



The Australian National University and Papua New Guinea—a special relationship

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It gives me great pleasure to introduce this scholarly celebration of Papua New Guinea's Independence. Many of us cherish special relationships with individuals and Papua New Guinea at large, often dating back to Independence and before.

The Australian National University's close association with Papua New Guinea began right after the ANU's establishment in the post war period.

In 1953 the Australian Government commissioned a working committee made up of ANU academics Oskar Spate, Cyril Belshaw and Trevor Swan 'to investigate the economic structure of the Territory with a view to suggesting gaps in knowledge'. ANU has pursued in-depth research on Papua New Guinea ever since.

In 1961 ANU established the New Guinea Research Unit in Port Moresby and for the next fifteen years its staff carried out a wide range of research. It ran an active publications program in English, Tokpisin and Hiri Motu, trained Papua New Guinean researchers, and provided advice to government and local organisations. In 1976, the last field director of the NGRU, Dr Ron May, became the first director of its successor,

the Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research (now the National Research Institute).

Oskar Spate made many contributions to the development of the Territory over 25 years, but one of the most lasting was his part in the establishment of the University of Papua and New Guinea (UPNG).

In 1963, at Minister Hasluck's request, he joined Sir George Currie, former Vice-Chancellor at the Universities of Western Australia and New Zealand, and John Gunther, Assistant Administrator of Papua and New Guinea, to report on higher education in the Territory. The resulting new University accepted its first, preliminary-year students in 1966.

As the University of Papua and New Guinea grew, so did its links with ANU and they included lateral recruitment of staff. Papua New Guinean students undertook graduate studies at the ANU. ANU scholars served on the UPNG Council. UPNG and ANU scholars collaborated on a broad range of research projects. The New Guinea Research Unit was situated adjacent to the new campus and many staff at one time or another served both institutions.



Ken Inglis left his Chair in History in the School of General Studies at ANU to become foundation Professor of History and then second Vice-Chancellor of UPNG, succeeding John Gunther, before returning to the Research School of Social Sciences. Gerard Ward came on Spate's recommendation from University College, London to the Foundation Chair of Geography at Port Moresby and was later appointed to the Research School of Pacific Studies (now the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies), where he subsequently became Director. ANU Vice-Chancellors Sir John Crawford and Peter Karmel were both UPNG Chancellors.

Young academics such as Peter Drysdale, now Director of the Australia–Japan Research Centre, went on secondment from ANU to UPNG.

Dr Gabriel Gris, the first Papua New Guinean Vice-Chancellor of UPNG, followed Ken Inglis as Vice-Chancellor and was then succeeded by Renagi Lohia, the current High Commissioner to Australia.

ANU continued to play a role on the UPNG Council. Donald Denoon, a successor to Ken Inglis at UPNG as Professor of History and now a Professor in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, continues the direct link as a member of the UPNG Council.

Of course, ANU's involvement in Papua New Guinea was broader than the purely academic.

ANU scholars, the late Jim Davidson and David Stone, were advisers to the Constitutional Planning Committee in the run-up to Independence, and members of the NGRU provided informal advice. ANU Vice-Chancellor, Sir John Crawford, played a key role in the negotiation of Australia–Papua New Guinea development assistance arrangements. ANU's Ross Garnaut and Andrew Elek were seconded to Papua New Guinea's Department of Finance, Diana Conyers was seconded to the Central Planning Office and Ron May served on the Board of the Bank of Papua New Guinea.

As a result of our special relationship, the ANU has a greater concentration of expertise on Papua New Guinea than anywhere in the world outside Papua New Guinea itself. The Asia Pacific School of Economics and Management has a large group of economists working on the PNG economy and has consolidated its standing internationally by involving young economists at post-doctoral level in work on Papua New Guinea, many supported by AusAID.

RSPAS Linguistics Department has published a monumental language atlas for Papua New Guinea. That work enables ANU to provide technical assistance to Papua New Guinea and to assist the Australian government, the Australian media, and the Australian public to obtain a better-informed picture of developments in Papua New Guinea.

There are many personal stories in our shared history. One involves the first UPNG Professor of History, Dr John Waiko who, like his wife Dr Ann Dickson-Waiko, is a graduate of RSPAS. At his ANU graduation, John Waiko wore traditional ceremonial dress from his village, in Oro Province, with his ANU academic gown. Hank Nelson went home with John to represent ANU at a special graduation celebration held in Oro, where this time John wore Western dress, again with his ANU academic gown. John Waiko, of course, has been an MP since 1992 and is now Minister for Education. His story is simply part of the history we share.

In 1979, Michael Somare, Papua New Guinea's first Prime Minister, told an ANU graduation ceremony that

the wealth of knowledge about the nature of both traditional and modern Papua New Guinea is due, in no small measure, to the influence and activities of this great institution.

We continue our shared history today.

This is a wonderful occasion and we thank the High Commissioner for inviting us to share in this celebration.