international audience of presenters and peers, saw this remarkable show which went on to New York and Paris.

Because of the impact on artists and the bravery of their audiences and international networks, because of our ambition, and because our work is interdisciplinary and intersectional, we are also great collaborators and a natural commissioning force.

That runs from Cloud Street 30 years ago, a retelling of an iconic Australian novel chronicling the life of two working class families against the backdrop of war and the Australian dream, to *Counting and Cracking* at Sydney Festival in 2019, an epic telling of four generations of family from Sri Lanka to Sydney, and of Australia as a place of refuge. Although 30 years apart, both these commissions told important, relevant Australian stories, were collaborations, and allowed Australians from traditional and migrant communities to see their own stories on stage.

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For artists, it allows you to lift your gaze, and therefore your game. For audiences, it brings new and exciting work, and also encourages the feeling of belonging. You saw it first, you discovered it, you're in it from the start – which is part of why Festivals are so compelling: they are about discovery.

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Festivals are also about history. We have audience members who have been coming to the Festival since the beginning, and they love it, and they have fond memories of it. And artists who have memories of experiencing art at the Festival for the first time and that shaping who they became.

International commissions and collaborations are a great means of telling global stories. We were incredibly proud to commission *Memorial* as part of 14–18 NOW, with Adelaide and Brisbane Festivals and the Barbican. An amazing Alice Oswald reworking of *The Iliad*, *Memorial* is an elegy to the fallen soldiers mentioned in the poem. It's an incredibly moving piece about war. I am struck by how, although of course I knew about the Anzacs before I moved to Australia, the World Wars felt very European to me; but of course they're not. Their impact was universal and very real in this part of the world.

Festivals have uniquely local and international perspectives. Think about the State Festivals here in Australia. Our Directors have a very focussed local knowledge of the sector, but also a profoundly international aspect; and together, a great national outlook. That is a very powerful tool for governments when considering how to project the image of Australia overseas, and the soft edge of cultural diplomacy. And for 'soft power' it is an incredible way to have difficult conversations – to allow a softer edge to take our story overseas. A colleague who is programming in the Arab Emirates can present incredibly challenging work about human rights issues, as long as they are not directly critical of the place, which is a great way to open eyes to that issue while considering the safety of their audience.

Collaboration is the decentralisation of the creative process. Festivals, when they're good, are the epitome of this. They facilitate, they call things into being. They are nothing without the place from where they emerge, but they look outward. Festivals can proceed quickly, turn fast, build compelling narratives and take risks. They are itinerant, they mark the passing of time, they bring us together.

They are important. They are life-changing. They are fabulous.

# One Blue Banner

## SUE FARRAN

Professor of Laws, University of Northumbria, Associate of the Centre for Pacific Studies at St Andrews University

For 200 years the history of Pacific islands has been marked by outside influence and colonisation. At a time when the region is again at the centre of geopolitical attention, Pacific nations are coming together to defend their interests and insist on their own culture and Pacific way of determining their future.

### **'DISCOVERY' AND COLONISATION**

The island states of the Pacific have a long history of association with the UK, starting with the voyages of discovery of Captain James Cook in the latter part of the eighteenth century, although there were other 'discoverers' and earlier encounters.

During the 19th Century contact and European incursions accelerated with the arrival of missionaries, such as those of the London Missionary Society, and thereafter settlement by planters, beachcombers and small traders. These contacts had a number of consequences, most significantly the decimation of island populations by introduced diseases against which they had little resistance, but also the resettlement of people around mission stations and the prohibition of some traditional practices.

Some of these consequences play a lasting role in the Pacific, not least the introduction of Christianity. The majority of Pacific Islanders are members of churches, and strong Christian beliefs inform attitudes towards the physical chastisement of children, the role of women, prohibitions on abortion and homosexuality, and a wide range of social values and practices. It is also true that religious beliefs and practices have become, in some respects, indistinguishable from custom and tradition.

The Pacific region has also been the site of colonial contestation between western powers, and many of today's island states came under the direct or indirect administration of foreign governments, including those of Great Britain, France, Germany, the United States and Japan. Tonga was the only Pacific island country never to come under colonial administration, although it did not escape western influence.

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emergence of cargo cults (such as the John Frum cult in Vanuatu).

