



THE  
CHRISTENSEN  
FUND

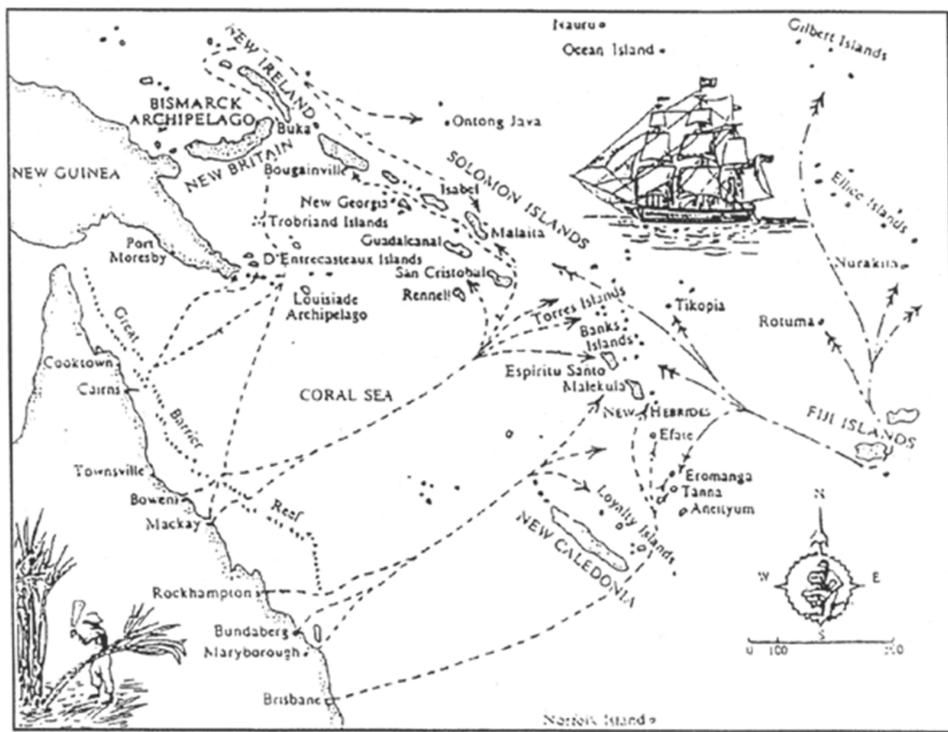
# FAENDEM BAEK FAMILI WORKSHOP

## BOOK - 1

Australian South Sea Islanders  
A Short History, Chronology and Bibliography

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SOLOMON ISLANDS  
HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

28 November to 1 December 2014



Map of the over 800 ship voyages to Australia



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA



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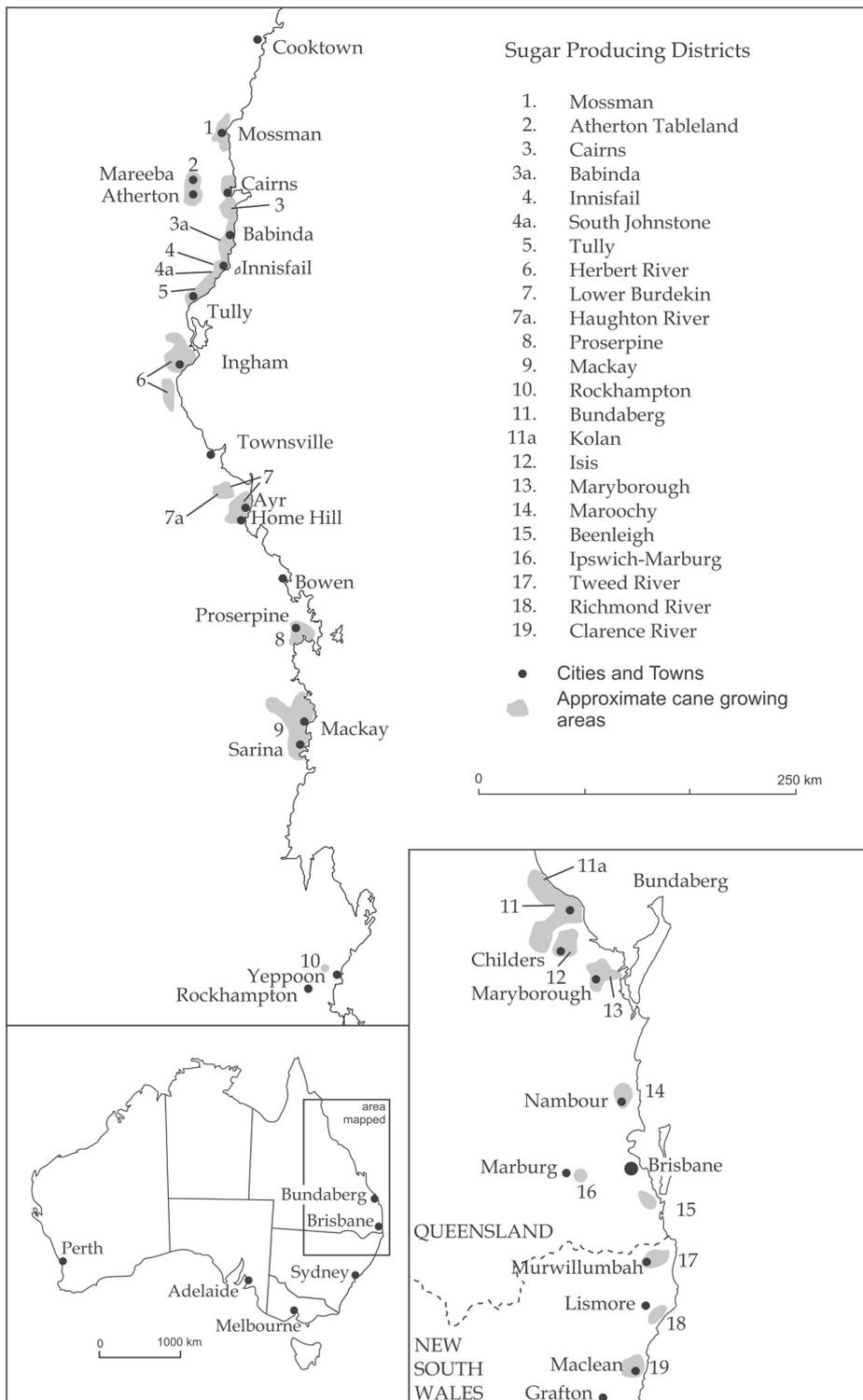
### A Short History of Australian South Sea Islanders

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### Australian South Sea Islanders Chronology

### Select Bibliography of Books, Exhibitions and Curriculum Resources on Australian South Sea Islanders

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**Australian Sugar Producing and Main ASSI Districts**

Source: Map by Peter Griggs, first published by Peter Lang AG in 2011, reprinted by permission.

## INTRODUCTION by Emelda Davis – President ASSI.PJ

### Pacific Islander Indentured Labourers in Australia, 1847-1908

Australia's Pacific Islands indentured labour trade, often called a new form of slavery, was initiated illegally in 1847, 167 years ago, by Benjamin Boyd an entrepreneur-adventurer who over two voyages coerced 122 Melanesian labourers, including three women, to the Australian township of Eden on the south coast of NSW. Boyd's attempts were seen as a human disaster. Other Pacific Islander indentured labourers were brought to Torres Strait onwards from 1860. Then on 14 August 1863, 151 years ago, 67 men from Maré and Lifu in the Loyalty Islands (now part of New Caledonia), and Tanna and Sandwich (Efate) Islands in the New Hebrides (now part of Vanuatu), began walking from upstream in the Brisbane River, near present-day Goodna, to Robert Towns' Townsvale cotton plantation on the Logan River 57 km away. *Don Juan*, the ship that brought them to Queensland, arrived in Moreton Bay on 14 August. They worked on the first of 62,475 indenture contracts issued for Pacific Islanders as labourers in Queensland between 1863 and 1904. Ninety-five per cent of these were males, some no more than teenage boys. By law, they should have been aged 16 years old, but we know that younger teenagers also participated. There were very few women, only about 5%. These Pacific Islands labourers came from present-day Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Solomon Islanders did not join this trade in human labour until 1871. They were recruited as labourers in difficult circumstances, suffered racism, high deaths rates and then were ordered to be deported in 1901 by the new Australian Commonwealth government. From the 9,000 living in Australia in 1901 a small community remained, around 2,000. Most were single aging males who died between the 1920s and 1960s, but a sufficient number of families remained that has now built up a community of 20,000 to 40,000. The difficulty in calculating the size is due to the lack of government focus on census and community education that strategically addresses our indigenous family connections in Australia.

Australian South Sea Islanders fall between two stools: about one-third of ASSI have indigenous ancestry, and about one-half of Torres Strait Islanders have some South Sea Islander ancestry, but they are proudly Australia's original Pacific Islanders. And the circumstances of their arrival and treatment in Australia are still being played out among disadvantaged members of the community. When they were first brought to Australia, many by quite illegal methods, there were no European-imposed international borders in what are now Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji, Tuvalu or Kiribati. These were created in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Australia, through Queensland and New South Wales, regarded the island around the Coral Sea as their domain to exploit. Today, ASSI are not Indigenous and are no longer regarded as Australian immigrants, yet many are still as disadvantaged as many Indigenous Australians or some recent immigrants who receive substantial assistance.

In 2013 the Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson) applied for funding from the Christensen Fund to help build trust between the Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) communities and their Pacific Islander communities of origin. This was to be achieved through maintaining an on-going dialogue and sharing of information through workshops relating to ASSI/ Pacific Islands sustainable cultures, land and sea traditions, history preservation and lifestyles. A long term goal is to host discussions around the cultural protocols in creating together a permanent digital exhibition hosted in a cultural centre which would serve as a satellite to a main installation in Australia depicting the Blackbirding era and the Pacific Islands cultural perspective, including video and the Australian South Sea Islander oral history collection assembled between 1974 and 1981 at James Cook University in Townsville. The basis of the workshops, to be held in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, will be to collect data that can be used to promote cultural survival, reconnection and celebration of the rich history of ASSI/Pacific Islands from a sustainability and grass roots perspective through story.

Australian South Sea Islanders are the largest Melanesian community living outside of the Pacific Islands, and they have survived considerable adversity. ASSI people believe that they can and must inspire and educate their communities and youth, particularly, instilling a much needed pride and dignity within their people and set a fine example of cultural healing on the global stage. The workshops will effectively share history, skills and knowledge from an ASSI cultural engagement and skills exchange-learning. We have created source materials for use in the workshops and later to be used by participants to spread further understanding to their communities. The two largest set of materials are a chronological history of the development of the ASSI community, and this short history of key aspects of our history. ~ *Emelda Davis - President, Australian South Sea Islanders, (Port Jackson) (ASSI.PJ) Limited PO Box 117 Pyrmont NSW 2009, Sydney Australia www.assipj.com.au*

## MY SOLOMON HERITAGE



My name is **GRAHAM MOONEY** and I will be participating in the Finding Families workshop. I have both Aboriginal and South Sea Islander heritage from both in my father and mother's ancestry. My father was brought up strictly in Solomon Islander culture and still speaks pidgin today. I was given the role as our biological family historian both on my father's (Percival Mooney (senior) ancestry and lineage into the Solomon Islands and my mother's (Jessie Darr) ancestry and lineage into my Vanuatu heritage.

Our great grandfather, Kwailiu, and great grandmother, Orrani were brought to Queensland as indentured workers to grow sugarcane in Innisfail in far North Queensland. They came from Fataleka, Malaita, Solomon Islands in 1888. My father's lineage as a Solomon Islander comes through his mother Cecily Fatnowna, the youngest daughter of Kwailiu and Orrani.

