**PACIFIC CONSTITUTIONS: MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH NETWORK**

**CONFERENCE 23 – 25 NOVEMBER 2016**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC, EMALUS CAMPUS, PORT VILA, VANUATU**

In recent years the constitutional foundations of many Pacific states have given rise to a number of socio-political challenges, including coups, clashes between human rights and custom, weak political accountability and political instability. These challenges have given rise to a vibrant body of case law, as courts try to negotiate the relationships between introduced institutions and local practices and come to decisions that promote the ongoing development of democratic states.

There have also been major constitutional reform activities in many Pacific island countries in the past ten years. For instance, Fiji introduced a new Constitution in 2013. That same year Vanuatu amended its Constitution to increase the power of chiefs in relation to proposed land reform, and Samoa amended its Constitution to, temporarily, introduce a quota of seats for women in Parliament. In 2010 Tonga introduced major constitutional amendments to limit the power of the King and increase democratic governance. In 2009 Nauru proposed a number of amendments to alter the operation of Parliament and parliamentary accountability institutions. Constitutional reform activities are also ongoing in a number of countries. To illustrate, Solomon Islands continues to discuss proposals relating to a federal Constitution, Vanuatu is considering reforms to enhance political stability, Tuvalu is in the process of developing amendments to address political instability and challenges arising from the interaction between custom and human rights and the Republic of Marshall Islands are currently undertaking a periodic constitutional review exercise.New States may also be emerging. For example, independence referenda are planned for Bougainville and New Caledonia and French Polynesia has been added to the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories in 2013.

This conference aims to bring together scholars, lawyers, judges, politicians and policy makers from within and outside the region to discuss these and other issues of current constitutional significance in the Pacific region. The conference will be multi/inter-disciplinary and speakers will approach the issues from a variety of perspectives, including socio-political, case law analysis, or in terms of making or changing constitutional texts. Both scholarly and policy oriented approaches are encouraged. Whilst the main focus will be on countries in the USP region and following an English common law tradition, discussion of constitutional issues in other countries and territories in the broader Pacific region are also welcomed.

One of the main aims of the conference is to develop ongoing collaborations and increase publications on Pacific constitutional issues. The conference will lead to contributions for an edited collection to be published (provisionally by ANU Press) in 2017, as well as plans for special editions of a number of academic journals.

**This is a preliminary call for papers and panels for the conference**. We welcome paper and panel suggestions from all disciplines and covering a wide range of topics relating to constitutions in Pacific island countries. This includes, but is in no way limited to: the tensions between human rights provisions and custom; exploring the limits of freedom of religion; instituting reserved seats for women; the role of customary authorities in constitutions; challenges for constituting the separation of powers and embedding effective checks and balances; the relationships between identity and constitutions; developing political stability; processes for effective constitutional reform and the meaning of constitutionalism in the post-colonial Pacific.

Limited funding is available to assist Early Career Researchers and those from the region who would not otherwise be able to attend. Skype and other forms of remote attendance are also being explored.

Please send an abstract of between 100 – 300 words; or a proposal for a panel with nominated speakers to [leeanne.sackett@vanuatu.usp.ac.fj](mailto:leeanne.sackett@vanuatu.usp.ac.fj) by 12 August 2016 using the pro formas below.

Thank you on behalf of the conference organisers, Anita Jowitt (USP), Lee-Anne Sackett (USP) and Miranda Forsyth (ANU).

**PACIFIC CONSTITUTIONS: MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH NETWORK**

This form is for expressing interest in participating in the PCN workshop to be held 23 – 25 November, and also registering membership.

Please delete the sections/responses that do not apply to you.

Return the form to Lee-Anne Sackett [leeanne.sackett@vanuatu.usp.ac.fj](mailto:leeanne.sackett@vanuatu.usp.ac.fj)

**WORKSHOP 23 – 25 NOVEMBER**

**EMALUS CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC, PORT VILA, VANUATU**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

Attendance

* I am interested in attending the workshop in person
* I am unable to attend but would like to participate virtually (via skype/prerecorded presentation/circulated papers). *NOTE: We have limited ICT capability and virtual participation is not guaranteed, but want to make this event available as widely as possible.*

Assistance

* I would need assistance to attend. The level of assistance I would need is
  + Full support of travel from (please complete details)
  + Accommodation
  + Partial support for (either a particular amount or what types of costs you would need covered)
* If you are seeking assistance are you:
  + A postgraduate student (note degree you are enrolled for and institution)
  + An early career academic (in first 5 years)
  + A Pacific Island National
  + A lawyer/judge/policy practitioner

If you are seeking assistance list 3 main publications in the area of Pacific Constitutions, or note involvement in practical constitutional reform activities

Paper/panel proposal

* I will submit this later
* The title and abstract of my proposed paper is:
* The title and summary of my proposed panel is:

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**MEMBERSHIP OF PCN**

I want to join the Pacific Constitutions Network (PCN)

The email list

* I have already joined the PCN google group
* I do not want to join the PCN google group
* Please add me to the PCN google group, using this email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The website

* I do not want to be listed on the website as a PCN member or
* Please add the following information to the members listing on the website (you can leave sections blank if you do not want information published)
  + Family Name
  + First Name
  + Current Employer/position
  + Contact details
  + Main constitutional research interests (countries, discipline focus, subject themes)
  + Membership of other related research networks

The network

To make a sustainable network we are looking for contact points at different organisations. These contact points will help to get information out to PCN members and to attract new PCN members. PCN members who have associations with journals that may welcome contributions relating to Pacific consitutions.

* I do not want to be a contact point
* I would be happy to be a contact point for (list organisation and/or publication)