The islands of the Pacific were never regarded as *terra nullius* – unlike Australia – but Indigenous land claims were often ignored, misconstrued or circumvented; and customary law and customary ways of doing things relegated to informal law, or prohibited. The Pacific was a theatre of war in 1939–45 conflict, with the Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Nauru all affected. The post-war legacy includes numerous wrecks of ships and aircraft, military equipment dumped in the sea or abandoned on the land, a continuing military presence in the Marshall Islands, and the

### **INDEPENDENCE AND COLONIAL LEGACY**

In the latter part of the 20th Century former colonies and mandated trust territories gained their independence; but for many the close connection with former colonial administration has persisted: for example Cook Islands and Niue with New Zealand, Nauru with Australia, and the Marshall Islands, Palau, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia and American Samoa with the United States. There are also Pacific island countries and communities which have yet to become independent, such as New Caledonia, Tokelau, Pitcairn Islands, and French Polynesia.

The written constitutions of the newly independent states reflect something of their pasts in the preambles and statements of general principles. But they are also remarkable for their aspirational quality, especially as regards their bills of rights, and in many cases the clear assertion of the importance of custom, customary law, and/or traditions. In the years since independence some of these constitutions have been revised, either to reflect new political directions, or to assert those values which are most important to Pacific island people. For example, the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, promulgated following the restoration of democracy in the country, makes specific reference to the Indigenous people of Fiji (the *iTaukei*), Rotuma, and those descended from indentured labour brought to Fiji from India and elsewhere by the British.

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The legacy of contact with western powers, particularly the UK, continues through language, religion and education. The University of the South Pacific, for example, originally with only a campus in Fiji but now with campuses in Vanuatu and Samoa and with centres in each of its twelve member countries, was established in 1968 by the British, working with New Zealand and Australia as well as local lawyers and politicians. It continues to educate students in English from all over the region, although in recent decades a number of national universities have also appeared, notably in Samoa and Fiji. Papua New Guinea, never a member of the University of the South Pacific, established its own university in 1965 under an ordinance of Australia (administering the country at the time).

The legal systems of the Pacific islands also reflect the colonial and post-colonial encounter, with French-influenced countries having plural legal systems in which Civil Law is a major source of law, while those that came under British influence have Common Law as part of their legal systems.

Foreign influence is also evident in the way aid funding is distributed in the Pacific, particularly from Australia, New Zealand, the European Union and non-state organisations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and various United Nations bodies.

### **PACIFIC IDENTITIES**

The relationship between international, regional, national or even local identity, is complex. It has sometimes been said that Pacific Islanders are 'people of place', suggesting they are securely rooted in one geographical location; and indeed on first meeting it is not unusual to be asked 'where are you from' or 'where is your place'. The initial answer may not be where the person lives, but rather the island on which they were born, or the place from which their lineage originates.

With growing urban drift, many Pacific Islanders have moved away from outer islands and rural areas to cities and metropolitan areas. There is

also a significant Pacific diaspora, particularly in New Zealand, but also Australia, the US and elsewhere. Often referred to as if homogenous 'Pacific Islanders', these may be second or third generation members of families, who while not living in the islands may still maintain land rights and ties to remaining kin, and observe traditional practices and customs. It is these features that link people to places, together with language, particularly where languages are locally distinct and numerous – as in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, or Papua New Guinea.

Pacific island countries are aligned (or align themselves) into various groupings. A long-standing (though no longer popular) cultural distinction is drawn between Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Fiji self-align as the Melanesian Spearhead Group to promote mutually agreed policies; but these countries are also members of much wider regional groupings such as the Pacific Forum and the Pacific Community.

Rather more nebulously, Pacific island states are included in collective terms such as Asia-Pacific and Oceania. This broad inclusion is not always advantageous, and smaller states – such as Tuvalu, Niue or Nauru – may be marginalised or neglected, particularly if they cannot send representatives to meetings. The same is true of international organisations that have offices in the region. Although there is some spread of location, the majority of these are in Fiji. This can therefore make it challenging, not only for staff in these regional offices to have a thorough understanding of the diversity of the region, but also for those further away to seek the assistance and support of these agencies.

From an international perspective the focus is often on relations with the region through one of its regional bodies, particularly the Pacific Forum Secretariat. Much of the funding that is channeled to the Pacific goes through this, or similar, regional bodies. The advantage of this approach is that the Forum operates as the political mouthpiece and think-tank of the members it represents, so it is reasonable to suppose that its priorities reflect the contemporary concerns of Pacific island states. The drawback is that while it is an inter-governmental organization, its meetings rarely reflect the whole of government, but rather specific ministries such as tourism, economics, and foreign affairs. This means the policies that are articulated and agreed may not translate into joined-up thinking when taken back home.