Cecily Fatnowna married Harry Mooney, whose Solomon Islander ancestry comes through his father's bloodline, Alec Lekki from Nggela in the Solomon Islands. Last year, 2013, a Fatnowna Family reunion was held in Malaita where both Australian born and Solomon Islander family met for this auspicious occasion to celebrate, learn much of our history and to exchange gifts. My father's only sister Isabel Sabbo and her daughter Karen Sabbo attended this occasion to represent our family. My aunt has visited Malaita on other occasions and had made concrete links to our families in Malaita and just recently there was a visit to my father in Mackay to pay respects to him.



My father (in the middle of the photo to the left) is currently the most Senior Elder between our family in Australia and our family in Malaita. He is 94 years of age.

## Chapter One :- Benjamin Boyd and the Importation of South Sea Islanders into New South Wales in 1847

Benjamin Boyd (1801-1851) was a rich entrepreneur and adventurer who arrived in New South Wales in 1842 and proceeded to buy up 381,000 acres of pastoral land in New South Wales. He died on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in 1851.

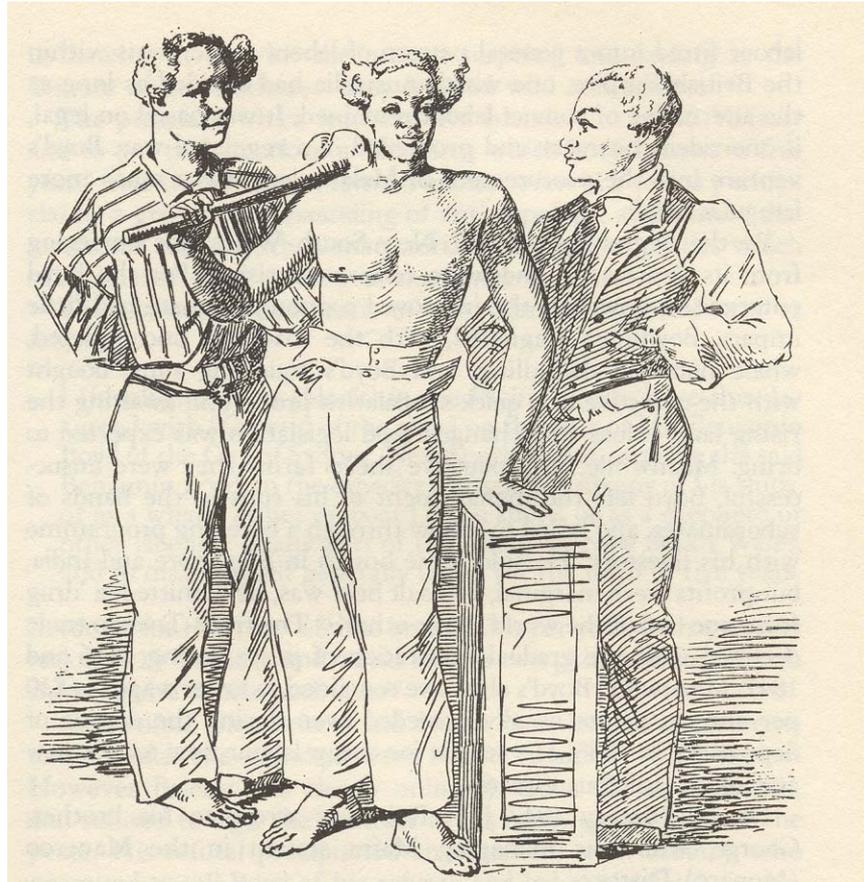
Boyd had already used Aboriginal, Maori and Pacific Islands labourers in his whaling industry ventures, and, worried about not having sufficient labour for his pastoral properties, he decided to experiment with bringing in a Pacific Islanders workforce, without waiting for government permission. In 1847 he brought the first 65 Islanders to Australia from Lifu in the Loyalty Islands (now part of New Caledonia) and from Tanna and Aneityum in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). They landed at Eden where his whaling venture was based. The clerk of the local bench of magistrates described them this way: “none of the natives could speak English, and all were naked..”. “[T]hey all crowded around us looking at us with the utmost surprize, and feeling at the Texture of our clothes...they seemed wild and restless.” (Diamond 1988, 128-129). They had all put their mark on contracts that bound them to work for five years and to be paid 26 shillings a year, plus rations of 10 lbs of meat a week, and two pairs of trousers, two shirts and a kilmarnock cap. Although onwards from the 1840s Loyalty Islanders were great travellers of ships throughout the southwest Pacific, clearly they had no idea of what they were doing in Australia, and the local magistrate refused to counter-sign the documents. Regardless, some of Boyd’s employees began to take the party inland on foot. Some of them bolted and made their way back to Eden. The first one died on 2 May and as winter approached more became ill. Sixteen Lifu Islanders refused to work and began to try to walk back to Lifu along the coast. Some managed to reach Sydney and seven or eight entered a shop from the rear and began to help themselves to food. Those that remained at work were shepherds on far off Boyd stations on the Edward and Murray Rivers.

Boyd refused to admit that the trail shipment was a failure, sending for more Islanders. By this time colonial society was beginning to realise what he had done and was feeling uneasy. The Legislative Council amended the *Masters and Servants Act* to ban importation of “the Natives of any Savage or uncivilized tribe inhabiting any Island or Country in the Pacific”. When Boyd’s next group of 54 men and 3 women arrived in Sydney on 17 October, they could not be indentured and once Boyd found this out he refused to take any further responsibility. The same conditions also applied to Boyd’s Islander labourers from the first trip and they left the stations and set off to walk to Sydney to find alternative work and to find a way home to the islands. The foreman tried to stop them but the local magistrate ruled that no one had the right to detain them. Their progress from the Riverina was followed by the press as they began their long march to Sydney. The press described them as cannibals on their way to eat Boyd, and the issue as depicted in the media was extremely racist.

The whole matter was raised again in the Legislative Council and Boyd showed no remorse or sense of responsibility. Boyd justified himself with reference to the African slave trade and there was much discussion in the colony about the issue to introducing slaves from the Pacific Islands. The recruiters were accused of kidnapping, a charge with they denied.

The Islanders remained around Sydney harbour, begging for transport back to their islands. Some of them found alternative work in Sydney and dropped out of the record. Most of the others finally embarked on a French ship returning to the islands, although it is unlikely that many of them ever reached their home islands.

For his part, Boyd overextended himself financially and went bankrupt. He left Australia for California and then the Pacific Islands on his luxury yacht *The Wanderer*. In the process of claiming to set up a colony went ashore on Guadalcanal and was killed.



“Panyella, Etoidsi and Sabbathahoo”, three Islanders recruited by Ben Boyd (Diamond, 1988, p. 127)

**Sources:**

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Boyd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Boyd)

Ron Adams, *In the Land of Strangers: A century of European Contact with Tanna, 1774-1874*, Pacific Research Monograph No.9, Canberra: Australian National University, 1984, p. 37.

K.R. Howe, *The Loyalty Islands: A History of Culture Contacts, 1840-1900*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977, pp. 88-90.

Marion Diamond, *The Sea Horse and the Wanderer: Ben Boyd in Australia*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 126-140.

## **Chapter Two :- Solomon Islands Labourers in Queensland, 1871-1906**

Beginning in the early 1870s, Solomon Islanders took part in the labour trade to and from Queensland, Australia and Fiji, and smaller numbers worked in Samoa and New Caledonia. The largest numbers went to Queensland. Labourers were employed mainly on plantations and farms. Usually this was to process sugarcane, although some also worked in maritime industries, sheep and cattle industries and even in domestic service. Overwhelmingly the labourers were men in their late teens into their mid-thirties; only about 5 per cent were women. The beginnings of this indentured labour trade came after the abolition of slavery as a form of forced labour, and it was formally based on contracts. However, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s, the participants were illiterate and could never have understood the contracts. Furthermore, master and servant contracts were designed to favour the employers, and

not to achieve equality of employment conditions for the labourers. Some of the early recruiting practices involved kidnapping and other illegalities and they were often said to resemble slavery. The death rates in the labour trade were high. Even at its best, the indentured labour trade was ‘cultural kidnapping’, in which Europeans took cultural advantage of the Solomon Islands. This is not to say that Solomon Islanders over the decades between 1870 and 1911 did not come to understand what was involved, as sons followed fathers and uncles to far away plantations. Nor was the exploitation only one-sided since many Passage Masters and Bigmen participated in arranging the labour supply. The labourers were not all ‘kidnapped’, and many enlisted more than once, some three times, perhaps once to Fiji and twice to Queensland. There were 17,554 contracts and probably around fourteen thousand individuals involved. Most of the contracts were for three years and these could be extended for various periods. They worked mainly in the sugar cane industry but also in maritime and pastoral industries and as domestic servants.

Mortality rates were high. In Queensland 25 to 30 per cent of the labourers died, mostly because recruits lacked immunity to the many new diseases to which they were exposed on European-operated plantations and farms. However, those who participated in this circular labour migration process and survived were immensely changed. The first labour recruits began to return to the Solomons in the mid-1870s, but some stayed away for many years. Others chose to stay in Australia and were forced to return in the 1900s when Australia legislated for a White Australia Policy. One such person was Joe Lovë, Headman of the Vololo area of Guadalcanal in the 1930s, who had been bartered by his chief for a Snider rifle when he was about twelve years old, and worked in Queensland for many years. He petitioned to be able to remain in Australia in the 1900s but was deported, returning home only to find his parents dead and himself forgotten. He gradually reincorporated himself into his descent group. Others returned from Fiji in the 1910s.

In 1901 the Commonwealth of Australia legislated to report all Pacific Islanders, although in 1906 for humanitarian reasons around 2,000 were able to stay. About half of these were Solomon Islanders. Today there around 10,000 to 15,000 Australian of Solomon Islands descent who are related to the original generation of indentured labourers.

Solomon Islanders who returned from overseas service had a significant influence on the development of the Solomon Islands and helped to introduce Christianity and literacy. They were often middlemen at the forefront of negotiations with missions, plantations and the government.

#### Solomon Islander Indentured Labourers in Queensland, 1870-1906

Province	1870-1877	1888-1906	Total
Central	971	1575	2546
Choiseul	58	0	58
Guadalcanal	1575	2613	4188
Isabel	92	116	208
Makira	509	520	1029
Malaita	2216	7082	9298
Rennell & Bellona	65	0	65
Temotu	26	6	32
Western	130	0	130
<b>TOTAL</b>	5642	11912	17554

## Solomon Islands Labour Recruits to Queensland and Fiji, 1870-1911

The colonial records show 17,756 travelling to Queensland, 1870-1904 and 8,705 travelling to Fiji, 1864-1911.

The total is 26,461.

### 17,756 to Queensland, 1871-1904

Price, Charles A., and Elizabeth Baker. "Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note." *Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 1/2 (1976): 106-21.

### Santa Cruz Group 429

#### South Solomons

Santa Ana 74  
Santa Catalina 1  
San Cristobal (Makira) 807  
Ugi 9  
Ulawa 147  
Malaita 9186  
Ndai 6  
Florida (Nggela) 2069  
Savo 481  
Guadalcanal 4188

#### Polynesian Outliers

Bellona 65  
Lord Howe 112  
Tikopia 32

#### Central Solomons

Ysobel 208  
Choiseul 58  
Rannonga 15  
Vella Lavella 85  
Simbo 34

#### North Solomons

Shortland 12  
  
(Now Papua New Guinea)  
Bougainville 38  
Buka 58  
Nissan 215

8,705 went to Fiji, 1864-1911

### Santa Cruz Group 1

#### South Solomons

Santa Ana 66  
Santa Catalina 5  
San Cristobal (Makira) 807  
Ugi 2  
Ulawa 19  
Malaita 5113  
Ndai 4  
Florida (Nggela) 86  
Savo 14  
Guadalcanal 1214

#### Polynesian Outliers

Bellona 65  
Ontong Java (Lord Howe) 5  
Tikopia 1

#### Central Solomons

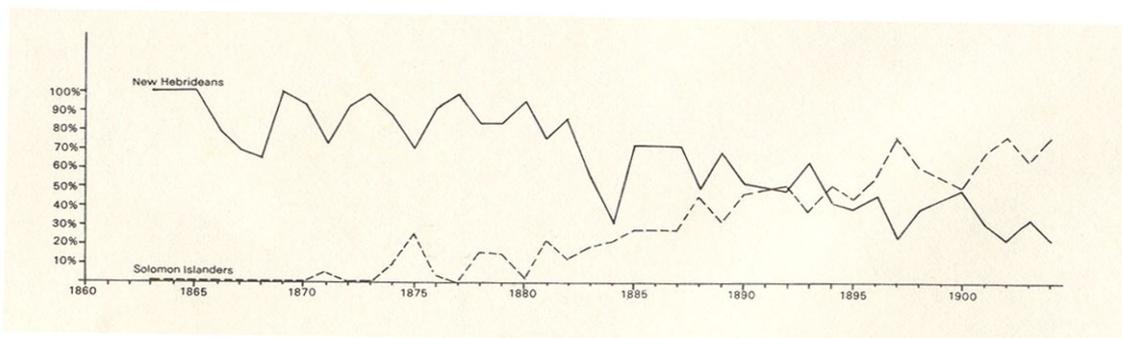
Ysobel 1211  
Choiseul 27  
Rannonga 5  
Vella Lavella 2  
New Georgia  
Mono 24  
Simbo 34

#### Source:

Price, Charles A., and Elizabeth Baker. "Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note." *Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 1/2 (1976): 106-21.

Siegel, Jeff. "Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers in Fiji." *Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 1 (1985): 42-54.

## Chapter Three :- Solomon Islanders in Australia



### Solomon Islander and ni-Vanuatu Labour Trade Migration to Queensland, 1863-1904

#### Numbers

62,475 indenture contracts were issued for Pacific Islanders to work as labourers in Queensland between 1863 and 1904. About two-thirds came from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and one-third from Solomon Islands. They travelled to Queensland on 807 voyages involving 80 islands in what is generally known as the Queensland Labour Trade to Melanesia. Given the rate of re-enlistments from the islands it seems likely that there were about 50,000 individuals involved. The vast majority (95 per cent) were adolescent and young adult males. Beginning in the early 1870s, Solomon Islanders took part in this labour trade to and from Queensland, Australia and Fiji, and smaller numbers worked in Samoa and New Caledonia. The largest numbers went to Queensland: 17,554 men and women from Solomon Islands. The first Solomon Islanders brought to Queensland were among the 58 indentured labourers carried to Brisbane on the *Woodlark* on 19 January 1871. Over the years between 1871 and 1904, people came to Queensland from all of our provinces: 2,546 from Central Province, 59 from Choiseul Province, 4,188 from Guadalcanal Province, 208 from Isabel Province, 1,029 from Makira Province, 9,298 from Malaita Province, 65 from Rennell and Bennola Province, 32 from Temotu Province, and 130 from Western Province. They were part of a much larger group of Pacific Islanders who left their island homes for Queensland. In the early decades, niVanuatu people predominated, but onwards from the 1890s and through the early 1900s, the majority came from the Solomon Islands. There were 39,931 contacts registered from what is not Vanuatu.

#### The Voyage to Queensland

Throughout the labour trade there were allegations of kidnapping and slavery, which have some foundation. Today's Australian South Sea Islanders often refer to themselves as the descendants of slaves and it is clear that the community harbours a deep sense of injustice. Estimates vary as to the number of Islanders who were physically forced into the labour trade: most historians would say 10 to 15%; the Islanders' memories suggest a larger percentage. The same labour process continued in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and this is not referred to as slavery, although the unfairness of labour contract conditions are acknowledged. Some were recruited on more than one occasion; so that some travelled to Queensland on more than one occasion.

The conditions on the ships which carried the labours were often appalling. Imagine the fear of being locked in a small ship's hold for weeks at a time in the rough weather. The conditions were often slave-like.

## Life in Queensland

It was never as easy life in Queensland and history tells us of many cruel things that happened. We know that some of the early recruiting practices involved kidnapping and other illegalities and the labour trade was often said to resemble slavery.

This is not to say that Solomon Islanders over the decades did not come to understand what was involved, as sons followed fathers and uncles to far away plantations and farms in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia. Nor was the exploitation only one-sided since in the islands many Passage Masters (the local boss of a bay or passage through the reef) and Bigmen participated in arranging the labour supply. It was a complex process which lasted 40 years. The labourers were not all 'kidnapped', and many enlisted more than once, some three times, perhaps once to Fiji and twice to Queensland. For some it was a mixed experience. Kwailiu, the original Fatnowna (a Mackay family), was kidnapped the first time he came to Queensland; he returned to Malaita Island and then came back to Queensland with his new wife Orrani. Of the 17,554 contracts here probably around fourteen thousand individual Solomon Islanders involved. Most of the contracts were for three years and these could be extended for various periods. Solomons people worked mainly in the sugar cane industry but also in maritime and pastoral industries and as domestic servants.

All of them were 'culturally kidnapped', meaning that Europeans took cultural advantage of their small-scale societies and enticed them to come to Australia under circumstances they did not understand. Once indentured in Queensland they were servile bonded labour, paid poorly (by comparison with European labourers), often held in circumstances that can be described as slave-like, and subjected to racial discrimination of an extent only matched by the way Indigenous Australians were treated.

Solomon Islanders worked six days a week on plantations and farms, but were able to wander the districts in their spare time. Their accommodation was either barracks or island-style leaf houses which they constructed themselves and preferred.

It was a complex process and over the decades four categories of Islander immigrants emerged: first-indenture labourers who had never left their islands before and travelled to Queensland; re-enlistments; time-expired labourers; and ticket-holders. Re-enlistments occurred onwards from the late 1860s, and by the early 1890s more than one-quarter of the newly-arriving labourers were re-enlisting: in 1897, 230 of the 934 new recruits (24.6 per cent) had previously served terms of indenture in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa. Time-expired labourers were those who had completed one three-year agreement but opted to stay in Queensland and entered new agreements. The time-expired section of the Islander work force grew increasingly important over the four decades of immigration. By 1895, time-expired Islanders made up 65 per cent of the Melanesians. Ticket-holders were 835 Islanders who had resided in Queensland for five years before September 1884; they had no restriction on the types of work they undertook. In 1892 there were 716 ticket-holders, 704 in 1901 and 691 in 1906. Expressed as a proportion of the overall Islander population in Queensland from 1885 to 1906, in any one year ticket-holders constituted between seven and eleven per cent of the Islander population. Most of today's Australian South Sea Islanders are descended from time-expired and ticket-holding Islanders.

Mortality rates were high, horrifically high. Queensland Government records show that around 15,000 Islander labourers died in Queensland between 1863 and 1906. In Queensland 25 to 30 per cent of the labourers died, mostly because recruits lacked immunity to the many new diseases to which they were exposed on European-operated plantations and farms. Queensland Government records show that in excess of 15,000 Islander labourers died in Queensland between 1863 and 1906. This is by far the highest death rate for any group of immigrants in Australia. We Pacific Islanders lived in an isolated disease environment lacking many of the common diseases found on large land masses. For those newly arrived in Queensland, the common cold, tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis and pleurisy were major killers. The Islanders also had no immunity to measles and chicken pox, which caused large numbers of deaths. Dysentery also occurred, particularly on plantations where public health standards were often low. If an Islander survived the first three years in Queensland, he or she would probably have lived

until old age, remembering of course that in the nineteenth-century people died much younger than today. The upper bound of the death rate for ticket-holders was a similar rate to Europeans in Queensland. It was always the newcomers, the first-indenture labourers, who suffered worst in Queensland.

However, those who participated in this circular labour migration process and survived were immensely changed. The first labour recruits began to return to the Solomons in the mid-1870s, but some stayed away for many years, even several decades. Others chose to stay in Australia and were forced to return in the 1900s when Australia legislated for a White Australia Policy. One such person was Tolimcane (Thomas), from Small Malaita Island who was recruited by the *Fearless* in the mid-1880s to work in the sugar industry, served three years in Queensland, and returned to Malaita on the same vessel. Tolimcane was arranged to marry a woman from South Malaita but when he returned she had married another man and he recruited again for Queensland, where he married Makeni (Maggie) from Small Malaita. . His son, Timothy George Mahratta, was born at Bundaberg in 1892. Tolimcane became a teacher in the Queensland Kanaka Mission founded by Florence Young, who encouraged him to gain a European education. Timothy attended three primary schools around Bundaberg and three in the nearby Isis District as the family moved about for work and mission reasons. By the early 1900s Tolimcane had a small cane farm near Bundaberg, ran a few head of stock and employed several of his countrymen. Although eligible to stay in Australia, he chose to return home with his family in 1906 or 1907. The couple became South Sea Evangelical Church missionaries on Small Malaita and Timothy attended the SSEM Onepusu School on Malaita's west coast. He left after just six months because his Queensland literacy and numeracy meant he was expected to be a teacher rather than a student.

Timothy was probably the best-educated Solomon Islander of his day, but he was always dissatisfied that he was denied further education, and unhappy with his 'native' status. He worked aboard SSEM, Malayta Company and Levers Brothers vessels, travelling throughout the Protectorate and as far as Australia and New Zealand. In Small Malaita he lived at Pau and then shifted to Papaarah. Because of his sophistication, Mahratta was the only Malaitan with a permit to carry a shotgun to shoot pigeons. In the 1920s he married Mizpah and became an influential Village Headman on Small Malaita, although he lost this position in 1925 when he committed adultery. He then moved to become storekeeper for the Mala Timber Company. When Maasina Rule, a nationalist movement, began, almost inevitably, he became the Head Chief for Small Malaita, and for a time some saw him as the overarching leader of the movement. He was imprisoned for three years with the other chiefs, and then reinstated as an Assistant Headman. He remarried and was active in the SSEM. He ensured that his children received the best education available, and one of his grandchildren, Alex Bartlett, became a Cabinet Minister and Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of the Malaita Eagle Force in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A misfit all of his life, and a man who lived before his time', Timothy George Mahratta died in April 1969. He was a proud son of Bundaberg.

### **The Twentieth Century**

In 1901 the Commonwealth of Australia legislated to report all Pacific Islanders, although in 1906 for humanitarian reasons around 2,500 were able to stay. About half of these were Solomon Islanders. This was a time of great pain for my people. They were no longer wanted in Australia and the Commonwealth Government forced thousands of them to return home. No matter by what circumstances they had arrived in Australia, many by 1900 had property and possessions, they had been educated at Christian missions and their children attended schools. Suddenly, they were told to leave because other Australians wanted a White Australia.

Those that were able to stay were left on the fringes of Australian society, an unwanted embarrassment. They were forced out of the sugar industry by trade unions and government subsidies for sugar produced by White-only labour. Their children were only allowed to attend segregated schools and they could only go to the "Coloured" wards in hospitals. ASSI had large families, they had faith in God, and

they survived under great difficulty. Many of the problems that still beset Australian South Sea Islanders today, the lack of unity, the poor socio-economic conditions, date from these decades.

Today there are around 30,000 to 40,000 Australian South Sea Islanders and 10,000 to 15,000 Australians of Solomon Islands descent who are descendants the original generation of indentured labourers. The largest Solomons community is at Mackay, but they live spread all along the coast of Queensland and northern New South Wales

#### **Australian Solomon Islanders begin to Visit Solomon Islands**

Between the 1900s and the 1960s and 1970s Australian Solomon Islanders lost contact with their families in the islands. Since then, slowly, they have been rebuilding this link. At the end of July 2013 Vanuatu organised a “150 Years of Blackbirding Commemoration” and 150 Australians of niVanuatu descent came to Port Villa and then many went on to their islands of origin. It was an emotional experience and so too is it for Australian Solomon Islanders who return. Through Mackay families like the Bobongies, the Vitis and the Fatnownas, the relinking began in the 1970s. Noel Fatnowna described the emotions in his 1989 book *Fragments of a Lost Heritage*.