Lacking industrialisation and with a very small manufacturing base, the Pacific has long been a region of resource exploitation by outsiders. In the early days of contact this was sandalwood and bêche de mer (sea cucumber). Later it was the extraction of phosphate – in Nauru and Banaba; mining – particularly in Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia; and hardwood logging – particularly in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Deep sea commercial fishing, especially of tuna, has endangered

certain species, while the transportation of nuclear and toxic waste through the Pacific has led to outcry and regional treaties seeking to take back control of the waters that surround island states. However, Pacific islands are dependent on inward investment, and Pacific Rim countries such as China, Japan and Taiwan vie with each other to offer funding for various projects. Rivalry for power and influence in the wider Asia-Pacific region has led to concern that the Pacific is becoming a contested geostrategic space. While Australia and New Zealand remain the largest aid donors, China and Japan are not far behind, with the US and EU some way down the list.

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Although Pacific islands are aid recipients and often referred to in international discourse as 'least developed', 'developing' and/or, 'small island states', Pacific island states are increasingly joining with others to make their voices heard. The power of collective voices both at the UN and at small island developing states (SIDS) conferences is being recognised.

This has become particularly noticeable at international fora focusing on climate change, and the impact this is having on Pacific Islanders, particularly those living on coral atolls which may be only a metre or so above sea level, such as in Tuvalu, parts of Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, or in coastal and estuarine areas. Across the region, it is not only rising seawater inundation that is a threat – both to physical survival and freshwater contamination – but also the damage caused by more frequent storms leading to flooding and erosion, cyclones, and earthquakes which can also trigger tsunamis. While cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis are long-standing natural threats in the region, global warming and unpredictable weather is also affecting biodiversity, subsistence food resources and livelihoods.

Pacific Islanders are not alone in experiencing the consequences of climate change. The power of collective action was evident in the decisions arising from the 2015 Paris Agreement, and it has also been seen in the compliance delays associated with the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights of the World Trade Organisation.

### **THE PACIFIC 'BRAND'**

While the vulnerability of Pacific islands – due to remoteness, the occurrence of natural phenomena indicated above, political instability



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current concerns about global warming and the threat to the global commons of the oceans, thereby foregrounding environmental and climate change concerns. It also draws on the long association of Pacific peoples with the oceans that surround them, the seas they have historically navigated and upon which many people depend, either for livelihoods or food. In many Pacific cultures, stories of origin and arrival on the islands are linked to the sea and the resources in them – and for many, reference to place makes no distinction between land and water.

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environmental degradation and loss. The place of Pacific island states at the table of international concerns is emphasised, while the narrative of 'the seas that link us' rather than divide, demonstrates the importance of togetherness that reverberates through so much of the social organisation and traditional values of Pacific island communities.

The 'Blue Pacific' can, therefore, be seen as both a rallying call and a challenge. The former because it builds on historical and traditional links, from voyaging to colonial control, to recent independence; the latter because it asserts the place of Pacific Islanders in the seas that surround

and economic weakness – has been acknowledged for some time, more recently Pacific islands are asserting their strength as 'strong ocean states' under the banner of The Blue Pacific.

This rallying call has a number of facets. It resonates with

The Blue Pacific also draws attention to the claim of Pacific Islanders and Pacific island states to be the rightful custodians of the Ocean and its resources at a time when the right to benefit is coming under growing pressure, not only in terms of fish and other marine life, but from extractive industries. The Blue Pacific trope therefore draws on a kaleidoscope of Pacific identities, from the romanticised version of the Pacific in films, tourism brochures and western stories, to the threat of

them, the knowledge they hold, and the custodianship they claim.

In a global world Pacific islands are no longer remote or isolated. While they do not always speak with one voice, they share common concerns, and numerically, with others, are being heard. That's not least because their fears – particularly as regards climate change and resource expropriation which threatens the sustainability of global biodiversity – have become the world's most pressing concerns.

Language and Music  
*Wangkininy*

# GINA WILLIAMS

## Balladong Noongar woman, singer, songwriter and storyteller

*Kaya, ngany Gina, ngany Balladong yok, ngany Noongar warangka wer Noongar Waangkiny.*

My name is Gina Williams. I'm a Balladong woman from Western Australia, and I write and perform songs and stories in Noongar language.