The plane neared Guadalcanal and we fastened our seatbelts. I looked out over the side of the plane again, out through the window. I could see the shoreline of Guadalcanal now – “Solomone” or “Kalekana”, as the old people used to say over here. A great feeling came over me. My eyes brimmed with tears, so I could hardly see. A vision of my dad and mum and all the old people came up before me....They say when a man drowns all his past life come up before him. I experienced this sort of feeling, as I looked at the blue hills of Guadalcanal reaching up to me as if to say, “Come down, come down.” I thought of the thousands of Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans who had come to Australia: and here was I, one of their sons, returning to the islands.

#### **Solomon Islands and Australia**

The Solomon Islands and Australia are neighbouring nations, and because of this link over many generations, the Solomon Islands has an enduring relationship with Queensland and with Australia. Solomon Islands and Australian share ancestors and history. The relationship that began in 1871 still thrives and Solomon Islanders value the close connection with Australia.

### **Chapter Four :- Christianity and the Queensland Kanaka Mission**

Onwards from the 1880s ASSI began to attend Christian missions, predominantly run by the Anglicans, Presbyterians and the Queensland Kanaka Mission.

Solomon Islanders who returned from overseas service had a significant influence on the development of the Solomon Islands and helped to introduce Christianity and literacy. They were often middlemen at the forefront of negotiations with Christian missions, plantations and the government. And of course one the most important links between Bundaberg and Solomon Islands is the Young family of Fairymead plantation and particularly Florence S.H. Young who founded the Queensland Kanaka Mission in 1886, which became the South Sea Evangelical Church, the third biggest Church in the Solomon Islands today.

In 1882, Florence Young commenced missionary work among indentured labourers from the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides on her brothers' Queensland sugar plantation and mill, at Fairymead, near Bundaberg. She had been a missionary in China and was steeped in the beliefs of the Plymouth Brethren and influenced by the English Keswick Convention. The Queensland Kanaka Mission formally began in 1886. By 1904, the QKM had 101 Islander missionaries, seventeen European ones working in eleven different centres along the southern Queensland and northern New South Wales coast, and thousands of converts. These men and women returned to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and the New Hebrides at the turn of the century. The most famous in the Solomon Islands

was Peter Abu'ofa of north Malaita, who established a Christian school at Malu'u in north Malaita in 1895 and appealed to the QKM for help. Several missionaries visited him, suffering ill health from the harsh conditions on Malaita. Then in 1903, after the Australian government signaled in 1901 that it intended to expel all immigrant Melanesians, the QKM began to think of moving the Mission to the Solomon Islands.

In January 1904, the QKM formed a Solomon Islands Branch and in April Florence Young arrived at Tulagi. She travelled to Langalanga Lagoon and to Malu'u to visit Peter Abu'ofa. Until the 1920s, Florence Young made annual visits to the Protectorate and in 1905 the QKM established its principal station at Onepusu on Malaita's west coast. At the end of 1906, the QKM closed its Queensland operation and transferred to the BSIP. Its name was changed to the South Sea Evangelical Mission (later Church) in 1907, and it has continued to operate in the Solomon Islands. The SSEM expanded into Papua New Guinea after the Second World War and this important Church, which began in Bundaberg, was localized in Solomon Islands in the 1980s. It is indigenous Christianity at its best.

## Chapter Five :- Vanuatu Labour Recruits to Queensland and Fiji, 1863-1911

### 39,931 to Queensland, 1863-1904

Price, Charles A., and Elizabeth Baker. "Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note." *Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 1/2 (1976): 106-21.

<b>South</b>	Maewo 575	<b>Central 1</b>
Aneityum 157	Omba 3,658	Efate 597
Tana 4,244	Santo 2,806	Nguna 8
Futuna 221	Malo 1,375	Eradaka 3
Aniwa 4	<b>Banks</b>	Emae 9
Eromanga 1,174	Mere Lava 438	Tongoa 8
<b>Central</b>	Merig 5	Epi 389
Efate 1,762	Gaua 2,537	<b>Central 2</b>
Eradaka 4	Vanua Lava 819	Paama 39
Moso 9	Mota 241	Lopevi 3
Pele 15	Valua 1,036	Ambrym 337
Emau 288	Ureparapara 602	Malakula 1,699
Nguna 607	<b>Torres</b>	Pentecost 961
Mataso 5	Toga 510	<b>North</b>
<b>Shepperd</b>	Loh 172	Malo 371
Makura 121	Tegua 183	Santo 1,820
Emae 692	Metoma 20	Mavea 5
Buninga 21	Hiw 223	Tutuba 1
Tongariki 148		Ambae 654
Tongoa 934		Maewo 327
Evoso 1	<b>14,198 went to Fiji, 1864-1911</b>	Merelava 137
	Siegel, Jeff. "Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers in Fiji." <i>Journal of Pacific History</i> 20, no. 1 (1985): 42-54.	Gaua 185
Epi 5,084		Vanualava 45
Lamenu 32		Mota 11
		Valua 47
<b>North</b>		Ureparapara 13
Lopevi 47	<b>South</b>	Torres (unspecified) 19
Paama 803	Tanna 1,176	Banks (unspecified) 64
Ambrim 3,464	Erronanga 35	
Melekula 2,934	Tutuna 7	Unknown 5,228
Pentecost 1,960		

## Chapter Six :- Current Australian South Sea Islander Surnames

Following mass forced deportations between 1906 and 1908, only about 2,000-2,500 ASSIs remained in Australia to become the ancestor's of today's ASSI Community. ASSI families have strong kinship ties, through blood or marriage to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. The below list contains over 160 surnames and is not complete. The list largely excludes Australian South Sea Islander families in Torres Strait (due to lack of research). Some variations in spelling of names has been included, so the actual number would be less. Any additions are very welcome.

Ahwong, Ambertal, Ambong, Ambrum, Andrew, Andrews, Appo, Armstrong, Arrow, Auda, Backo, Baggow, Balap, Bandler, Banu, Barrett, Bellar, Bicky, Bickey, Bikwai (Byquar), Boah, Bobongie, Bolt, Bong, Boranti, Boykin, Bozier, Browning, Broome, Budby, Budd, , Bullio, Brown, Bunn, Carter, Cassidy, Chadburn, Choolburra, Christian, Cloudy, Coakley, Cole, Choppy, Corowa, Darby, Darr (Darr-Melid), Davis, Deshong, Dorman, Douglas, Dudley, Edmunds, Eggmolsse, Enares, Enfantie (Sirriarkock), Fatnowna, Feukwandie, Fewquandie, Geesu, Geia, Gela, George, Giblett, Gorman, Henaway, Heron, Hodges, Homa, Itong, Ivy, Johnson, Kanak, Keevers, Kia, Kinch, Kris, Lammon, Lampton, Lea, Lemison, Leo, Levi, Little, Lingwoodock, Lui, Kris, Kamore, Kemp, Kissier, Kiwatt, Kohler, Macken, Mabo, Mackeleo, Malamoo, Malayta, Manaway, Maninga, Mann, Marlla (Marrler), Matthews, Maycock, Mazza, Mau, McCarthy, Mehow, Miller, Mezzin, Minniecon, Mooney, Moreton, Morseu, Moss, Motto, Mount, Moona, Mussing (Mussington), Mundine, Murphy, Mye, Nagas, Na'howe, Nalam, Namok, Noter, Oba, Obah, Oth, Oliver, Pakoa, Parter, Payne, Pebby, Pelayo, Penola, Percy, Phillips, Poid, Power, Quakawoot, Quero, Reid, Reys, Robe, Rode, Rowies, Reuben, Sabbo (Sabbo-Toga), Sandow, Satani, Santo, Saukuru, Sauney, Savaige, Saylor, Schaper, Sheppard, Simonsen, Simpson, Sippie, Skinner, Slockee, Smallwood, Solomon, Sussyer, Sutherland, Sussyer, Swali, Taiters, Tallis, Talonga, Tambo, Tammorah, Tamock, Tanna, Tanner, Tapim, Tarrella, Tarryango, Tass, Tattow, Terare, Terrere Thomas, Toar, Toas, Togo, Tolonga, Tammorah, Tomarra, Tomarie, Tonga, Trevy, Upkett, Vea Vea, Vice, Vickery, Viti, Watego, Warcon, Warkill, Ware, Warriie, Wass-Miller, Williams, Willie, Wogas, Womal, Wone, Wormald, Wright, Wymarra, Yasso, Yasserie, Yatta, Yettica, Youse, Yow Yea, Yow Yeh

## Chapter Seven :- The Demography of Pacific Islander Migrants in Colonial Queensland

### Numbers

62,475 indenture contracts were issued for Pacific Islanders to work as labourers in Queensland between 1863 and 1904. Given the rate of re-enlistments from the islands it seems likely that there were about 50,000 individuals. The vast majority (95 per cent) were healthy adolescent and young adult males.

### Mortality

#### Lack of Immunity

At home, Pacific Islanders lived in an isolated disease environment lacking many of the common diseases of large land masses. They were unused to regulated field work. The climate from which they came had no winter. Most were not used to wearing clothes which caused health problems when they continued to wear damp garments. The food they received was quite different from food in the islands. There were large conceptual differences between nineteenth-century European and Pacific Islanders views of causes of sickness and death.

### Death Rates

Government records show that in excess of 14,564 Islander labourers died in Queensland between 1868 and 1906. There are some gaps in the statistics: the total figure is probably closer to 15,000. This is 24% of the total number of indentured contracts and an even higher percentage of the actual individuals involved. Tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis, pleurisy, dysentery, measles and chicken pox were the major killers

The estimated death rate of Islanders in the first year of their indenture was 81 per 1,000, over three times the estimated crude death rate for the rest of the Islander population, which was 26 per 1,000. It was always the newcomers, the first-indenture labourers, who suffered worst in Queensland.

### Comparison with European Death Rates

The death rate amongst Europeans in Queensland over similar years—of all ages—was 15 per 1,000. The death rate amongst European males in Queensland of similar age to the predominantly male Islander population, was closer to nine or ten in every 1,000. The general Queensland mortality rate was average for colonial Australia and acceptable by world standards. The Queensland Pacific Islander mortality rate, which at its height in 1884 was 147 per 1,000, was unacceptable by humane standards anywhere.

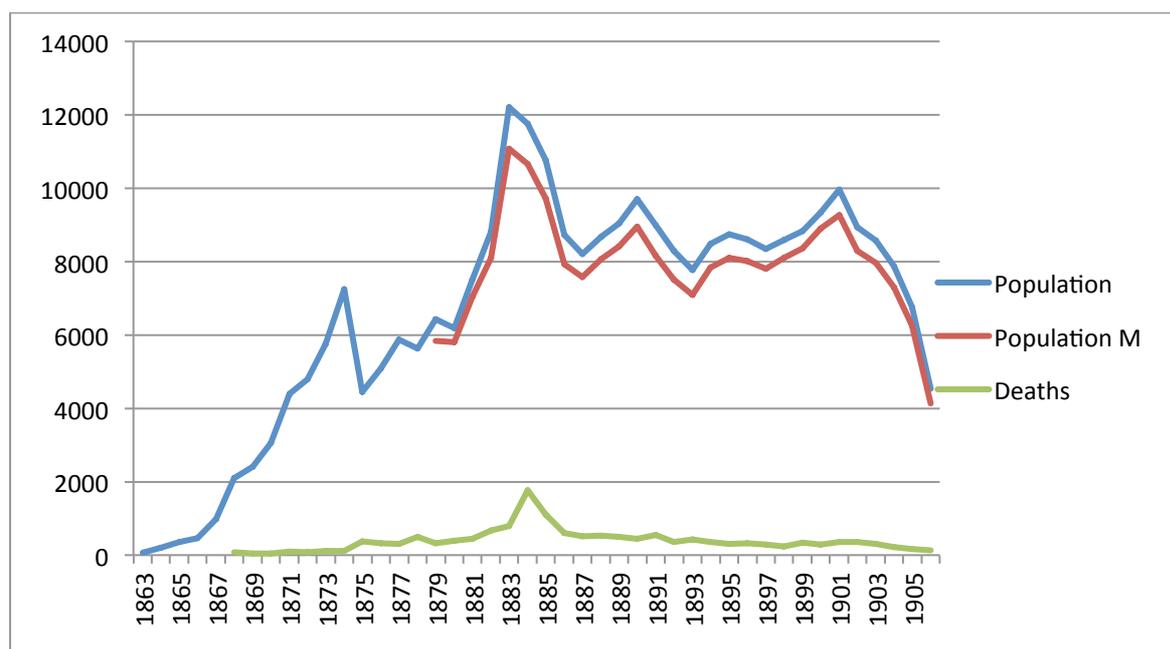
### The Burden of Guilt

Exposure to the new disease environment was the fundamental cause of death. Neither employers nor government can be blamed for the initial high death rate, nor for failing to foresee it. But they can absolutely be blamed for persisting with the system for forty years when it had become clear that the death rate was the price. There is a heavy burden of guilt borne by the colonial Queensland Government and those it represented.

### Categories and Numbers

There were around 62,000 indenture contracts issued for Pacific Islanders to work as labourers in Queensland between 1863 and 1904. We do not know how many individuals were involved, but from knowledge of the rate of re-enlistments from the islands it seems likely that there were about 50,000 individuals. The vast majority (95 per cent) were adolescent and young adult males. The government records show that in excess of 14,564 Islander labourers died in Queensland between 1868 and 1906; and given the lack of statistics for 1863-1867 and possible other inaccuracies, the total figure is probably closer to 15,000.

Figure 1: Pacific Islanders In Queensland and Mortality, 1863-1906



**Source:** *Votes and Proceedings* of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, 1867-1907, from a variety of sources available on request; Ralph Shlomowitz, 'Mortality and the Pacific Labour Trade', *Journal of Pacific History*, 1987, Vol 22, No. 1, p. 50; The figures for 1863 to 1875 are very approximate. Mean population figures are available only for 1863 and 1868. The figures between 1863 and 1874 have been calculated by adding up immigrant numbers recorded for each year, which takes no account of mortality until 1868. And the mortality figures come from registered deaths, which would not be accurate. The spike in 1873 seems false and the graph should show a much more gradual increase.

### **First-Indenture Labourers and Acclimatization**

The average crude death rate declined as the labour trade progressed, mainly because their numbers included a decreasing proportion of **first-indenture** labourers, not from any European-inspired improvement in working or living conditions. Over time, three more categories emerged: re-enlistments from the islands; time-expired labourers and ticket-holders. **Re-enlistments** occurred onwards from the late 1860s, and by the early 1890s more than one-quarter of the newly-arriving labourers were re-enlisting: in 1897, 230 of the 934 recruits (24.6 per cent) had previously served terms of indenture—116 in Queensland, 24 in Fiji, 5 in New Caledonia and 40 in Samoa.<sup>1</sup> **Time-expired** labourers were those who had completed one three-year agreement but opted to stay in Queensland and entered new agreements. The time-expired segment of the Islander work force grew increasingly important over the four decades of immigration. By 1895, time-expired Islanders made up 65 per cent of the Melanesians in the Mackay district and could be found in similar proportions in other districts.<sup>2</sup> **Ticket-holders** were 835 Islanders who had resided in Queensland for five years before September 1884, who had no restriction on the types of work they undertook. In 1892 there were 716 ticket-holders, 704 in 1901 and 691 in 1906. Expressed as a proportion of the overall Islander population in Queensland from 1885 to 1906, in any one year ticket-holders constituted between seven and eleven per cent of the Islander population.<sup>3</sup> The present-day Australian South Sea Islander population is largely descended from the time-expired and ticket-holder Islanders.<sup>4</sup>

### **Mortality**

At home, Pacific Islanders lived in an isolated disease environment lacking many of the common diseases of large land masses. They were unused to regulated field work, the climate from which they came had no winter, most were not used to wearing clothes which caused health problems when they continued to wear damp garments, the food they received was quite different from food in the islands, and there were large conceptual differences between nineteenth-century European and Pacific Islanders views of causes of sickness and death. These things were not primarily responsible for the high mortality rate but they certainly exacerbated it. A large proportion of the Melanesians who died in Queensland were first-indenture labourers—those who had not previously participated in the labour trade. Ralph Shlomowitz's statistical analysis clearly shows that the longer a Pacific Islander lived in Queensland, the more chance they had of a normal life expectancy. However, the labour trade was not designed for immigration; rather it was a circular-migration over three years, which only compounded the death rates. Respiratory tract infections are the most frequent minor illnesses of humans. For Islanders, particularly those newly arrived in Queensland, tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis and pleurisy were more than minor illnesses—they were major killers.

Over the four decades of the Pacific Islands labour trade, each year on average 74 Islanders in every 1,000 in Queensland died. These were young men and women in the prime of life, aged mainly between sixteen and thirty-five. The death rate amongst Europeans in Queensland over similar years—of all ages—was 15 per 1,000. The death rate amongst European males in Queensland of similar age to the predominantly male Islander population, was closer to nine or ten in every 1,000. The general Queensland mortality rate was average for colonial Australia and acceptable by world standards. The Queensland Pacific Islander mortality rate, which at its height in 1884 was 147 per 1,000, was unacceptable by humane standards anywhere.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2: 426 Samples of Islander Deaths in Queensland, 1867-1895, indicating the Cause of Death**

Cardiovascular System	5
Respiratory System	131
Gastro-Intestinal Tract	65
Nervous System	11
Genito-Urinary System	8
Blood System	0
Endocrine Gland	1
Bones, Joints and Collagen Disease	5
Infectious Diseases	70
Skin Diseases	3
Degenerative Diseases	0
Fever, Debility and Unclassifiable	38
Chemical Agents	5
Trauma	33
Suicide	19
Murder	32

**Source:** Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay*, Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985, p. 247.

Two Figures are included in this paper. The first is an overview, 1863 to 1906, of the population of Pacific Islanders in Queensland, giving males and females but not differentiating children (who grew in numbers in the 1890s and 1900s), and giving the government mortality figures. The second Figure is my attempt at an analysis of a 426 person sample of Islander deaths which occurred in the Maryborough and Mackay districts during the 1863-1906 years. In the 426 cases the cause of death can be defined reasonably accurately: 202 of the cases came from the Maryborough Islander Hospital Register (1884-1888). The remaining 224 are all from Mackay, drawn from a cemetery register (1875-1884), the Mackay Base Hospital Register (1891-1895), a thorough reading of the *Mackay Mercury* (1867-1907), and a sampling of Queensland Government archival records. The combination of records gives a wide chronological and source outline, providing a fair balance between deaths from diseases and those caused by trauma, suicide or murder. The number of deaths from trauma, suicide or murder is likely to be reasonably accurate, given the level of public interest.<sup>6</sup> The sample is less accurate in its listings of deaths from natural causes, although the emphasis on respiratory, gastro-intestinal and infectious diseases is accurate. The legislation governing the Islanders' living conditions was inadequate and not always enforced. Police Magistrates and Inspectors of Pacific Islanders only occasionally inspected the labourers' quarters and rations. They seldom were able to arrive un-announced and usually only reported on conditions when they were called to investigate a complaint. Conditions of plantations and farms owed more to the discretion and goodwill, or otherwise, of individual employers and managers. Access to hospitals did not begin until the 1880s and even then they were rudimentary with medical practitioners lacking proper understanding of many of the diseases prolific during this time.

Economic historian Ralph Shlomowitz has calculated that the estimated crude death rate of Islanders in the first year of their indenture was 81 per 1,000, over three times the estimated crude death rate for the rest of the Islander population, which was 26 per 1,000.<sup>7</sup> If an Islander survived the first three years in Queensland, he or she would probably have lived until old age, remembering of course that in the nineteenth-century people died much younger than today. Shlomowitz calculated that the upper bound of the death rate for ticket-holders was 14 per 1,000, a similar rate to Europeans in Queensland. It was always the newcomers, the first-indenture labourers, who suffered worst in Queensland. During the first two decades of the trade kidnapping and underhand recruiting methods were prevalent. The majority

of the recruits were making their first voyage to Queensland and the plantation conditions were primitive. In the final two decades voluntary enlistment was more the norm, many recruits were no longer novices in the labour trade and were actually re-recruiting from the islands. Working and living conditions also improved and an ever-increasing proportion of the Islander population were time-expired labourers working for small farmers, and ticket-holders. This is not to deny Australian South Sea Islander testimony that some kidnapping continued into the 1890s and 1900s, but analysis of all documentary records indicates that this was not the norm.

That death was more prevalent in the first year of residence in itself disposes entirely of any suggestions that overwork, insufficient and unsuitable food or lack of medical care (or any combination of these) was the cause, since these would obviously have had a combined effect, making the death rate increase with length of contract. Exposure to the new disease environment was the fundamental cause of death. Neither employers nor government can be blamed for the initial high death rate, nor for failing to foresee it. But they can absolutely be blamed for persisting with the system for forty years when it had become clear that the death rate was the price. There is a heavy burden of guilt borne by the colonial Queensland Government and those it represented.

## **Chapter Eight :- The Deportation of Australian South Sea Islanders by the Commonwealth Government, 1901-1908**

62,475 Pacific Islander indentured labourers were contracted to work in Queensland onwards from 1863. In 1901, approximately 10,000 Pacific Islanders lived in eastern Australia from Torres Strait to northern New South Wales. They comprised the original labourers and their children. In 1900s they were two-thirds from the Solomon Islands and one-third from the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu).

### **White Australia Legislation in 1901**

In 1901 the new Australian federal parliament passed three pieces of racially discriminatory legislation. Best known was the Immigration Restriction Act, aimed at excluding all non-European migrants. The second was Clause 15 of the Post and Telegraph Act, intended to ensure that ships subsidised by the Commonwealth to carry Australian mail, only used white crews.<sup>8</sup> The third was the Pacific Island Labourers Act, the purpose of which was to deport the vast majority of the Pacific Islanders currently working in Queensland and northern New South Wales as soon as possible after the end of 1906. The only exemptions allowed were for Pacific Islanders introduced to Queensland before 1 September 1879, ships crews, or those granted Certificates of Exemption under the Immigration Restriction Act. Debated extensively during October and November, the Bill was passed and assent given on 17 December 1901. This paper looks at the implementation of the Pacific Island Labourers Act and the reaction of Australia's Pacific Islanders to the deportation order. I argue that they proved themselves to be a well-organised lobby group and mounted a sophisticated political campaign. This both surprised and embarrassed the Federal Government, which preferred to view them as a primitive people from the South Seas, able to be written out of Australian history like indigenous Australians.

The Act allowed Pacific Islanders to continue to enter Australia under licence as indentured servants until 31 March 1904, after which a ban was imposed. The government was aware that there were approximately 10,000 Pacific Islanders living in Queensland and northern New South Wales when the Bill became law, only 700 of them 'ticket-holders' exempt from deportation. During 1901 839 returned to their islands and another 1,678 arrived.<sup>9</sup> While the Act was intended as an instrument of mass deportation, this was to be accomplished partly by progressive limits on immigration and encouraging emigration.<sup>10</sup> No agreements were valid after the end of 1906, and any Islander found in Australia who had not worked under an indenture agreement within the previous month was to be deported immediately.

These legislative moves came as no surprise to most Australians. They were in line with the sentiments of Australian nationalism and were related to attempts during the late 1880s and 1890s to restrict all non-European immigration. They were also an integral part of the political bargaining during the 1890s which federated Britain's Australian colonies as the Commonwealth of Australia.<sup>11</sup>

An end to the importation of Pacific Islanders had been signalled since 1885 when Queensland first attempted to close down the labour trade. The Queensland government had done its best to phase out the plantation system and restructure the sugar industry. The new structure was based around small farms owned by white Australians using their families as labour, employing white labour, and supplying co-operatively owned central mills financed initially from the colony's Treasury. Pacific Islander labour was no longer cheap (costs were comparable with European labour), and the Islanders were no longer the pliable short-contract servants who were first introduced into the industry in the 1860s.<sup>12</sup>

Reaction to the Pacific Island Labourers Act came from three main sources: the Queensland Government; missionary and other humanitarian groups; and the Islanders themselves.