I started in music completely by accident. I used to write a lot of poetry and I used music. Working as a journalist in television, with the long hours on the road, often to pass time I would sit and write little songs just to entertain myself. When I got out of media, someone much smarter asked, 'Why don't you do something with your music? We think you can sing'.

After entering a song contest, the West Australian Music Industry Association invited me to come and sing at the awards ceremony. I ended up walking away with the prize. After that, suddenly people were ringing me saying, will you come and sing with me? I couldn't believe that they were prepared to pay me to do something I've always done for fun.

I wasn't singing in language. I was singing in English. I started working with Guy Ghouse about ten years ago, and he said to me 'You should write songs in Noongar'. I'd just started learning my language at that time. I said 'Gussy, I can't get people to listen to me in English. Who is going to listen to me if we use language? Hardly anyone understands the language even on Noongar country'. He said, 'Trust me, if you write language songs the way you write English songs, people will listen'.

It wasn't until 2012, when I was in London as part of the British Council's ACCELERATE program that I started singing in language. I was singing in a club in London and I thought, you know what sets me apart from everyone else who's ever walked into this club? The one thing that sets me apart is that I can sing my language. So that's what I did, and I haven't looked back.

The British Council's ACCELERATE programme really changed my life. I never saw myself as someone who could actually do much. I always thought that people fell into two categories. Those who changed the world and then those who decorated it. I saw myself then as a decorator, I didn't see that there was anything that I could really contribute.

My thinking about how I saw myself changed. I had a conversation with a lovely chap from the National Eisteddfod of Wales. We talked about the Welsh language and the parallels to Noongar language, in that it was nearly erased. He talked about random acts of civil disobedience in

Wales [to campaign for language], that you need to work out what it is that makes your heart beat faster and pursue that. People will notice and that's how you will revive your language.

For me it was a no brainer. It was always that I would sing in my language. I came home and I knew what I needed to do.

Language is our birthright. I'm pursuing this because it's important, not just for me, but for my children. I'm a product of four families, so I didn't grow up with my Noongar family. I was adopted as a baby and then I was fostered twice. I have a biological family, an adopted family, and two foster families. When I came to language as an adult, I thought that the language was extinct.

I'd seen pockets of people who could speak language, but for me it was something that was entirely unattainable. Then suddenly, the local TAFE (Technical and Further Education) was offering a course and off I went. When I turned up, I realised I was the only Noongar in the class.

I felt embarrassed and ashamed. In true Noongar form, I let rip. Shame on me having to come to class, this should have been my birthright and now I feel embarrassed because I've got to come back to school to learn something that I should have grown up with. This lovely lady in the class said to me, 'That's not your shame, that's ours'.

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I wrote a song called *Nyit Yok Barnap*. This song is about an orphaned girl, she has no mother or father, she has no love and she doesn't understand why. The authorities tell her that she has no Mum and Dad and that she is never going to

see them again, that they're not coming back. But this little girl is made of something different, she doesn't quite buy into this script. She goes outside and looks up at the night sky and in amongst the stars she sees and feels the presence of her families. She goes back to the authorities and tells them, I have a family, I keep them here in my heart.

When I first played it to my Mum she didn't understand it, so I translated it for her and she asked me to play it for her again and again. I played it for her a few times and she said quietly, 'You should teach me my language'.

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A song that I've written, *Wanjoo* or *Welcome Song*, is being translated into all sorts of languages. I've collected about nine different translations across Western Australia.

We were collecting one of the translations in regional Western Australia, and it was miles away from anywhere. We'd been told that there were no Aboriginal people there, but we found an elder who could speak the language. She translated our song and then she asked, 'What happens now? I guess I hear about it later?'. I replied, 'No, we're gifting this back to you'.

'Can I sing this at a Welcome to Country'?

'Yeah, and you can teach it to the local school, to everybody'.

She then called the station manager, his wife and their child, she called grandkids and her husband. In the space of 30 minutes, she rounded up this whole bunch of people and she taught it without even thinking. All of a sudden there were about a dozen people singing this song in her language.

As she walked me to the car she said, 'This is such a wonderful thing. When me and my two sisters pop off, our language will still be heard. There's only three of us left that speak my language'.