### **The Islander Reaction to the Deportation order**

They mounted complex legal and humanitarian arguments: that they were legal immigrants; that the Act was against the principles of racial equality within the British Empire; that their families would be financially and socially disadvantaged by deportation; that many were alienated from their original island societies by long residence in Australia or because they would be in danger if they returned home.

**The Pacific Islanders Association** was formed in Mackay in 1901 by Tui Tonga, a Fijian of chiefly status, but he died soon afterwards. Control was then taken by Henry Diamuir Tonga, from Tongoa Island in the New Hebrides. With assistance from missionaries, between 1902 and 1906 the Islanders petitioned the King, the Governor of Queensland, the Governor-General, Federal politicians, and gave evidence to the 1906 Royal Commission into the sugar industry. They also mounted a challenge to the High Court that Section 8 of the 1901 Act was unlawful, exceeding the powers of the Australian Constitution and exceeding the powers of the Australian Parliament. In 1906 Tonga and another Islander voyaged to Melbourne to interview the Prime Minister.

### **1906 Amendments to the 1901 Act**

Under 1906 changes Islanders were exempt from deportation if had lived continuously in Australia since 31 December 1886, were aged or infirm, had children educated at State schools, owned freehold land, were (before 31 October 1906) married to a person not from their own island, or could prove that they would be in danger if they returned home. The majority of present-day Australian South Sea Islanders are descended from this group.

### **Final Deportation, 1906-1908**

Forced deportation began in late 1906 and continued until mid-1908. Families were ripped apart and property was forfeited. On return to the islands many faced severe problems readjusting to their old lives and some were killed. The official number allowed to remain was 1,654, but later estimates suggest that around 2,500 remained. The result was a cruel, racially-based mass deportation unique in Australian history and a matter of shame for the Australian Government and people.

## **Chapter Nine :- Blackbirding, Kidnapping and Slavery?**

### **Recruitment and Enlistment by Pacific Islanders to Queensland, 1863-1904**

The Queensland Government has records of 62,475 indenture contacts between Pacific Islanders and employers between 1863 and 1904. Given the number of re-enlistments, the total number of individuals is likely to be around 50,000. Most were adolescent and young adult males; only about 5% were women. Throughout the 'labour trade' there were allegations of kidnapping and slavery, which have some foundation. The culture of today's Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) community is shaped by their treatment during the indentured labour period and the harsh years early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their sense of their united history begins in 1863 with the first labour recruits. ASSI refer to themselves as the descendants of slaves and it is clear that the community harbours a deep sense of injustice. This cannot be answered merely by denying that they were slaves.

### **Slavery?**

Legally, slavery was abolished in the British Empire in the 1800s but continued to exist in the West Indies, South Africa and Mauritius until 1833, in fifteen southern states of the United States of America until the Civil War of 1861–1865. It was a legal status that lasted for life and was inherited by slaves' children. Slaves were the property of their owners, and could be sold, bequeathed, gifted, mortgaged or hired out like any other chattel. Slaves could not enter into any contract, own property or give evidence in court. In contrast, indenture contracts were legally enforceable and legally void if the law was satisfied that they were not voluntarily entered into. Indenture is not the same as slavery, but it has also been called a 'new form of slavery', used to keep non-European labourers in servitude. The racism, exploitation and contempt from which ASSI suffered was close to the way that Australians treated Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, which also bordered on slavery. This has now been recognised by all governments and apologies issued. Australians cannot deny the belief in slavery and retreat to legal definitions: it is the lived experience of the ASSI community.

### **Blackbirding and Kidnapping?**

ASSI and other Australians often use 'Blackbirding' to describe the entire indentured labour process: the word as connotations of total illegality. However, historians and some ASSI and their families in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands differentiate between labourers who were forced to recruit, those who chose to enlist, and those who enlisted for different colonies: Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia. The labour trade was a 'moving frontier' through the islands. Everyone agrees that that in the first ten or so years in any area illegality predominated, but historians and some ASSI say that the labour trade developed into a circular migration and that overall probably only 10 to 15% would have been kidnapped as legally defined, and that occasional kidnapping occurred up until the 1890s.

### **Cultural Kidnapping?**

The degree to which Islanders chose to enlist does not undermine the reality of European exploitation. Dividing the labour trade into kidnapping and voluntary enlistment is too simple. Every one of the indentured Islanders was culturally kidnapped. Europeans were taking cultural advantage of Pacific Islanders in taking them from their small-scale societies, paying them with cheap goods, and binding them with legal contracts they did not understand. Even the most willing were disoriented by the experience.

## **Chapter Ten :- Indenture or Slavery?**

### **Slavery and Indenture**

Slavery was a legal status that lasted for life and was inherited by slaves' children. Slaves were the property of their owners, and could be sold, bequeathed, gifted, mortgaged or hired out like any other chattel. Slaves could not enter into any contract, own property or give evidence in court.

Convicts on assignment in New South Wales worked under conditions very close to slavery, although only for the duration of their sentences. Australian colonial society was founded at a time when slavery was still legal in the British Empire. Australians know of their initial convict heritage but seldom realise that other labour systems existed which bear similar characteristics to slavery. Slave trading and slavery began to be abolished in many European and USA jurisdictions onwards from the 1770s and 1780s. Slavery was deemed illegal in Britain in 1772, then slave trading was abolished anywhere in the British Empire in 1807 and slave trading was made a felony anywhere in the empire in 1811, the offence punishable by transportation as a convict. Slave ownership was not abolished in the British Empire until 1833 and slavery continued in fifteen southern states of the United States of America until the Civil War of 1861–1865. In 1865, after the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery throughout the United States of America. Up until 1833 individual Australian colonists could have owned slaves. The Queensland indentured labour trade began just thirty years later.

At the same time as slavery declined as a labour system, and transportation of convicts came to an end, there was a transition to the use of indenture to create masters' and servants' contracts. This was the legal mechanism used in Queensland to bind over 50,000 Pacific Islander labourers on 62,000 indenture contracts to their employers between 1863 and 1904. Indenture was used widely in European colonies to ensure a supply of labour, and most European migrants to the USA onwards from the 17th century arrived as indentured servants. European, Asian and Pacific Islander indentured servants were imported into Britain's Australian colonies. Indenture remained in use in Queensland until 1906 and in the USA until 1917. While it has been called 'a new form of slavery', strictly speaking, by the standard definition of slavery given above, indenture was not slavery. Like assignment of convicts, indenture legally bound a servant to his or her master in servitude for a specific period of time under specific conditions and was a highly authoritarian legal structure which favoured the employer. When Queensland was established as a free colony in 1843 convictism ended and slavery had become moribund and anachronistic. Indenture took their place as a means of controlling labour. In some places, such as Mauritius and the West Indies, where indenture was directly substituted for slavery, the conditions remained extremely similar. When Queensland, adopted indenture as the legal mechanism to bind imported Pacific Island labour, the colony was working within the current legal system of the British Empire, although the legal relationship with Melanesia was of dubious legality and predatory.

The circumstances of 'recruiting' Pacific Islanders were dubious and sometimes totally illegal: around 10 to 15% of the labour recruiting, mainly in the 1860s and 1870s, was probably illegal; and there was no specific legislation between 1863 and 1868. The indentured labour trade took advantage of Pacific Islanders, by physical force, coercion, guile and entrapment, but as the process continued inter-colonially over fifty years it became more regulated. For a variety of reasons young males participated freely, sometimes on more than one occasion, sometimes lured by cheap trade goods but often for legitimate reasons relating to their own societies. It also needs to be said that as the indentured labour trade continued over several decades there was undoubtedly a large degree of voluntarism involved and 'indigenous 'bigmen', 'chiefs' and 'passage masters' in the islands were complicit in organising the movement of labour. As well, there was virtually no difference between the indentured labour trade to Queensland and Fiji in the 1880s, 1890s and 1900s and that internally in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands in the 1910s to the 1930s. In Queensland it is often called 'Blackbirding', with strong connotations of illegality, while in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands the internal indentured labour trade, while just as exploitative, is regarded as a legal labour system.

If the word slave is used metaphorically—for example to indicate that someone was treated as badly as a slave—then this is a question of historical fact to be determined like any other, by a dispassionate weighing of the evidence. In a significant proportion of cases Pacific Islanders were kidnapped to come to Queensland to work under indenture in conditions which were slave-like. Even so, use of the term slavery in describing indentured labour merely confuses the issue by introducing an inaccurate and emotionally charged expression.

## **Chapter Eleven :- Incidents of Abuse of Pacific Islanders during the Recruiting Process to Queensland**

There were 870 labour-recruiting voyagers between Queensland and the Pacific Islands, 1863-1904. Illegal activity and abuses occurred on many of these voyagers.

### ***King Oscar, 1867***

The first adequately documented case of kidnapping occurred on the *King Oscar*, a 248 ton schooner owned by Robert Towns in 1867. The ship returned to Brisbane with 282 labourers from the New Hebrides and Loyalty Islands. Ross Lewin, the recruiter, had induced Mii Islanders to come on board and used Mare Islanders placed around the ship to stop the leaving. At Apie, two men were kidnapped:

when one escaped, two others were shot. Lewin ordered all houses and crops in a village to be burnt. Canoes were deliberately rammed or destroyed by dropping large iron weights from the ship's bow.

#### **Syren, 1868**

The *Syren* was accused of kidnapping a Tanna chief and six other men who unsuspectingly came aboard, and well as Malekulans who had swum out to inspect the vessel.

#### **Jason, 1871**

On 8 January 1871 a canoe paddle out to the *Jason* was pursued and its occupants abducted. On 7 June 1871 at Ambrym two large canoes were sighted: the *Jason's* boats captured nine men and one boy, after shots were fired. The Government Agent tried to stop the abuse but the captain had him hand-cuffed and chained to a ring-bolt for more than three weeks without bedding.

#### **Hopeful, 1884**

The most notorious cases of kidnapping come from the islands odd east New Guinea in the 1880s. On one voyage the *Hopeful* crew had kidnapped a mission teacher and shot two Islanders. On a second voyage the *Hopeful* kidnapped a number of Moresby Islanders, by dragging them into the boats. The Royal Commission report into the New Guinea phase of the labour trade observed that:

“The cruise of the *Hopeful*... is one long record of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping and cold-blooded murder. The number of human beings whose lives were sacrificed during the ‘recruiting’ can never be accurately known.” The case was tried in late 1884. Members of the crew were charged with murder and kidnapping. All were found guilty, the murderers receiving death sentences, and the others given long sentences, the initial years to be spent in chains. The Queensland public protested: 28,000 people signed a petition for clemency, including 60 members of Parliament. The death sentences were commuted and all were discretely released in 1889.

#### **William Manson, 1894**

The last documented case of kidnapping occurred in 1894, when the *William Manson* was recruiting at Malaita. Several Malaitans were kidnapped and there were other irregularities, including an allegation that the captain made one of the recruits pregnant. The captain, Government Agent and four crewmen were all charged with kidnapping but were acquitted.

#### **Cultural Kidnapping**

Although physical kidnaping decreased as the labour trade progressed, the entire process can fittingly be described as Cultural Kidnapping, as it involved taking Pacific Islanders out of their small-scale societies and using them as labour in colonial Queensland.

## **Chapter Twelve :- Incidents of Abuse by Employers of their Pacific Islander Labourers**

In creating general work pictures about the lives of South Sea Islanders over the last 150 years it is easy to lose sight of the individuals involved and the atrocities which occurred. While most of these incidents come from the 1860s and 1870s, the level of physical abuse was a disgrace to Queensland. It is undeniable that coercion and cruelty towards Islanders was very prevalent before about 1890.