It's so sad, but I think we've got to do what we can, not just for our own languages but for everybody.

Everything that Guy and I do is informed by four principles. Your *Koort* is your heart. The second is *Moort*, your family and the people that we choose as family. The people we work with, people we live with, people we play with. The third principle is *Boodja*, which is our land. It's about where our hearts go and our heads think of home.

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<sup>1</sup> Protocols for Welcoming to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. Crossing into another group's ancestral lands required asking for permission; then the hosts would welcome, offering safe passage and protection. A Welcome to Country is delivered by the Traditional Owners at the beginning of formal events in Australia.

The fourth principle is *Koorlangka*, which is children. It means more than that, it's about legacy. It's about making sure that we acknowledge respectfully what's happened in the past, but we can be responsible for this moment and ensure that what happened doesn't happen again. We learn from it, and we actually make it better for the generations that follow.

The idea now is to do four major works around each of these principles. We're starting with *Koorlangka*, which is children, but it's the legacy that's important to me.

People expect a certain sound when they think of Aboriginal music. French, German and Japanese are languages that have had no interruption. They've been able to grow into different things. They change, whereas Noongar hasn't had that opportunity. People are expecting us to go back to the point where the interruptions began.

Why can't we just hear things in a contemporary way? This is where we live and this is our experience.

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I'd love to take a performance back to Wales because I was gifted something there that was really life-changing and really important. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able as a thank you to come back and go: 'This is what you taught me, but this is what I did with it'.

At a campfire jam, Guy started playing *Under the Milky Way* by The Church. We were next to the fire and we were under a billion stars. I started singing. I managed to translate the first and the third verse, and then I'd sing the second verse in English.

A few months later my phone rings and the voice on the other end is The Church's Steve Kilbey saying, 'So I believe you've done something to one of my songs'. He asked me, 'How about you jump up on stage and do your language version with me?'. After the show we were out in the car park and he asked, 'Darling, why didn't you translate the second verse?'.  
 "Lower the curtain down in Memphis"? The Noongar don't have curtains, come on, you've got to chuck me a bone here.'

'No, I'm not singing about that. I'm singing about Elvis; I'm singing about how the King is dead. The boss is gone. He's not coming back. We can't just sit around talking about it. We've got to keep moving under the Milky Way'.

And so the second verse is now:

*Ngalang burdiya baal wort-koorl  
Baalap yoowart, yoowarl-koorl  
Yoowart yelakitj, yoowart daat-nyin, waangkiny  
Ngarda djinda kedala-k.*

It is literally: *'The boss is gone and he's not coming back. We can't wait, we can't sit down talking under the stars tonight'*. It worked and he loves it.

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We're now seeing the emergence of what is being called New Noongar. We are hearing new words that are not based on old words. It shows that there's actual growth, there is health around the language. It's robust enough to be able to stretch, to be played with and find new ways to be used.

There are 25 million people living in Australia. If they learnt five words of the language of the land in which we are living, our language would be secure. We would be having different conversations because Noongar and all the other languages of the land would be ordinary.

*Language and Music is also available on the Diversity Arts Australia Colour Cycle Podcast. The full podcast is available at: [britishcouncil.org.au/crossingpoints](http://britishcouncil.org.au/crossingpoints)*



# A Sweeping Generalisation of the UK and Australia

## ALICE FRASER

### Australian comedian, writer, podcaster and actress

I was in a backstage area last week, and heard some British comedians gossiping about how well Australian acts are represented in the nominations for British comedy festival awards. Comedians have opinions about everything, and for many of them cynical sniping is as much of a sacred calling as it is a professional asset. But even as a representative of the maligned party (Australian, not award winning), I thought it was an interesting point. Why do Australian comedians do well in the UK?

Here I feel an urge to emphasise that I'm not doing wildly well, but that's probably just an extrusion of the Australian national tall-poppy-syndrome – our beautiful, egalitarian and occasionally poisonous desire not to put ourselves above one another.

I mean, putting aside the obvious selection factor that you're unlikely to travel to a foreign country to ply your craft unless you're either good, ambitious or have burned a lot of bridges back home, we do tend to show up a lot on British stages and on British television. But why? They can't just be fond of us because they've watched too many reruns of *Home and Away* and *Neighbours*, right?