#### **1868: Work on Pastoral Stations**

“... twelve men engaged on Lawson and Stewarts station, *Boondooma*, in 1868 were severely beaten and half-starved. One of the number was extremely ill, yet received no medical attendance. When the Bench in Brisbane – (the men having, in desperation walked from the Western Darling Downs to the capital) – heard of their sufferings, it still ordered them to return to their employers.” (Saunders in Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975, 194-5)

#### **1870s: Work on Pastoral Stations**

“Rev. J.C. Kirby was alarmed to watch a group of Islanders passing through Dalby on their way inland. They were without shoes, whilst the overseers accompanying them were armed with pistols as they rode, mounted on horseback beside them. He described it as a “scene from Uncle Tom’s Cabin”, whilst William Brookes, MLA stated that: “the driver [would be] comfortably seated with a long stock-whop,

on a horse, the Polynesians barefoot; day after day, plodding their weary way. Richard Sheridan, the Inspector at Maryborough in 1876, verified these statements, adding that “some of them die... on the road from weariness.” (Saunders in Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975, 178)

#### **1870s: Work on Pastoral Stations**

“In a newspaper article entitled “Only a Blasted Nigger!”, the death of a lad named Locy was exposed. The Melanesian who was engaged at *Pandora* Station near Rockhampton, was only a “half dingo-eaten corpse... whose hands were tied behind him with a rope” when he was discovered. John Murray, one of the Justices on the Bench at the subsequent inquest, blandly stated that there were “no traces of violence of anything to indicate the cause of death”. (Saunders in Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975, 195-6)

#### **1872: Work on Pastoral Stations**

“In 1872, a missionary-educated man, Vee Vat, who was engaged on Northampton Downs near Tambo, reported that several co-workers were:

...cruelly... flogged with a stock-whip, (one receiving 36 lashes on his bare back after he had been tied up by the two hands to a tree.) Three other South Sea Islanders underwent the same punishment for refus[ing] to work without rations. (Saunders in Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975, 199)

#### **1874: Work on Sugar Plantations**

“Hammangi, a San Christobal Islander, who had been employed at Mackay, died in September 1874 from exposure, starvation and a fractured skull. He had left his place of service, *Branscombe* Plantation with two compatriots. Later, he was found dead, still tied to a tree. His master was not even called to testify at the Inquest into this atrocity, as it was conducted by Alfred Hewitt, JP, the proprietor of another local estate *Pleystowe*”. (Saunders in Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975, 195)

#### **1870s-1880s: Work on Sugar Plantations**

“In 1876, a man called Jepson, an employee of *Te Kowai* had savagely assaulted an Islander named Collio to such a degree that he died. Previously, Jepson had been warned by the Bench against this persistent maltreatment of those under his control. Even after this tragic development, he was not charged with murder, as his manager, Hugh McCready, formerly a planter himself, shielded the culprit. All that the Bench would insist upon was Jepson’s dismissal. Melanesians had told Richard Sheridan in 1976 that High Monkton, the proprietor of *Nevada*, would “beaty boy, whip him boy”, whilst the overseer at neighbouring *Magnolia* Estate was also “grossly ill-treating” field-hands. Lewis Hoey, the field-supervisor employed by the Drysdales of *Pioneer* at Ayr, was frequently vicious to the Melanesians: On one occasion, he gouged out the eye of an Islander with his whip. On another occasion, he had nearly beaten Jimmy Santo to death. He subsequently set savage dogs onto Santo’s compatriots to deter them from complaining to the local Inspector. (Saunders in Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975, 197)

## **Chapter Thirteen : John Mackay, Blackbirder**

In 2014 Australian South Sea Islanders held *Wantok Mackay*, the last of three national workshops aimed at bringing together the diverse Islander community. The first of their ancestor were brought to Mackay in 1867, just a few years after the founding of the settlement in 1860.

What few Mackay residents realise is that John Mackay, a leading member of John Macrossan’s 1860 expedition which ‘discovered’ the Pioneer Valley, went on to work in the labour trade. Mackay, the city, owes its name to a Blackbirder.

Born in 1839, as a young man John Mackay was involved in mining, exploration and pastoral ventures. He stocked Greenmount run in the valley but had to sell out in 1863. Mackay had previously served on one Pacific voyage as a purser while still in his teens, which led him to gain his master’s certificate in

1865 and for the next eighteen years he commanded various ships in the Pacific trade. Captain of several vessels recruiting Melanesian labourers, one was *Sir Isaac Newton* in 1868 on a voyage bringing Melanesian labourers to Gladstone. Records also suggest that he was twice master and recruiter on Queensland vessel the *Flora* in 1875.

He was also on another voyage, either that of the *Daphne* or the *Carl*, and was master of *Waiiau* in the Fiji labour trade. before becoming harbour master in Cooktown (1892-1902).

Back in 1978 and 1979 when this labour trade connection was aired in the pages of the *Daily Mercury*, his granddaughter Margaret Mackay defended what the family believed to be the honour of John Mackay (D.M. 25-4-1979). A trip, thought to be on the *Daphne*, was discussed. John Mackay was badly treated by the Queensland government. In 1864 the Governor had promised to give him a financial recompense for his part in discovering the Pioneer Valley, but the government never honoured this pledge. John Mackay protested this on several occasions, and this is probably why in later years he presented himself as leader of the 1860 expedition. Evidence from the Macrossan family suggests that John Macrossan was the real leader.

As chairman of the Queensland Marine Board (1902-12) and finally harbour master of Brisbane until his death in 1914 he became a venerable figure, held in high regard. But in the 1860s and 1870s he was a young man seeking his fortune on land and at sea.

The 1860s Queensland labour trade was confined to the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and the Loyalty Islands (now in New Caledonia). Historians believe that there was a great amount of deception and trickery involved and that kidnapping and violence was rife in the early years, although not universal. Many of the labour recruits from the Loyalty Islands and southern New Hebrides had already worked as crews on inter-island shipping.

The word Blackbirding is used to describe the early years of the labour trade. Even by his family's admission, John Mackay was involved in at least one very violent incident, and there were official French protests over the *Sir Isaac Newton* voyage.

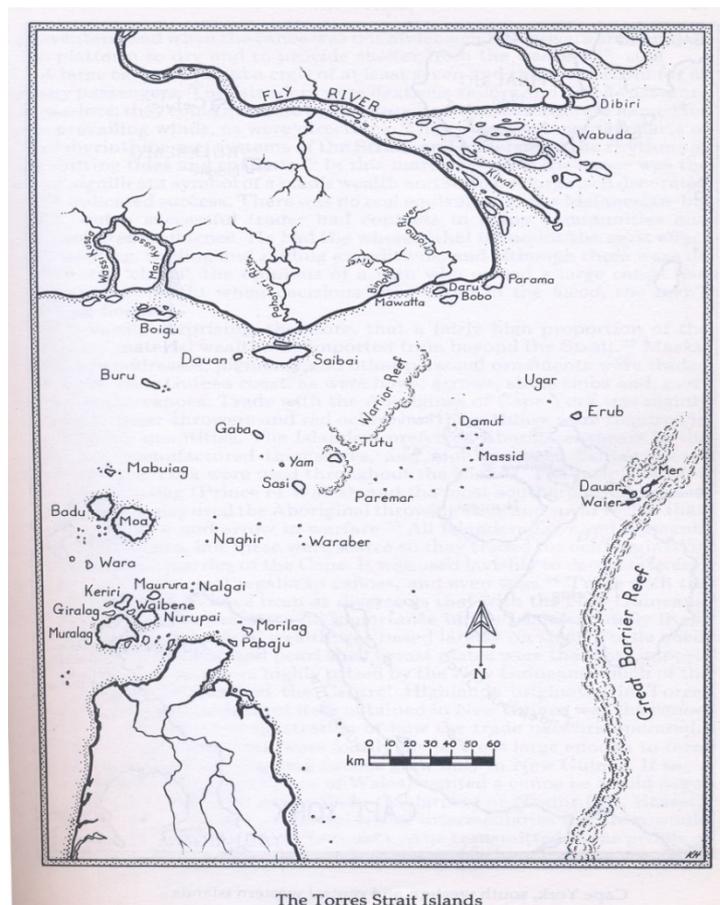
John Mackay deserves to be remembered as a 1860s explorer and pastoralist, but let us also remember that, similar to Robert Towns, founder of Townsville, his name is connected to the Blackbirding years.

## **Chapter Fourteen :- Australian South Sea Islanders in Torres Strait**

The Torres Strait Islanders are one of Australia's indigenous peoples. Since the 1860s they have been host to many different migrants, both long and short term. Thursday (Waiben) Island became famous as a cross-roads of cultures when Indians, Chinese, Malays, Filipinos and Pacific Islanders were all involved in pearl-diving in the Strait. Pacific Islanders, or South Sea Islanders, were one of the major immigrant communities.

The population of the Torres Strait Islands before sustained contact with foreigners was no more than 5,000. Most Torres Strait islands had populations below 500; only two of the twenty major islands were big enough to support large populations, and they were relatively infertile. The Islanders depended on canoes which linked all islands into successful groups. The Top Western Islands, Boigu (Talbot), Dauan (Mt Cornwallis) and Saibai were one group. They shifted village sites with the seasons, were mound-and-ditch cultivators, as well as drawing their livelihood from the sea. Another group was 60 km to the south, Mabuiag (Jarvis), Badu (Mulgrave); Moa (Banks), and Muralug (Prince of Wales); although the channel between Badu and Moa is small, the cultural gap between these islands was larger and these south-west islands shared more characteristics with the peoples of Cape York. Their territory is large but the number of inhabitants was small: 200 to 250 on Moa, and 50 to 100 on Muralug. Their primary focus was on the sea and they regularly shifted village sites. All the western Islanders from Saibai to Muralug spoke variations of Kala Lagaw Ya, an Australian language.

The eastern side of the Strait spoke a Papuan language, Meriam Mir. Erub (Darnley), Ugar (Stephen) and Mer (Murray) are old volcanic cores surrounded by reefs and at the top of the Great Barrier Reef. They were densely populated and had permanent beach villages with extensive gardens. The neighbouring sea is deep and rich in marine foods. The remaining three groups are Massid (Yorke), Aurid (Aureed), Damut (Dalrymple), Muar (Rennel), Paremar (Coconut); Tutu (Warrior), Yam (Turtle-backed), Giaka (Dungeness) and Gaba (Two Brothers); and Naghir (Mt Ernest), and Waraber (Sue). Now often called the central Islands, they are the newest and least fertile islands. They traded widely with the coast of New Guinea and Cape York. By the end of the nineteenth century the overall population of the Torres Strait Islands had been reduced through introduced disease to around 3,000 to 2,000. The official estimates are 2,000 in the 1910s (excluding St Paul's Anglican Mission on Moa and Thursday Island), 3,000 in 1922, 5,000 in 1948, 7,259 in 1960 and 16,533 in 1976, all well in excess of anthropologist Jeremy Beckett's estimates.<sup>13</sup>



Source: Steve Mullins, *Torres Strait: A History of Colonial Occupation and Culture Contact*, Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1995, p. 13.