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Well, first of all, when Australian comedians come to the UK we can make the same jokes and get more or less the same laughs. It's an interesting phenomenon, given how much of comedy tends to lean on recognisable references. Sure, sometimes you might have to relocate the *mise-en-scène* of your Priceline joke to a Boots, but your punchline will tend to hit a comedy club crowd with equal force. It feels like there's some sort

of bedrock sympathy of national identity between Australia, New Zealand and the UK that's reflected in our humour.

Perhaps that's because at least before the internet came along and internationalised our access to content, most of my generation grew up on British comedy classics: from *The Goon Show* to *Monty Python*, from *Fawcett Towers* to *The Mighty Boosh*, *Blackadder*, *Fry and Laurie*, *Mitchell*

and Webb, Rowan Atkinson. Our taste was shaped as much by the British comedy classics as it was by *The Footy Show*.

Many of us saw those beautiful British bastions of absurdity and silliness when we were growing up, and concluded that there was something special about the way comedy is done in the UK. We thought perhaps there was something particularly fertilising about the soil of the comedy scene.

Coming over, of course, you realise the long-running influence that class-based, out-of-Oxbridge-straight-into-the-BBC nepotism norms had in that taste-making. Although that tendency is now declining (thanks to a movement now in the national broadcaster towards increasing breadth of representation), it's nonetheless interesting when you compare it with the barriers that weird sideways comedy comes up against on mainstream Australian screens.

I've written jokes for the television in both Australia and the UK, as well as trying to make people laugh from the stage in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and outback Western Australia. I am occasionally asked what the differences are between working as a comedian in the UK and working in Australia, and that's hard to answer unless you want to talk in sweeping generalisations. Which I always do. Every comedy crowd is a unique and special creature, but if you perform in front of enough of them you can start to notice national characteristics.

For example, mainstream American crowds tend to prefer it if you signpost your punchlines; if you make it clear that now is the time for laughing. This is, I assume, because they are used to watching sitcoms with laugh tracks, and they're a generally polite and sincere group of people in their day to day lives. My British friend Amy who is currently living and doing comedy in San Francisco, says, 'Americans don't like punchlines, they like keywords', which is a slightly mean and fairly accurate take on the willingness of American audiences to applaud a performer wildly when you tell them your age, marital status or home town.

British audiences, weaned on dark comedies with neither laugh track nor studio audience, like a sideways laugh, and they don't mind a performer showing off a touch of linguistic cleverness. Australian mainstream audiences come down on a showing-off performer like a ton of bricks: our national tall-poppy syndrome kicks in to make us, as an audience, very unwilling to encourage any pretension. As a result our comedians tend towards self-deprecation and emphasising our own relatable flaws.

More generalisations! My accent in Australia is definitely on the more educated, less ocker end of the spectrum. When I get up on stage in Australia, I've often felt like I need to counteract an automatic presumption that I will be pretentious and patronising. (Difficult to

counteract. I can't help sounding pretentious, as I am actually pretty pretentious.)

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The average UK audience feels a little more open than Australia to unusual left-field comedy, but perhaps that's a very personal thing – my accent over here reads as more neutral, so I have less to apologise for, or maybe because I'm foreign I get some leeway? But certainly I've felt more openness from British audiences than from Australians, from the long walk towards the microphone, where they get to see you but you can't talk yet, to the getting away with a different kind of joke, and a feeling that I'm 'allowed' to play higher status on stage.

It's a bare fact that since I first came over to the UK and began performing, I've spent more and more of each year here,

because I do seem to do more and more interesting things here than back home. Much though I miss our sunburned country when I'm away, it's undeniable from a professional level that even on a per-capita basis, Australia doesn't like my comedy quite as much as the UK does.

I don't know where that slightly more open feeling comes from. I like to think perhaps it's because of the power of the BBC to broaden people's art, independent from government politics, funded by television licences, with a mandate to commission good stuff as a mainstream but non-commercial channel. Without having to play to advertising dollars, the BBC could beam surreal, absurd and extremely silly comedy straight into the homes of the nation.

Maybe both performers and audiences will homogenise around the world, or maybe with wildly unrestricted access to so much interesting

and good art, every audience will be more welcoming to weird foreign acts when they trot onto the stage.

Perhaps this is an outdated idea for the up-and-coming-generations, with the internet opening up channels of access to everything to everyone. Maybe my generation of comedians will be the last ones to really feel vast differences in national audience flavour, as more people sort themselves into team affiliations that span national identity.





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