Torres Strait is a maritime thoroughfare and market place facilitating the flow of commodities, through the islands in the Strait, south down Cape York, and onto the New Guinea mainland west to Frederick Hendrick Island and east to the delta of the Fly River. The Strait contains more than 100 islands and islets as well as a multitude of coral cays, reefs and mud banks. The success of the inhabitants of the Strait depended on their relationship with their neighbours on the mainlands north and south, and there is evidence of regular contact for raiding and trading. The peoples of the New Guinea mainland opposite Torres Strait, from the Fly delta to the Mai Kussa River near Boigu, share its reefs and waters with the Islanders and have extensive kinship and cultural links, similar to those connecting people from southern Torres Strait to the Aborigines of Cape York. Two large changes occurred in the 1860s and 1870s: the formation of Queensland with its territorial limits focussed on the connection with

Cape York which caused a de-emphasis of the links with New Guinea; and South Sea (Pacific) Islanders arrived on board *bêche-de-mer*, pearl-shelling and missionary vessels. Before the early twentieth century when Merauke was established by the Dutch in south-central New Guinea, the Marind-Anim (also known as the Tugeri) quite regularly marauded east as far as the Fly River. Their territory ran from the coast near Frederick Hendrik Island 400 km to the west, to beyond Merauke with outposts further east as far as the Moorhead River on the New Guinea coast and inland to Lake Murray. Jan van Baal suggests that the motives for the raids were primarily part of rituals, not warfare and not part of exchange networks. Their big canoes raided far afield, the distance lessening the chance of retaliation. The people of New Guinea's Trans-Flu are not easily separable from those of northern Torres Strait. Inhabiting a vast lowland region east to the Fly River estuary, cut by sluggish muddy rivers, villagers relied for sustenance on swidden agriculture, sago making, fishing, gathering bush foods and hunting. In the final decades of the nineteenth century they were being squeezed by aggressive raids from the Marind-Anim and the Kiwians to the east. In the 1870s, Boigu was raided by hundreds of fighting men from the Marind-Anim, and in 1880, the whole population of Boigu took refuge on Dauan (Cornwalis) Island after an attack from the mainland. Raids by war canoes from New Guinea into the northern islands of the Strait continued to be common during the 1880s and had depopulated the northern islands to a large extent.

Queensland's northern outpost of Government, Somerset on Cape York, began operating in 1864, replaced in 1877 by Thursday Island in the Strait. The Strait was within first New South Wales' and then Queensland's sphere of influence (as a three mile limit) long before Queensland's colonial boundary was extended in 1872 and 1879 eventually to include the whole of Torres Strait. The several major European explorations of the Strait in the first half of the nineteenth century all emanated from New South Wales, or were British naval expeditions. Missionaries were among the first colonists on Cape York and in Torres Strait: the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Somerset (1867-1868) and the London Missionary Society based at Somerset, and Mer (Murray) Island (1871-1914). Traders working out of Sydney, Singapore and Hong Kong searching for tortoiseshell were already making voyages as far as Torres Strait in the 1840s and 1850s. As sandalwood reserves were cut out and maritime resources were depleted around the New Hebrides and New Caledonia in the late 1850s, traders began planning to move to the Queensland coast.

Nearly sixty Pacific Islanders were on board William Paddon's *Julia Percy* when the ship arrived at Lizard Islands from Dillon's Bay, Erromanga late in 1860, to establish a *bêche-de-mer* station.<sup>14</sup> These men came from Maré, Lifu in the Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia, Tanna, Erromanga, Erromanga, Aneitym in the New Hebrides, and Solomon Islands.<sup>15</sup> By 1870 there were about seven vessels in Torres Strait employing about 150 South Sea Islanders, the majority males. They were employed at beach camps on the north-eastern and central islands. Commonly there were European overseers but more experienced Polynesians were also used to oversee labour. South Sea Islanders were also skippers on the luggers which roamed about the Strait in search of new *bêche-de-mer* grounds and fresh fruit and vegetable to supplement trade store rations. By about 1872 there were around 500 of these 'foreign' Islanders working in Torres Strait, mainly from the Loyalty Islands, the southern New Hebrides., and perhaps a very few Solomon Islanders.<sup>16</sup> Very few of the South Sea Islanders in the Strait were introduced through trickery. Most were legally recruited in Sydney or a Queensland port and many were professional seamen, particularly the Loyalty Islanders. In the 1870s there were labour strikes among South Sea Islanders in Torres Strait. Mullins reports on a strike in 1872 and that in 1877 at the Thursday Island bench there were 125 cases of infringements of labour agreements under the *Merchant Seaman's Act*, also an indication that they were not bound by the 1868 *Polynesian Labourers Act* which controlled immigrant Islanders on the mainland.<sup>17</sup> In 1872 when Queensland extended its border north to 100 km from the coast of Cape York, the government refused to issue licences under the 1868 Act for work in Torres Strait, although by 1875 this was relaxed and time-expired agricultural labourers with a maritime background began to be engaged. In 1876 seventy-five Solomon Islanders were engaged on licences issued in New South Wales, although Queensland ensured that this never happened again. Over decades, the main South Sea Islanders employed in the Strait were mission-educated experienced men, not the 'new chums' on the sugar plantations on the mainland. In the

1870s, South Sea Islander crew earned £3 a month on pearl luggers, but South Sea Islander skippers and 'hard hat' divers could earn up to £300 in a season. These men were living on most of the inhabited central and north-east islands.<sup>18</sup> As the century continued some South Sea Islanders began to work their own family luggers.<sup>19</sup>

Close behind came the staff of the London Missionary Society, gathered from Pacific Islands where evangelism was already advanced. These were also from the Loyalty Islands but included some from Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands and Rotuma.<sup>20</sup> Most of the mission staff arrived married, but over time some local matches were made. The LMS teachers relied on the Loyalty Island links to bind them to the pearling elite. The 1875 measles epidemic which spread throughout the eastern Pacific also affected Torres Strait. It was interpreted as a supernatural sign and led to large scale conversions.

These South Sea Islanders precipitated change in the Strait and often became cultural middlemen between Torres Strait Islanders and Europeans. They introduced young Torres Strait Islander men to work in the maritime industries and although conditions on the boats were harsh, Torres Strait Islanders took to the life quickly, of their own choice. Steve Mullins describes how over three years, 1871 to 1873, almost the entire adult male population of Mabuiag worked in the fishery. Another change was to central villages near missionary settlements, rather than in the scattered beach hamlets that had previously been the style in the north-east. Houses became more substantial in Loyalty Island style. Anna Shnukal's analysis of Torres Strait Creole (Broken) suggests that the dominant external influence in Torres Strait between 1870 and 1940 was not European but South Sea Islander, and that at an early stage their presence began to alter the traditional languages, partly because they found it difficult to pronounce some words and substituted their own.<sup>21</sup> Beckett explained how the descendants of this first generation of South Sea Islanders developed into an elite in Torres Strait, which he described as a 'skipper class'.<sup>22</sup>

In 1901, South Sea Islanders in Torres Strait faced the same deportation order as those on the mainland. One category of exemption that emerged was those who had lived in Australia for more than twenty years. For those resident in Torres Strait, a reserve was established on Moa Island in 1904 which later became St Pauls Anglican Mission.<sup>23</sup> In 1914 the LMS left Torres Strait, having long regarded the area as a backwater of its operations in the Australian Territory of Papua. The Anglican Church accepted the charge. The Anglican colony on Moa continued. The South Sea Islanders fell outside the *Aboriginal Protection Act* until 1934 when an amendment widened the terms of the Act to include Torres Strait residents of South Sea Island origin and others known locally as 'Thursday Island half-castes'.<sup>24</sup>

As John Singe concludes, "many of those on Erub, Mer, Masih [Massid] and Mabuiag were actually South Sea Islanders or their descendants. In 1850 the population of only three of these islands, Saibai, Erub and Mer, would have exceeded this total. Thus it can be seen by what a slim thread Torres Strait Islanders escaped total extension."<sup>25</sup> Nonie Sharp concludes that on Erub (Darnley) there was a dwindling indigenous population which "became subsidiary to immigrant South Sea Islanders as early as the 1870s... In 1885 all the South Sea Islanders at Mer were expelled and resettled at Darnley Island."<sup>26</sup>

### **Shift to the Mainland**

Since the 1940s Torres Strait Islanders have shifted to the mainland in large numbers, living in the same Queensland towns as South Sea Islanders who had worked in the sugar industry. They also worked in outback Queensland and Western Australia on the railways. During the decades since then a large amount of intermarriage has taken place, probably the most famous case of all being that of Edward Koiki Mabo (1936-1992) to Bonita Neehow of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander descent, from the Gardens at Halifax near Ingham. They raised ten children. (The 1992 'Mabo Case' in the High Court established customary ownership of indigenous land in Australia.<sup>27</sup>) Establishing the extent of the interlinking between Australian South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders is difficult as most people from Torres Strait choose to identify as Torres Strait Islanders, regardless of their complex ancestry. In 2011 the Australia Bureau of Statistics identified 38,134 Australians as of Torres Strait descent, 24,386 of them in Queensland.<sup>28</sup> The spread of Torres Strait Islanders with South Sea Islander ancestry is likely to be even in the Strait and on the mainland.

## Conclusion

The dominant culture in the Strait is that of the original Torres Strait Islanders. The inescapable conclusion is most Torres Strait Islanders are related to South Sea Islanders through marriage links. Not much of the South Sea descent is directly from the sugar fields of Queensland, as it also involved crews engaged in Sydney and the Polynesian descendants of the mission teachers. However, the connections are well established. Estimating exact numbers and proportions is difficult and all that is intended here is to point out the depth and complexity of the relationship.

## Chapter Fifteen :- The Pacific Islanders' Fund and the Misappropriation of the Wages of Deceased Pacific Islanders by the Queensland Government

62,475 indenture contracts were issued for Pacific Islanders to work as labourers in Queensland between 1863 and 1904. They travelled to Queensland on 807 voyages involving 80 islands in what is generally known as the Queensland labour trade to Melanesia. Given the rate of re-enlistments from the islands it seems likely that there were about 50,000 individuals involved. The vast majority (95 per cent) were adolescent and young adult males. In 1901 the Commonwealth government ordered the deportation of all Islanders in Australia: of the 10,000 resident in 1901, only around 1,500 remained in 1907, from whom the present-day Australian South Sea Islander community is descended.

The Queensland government's Pacific Islanders' Fund which operated between 1885 and the 1900s is unknown today. It was established in the Treasury in relation to the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1880* through an 1885 Amendment Act to safeguard return fares and to ensure that the wages of deceased Islanders were returned to their families. However, over time, because of the high death rates, the wages of deceased Islanders became so substantial that they were able to be used to supplement the administration of the whole labour trade.

The 1880 Act introduced control over the wages of deceased Islanders; their wages were to be paid directly to the government which was supposed to arrange for the money to be returned to the families back in the islands by Government Agents on recruiting ships in the form of goods. Two conclusions can be drawn: the Islanders suffered from high mortality rates (by far the highest for any immigrant group in Australia) and the Queensland government keep a large part of their wages (ninety per cent).

Government records show that around 15,000 of these Islander labourers died in Queensland between 1868 and 1906: 6,579 died before 1885 and 8,771 onwards from 1885. This is a reprehensible 24 per cent of the total number of contracts and an even higher proportion of the individuals involved (around 30 per cent). Only 15.6 per cent of the wages of deceased Islanders were deducted from the Pacific Islanders' Fund to purchase goods for relatives, a profit to the government in excess of £35,000. The money was used to subsidise the administration of the Queensland labour trade. The government also held return passage money for the Islanders. The passage money for deceased Islanders was not returned to employers and became profit for the Queensland government, around £85,000, which was also used to subsidise the administration of the Queensland labour trade. In the 1900s the Fund was passed to the Commonwealth government for use to fund the deportation of the Islanders.

The present-day value of the wages retained, taking into account inflation and compound interest, is difficult to calculate as it is a rolling amount between 1885 and 1906. As a rough guide, every one thousand pounds in the 1900s is now worth one million dollars. If we use the last known balance of the deceased Islanders' account (£39,363) as our base figure, the 2012 equivalent is \$38,221,511. If we use the £35,000 profit made on the wages, the amount in today's values is also in excess of thirty million dollars.

There is evidence that the Queensland government seldom if ever fully compensated the families of the deceased Islanders and profited largely from their deaths. At best the process was immoral and lacking fiduciary duty. In today's money, millions of dollars were misappropriated, in similar fashion to wages

misappropriated by the same government from Aborigines. In August 2013 while Queensland is marking the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Pacific Islander labourers, it is timely to raise the issue of the Pacific Islanders' Fund.

Direct compensation to the families of descendants of the Islanders whose wages were misappropriated may now be almost impossible, but acknowledgement that this travesty occurred is a necessary part of healing for the Australian South Sea Islander community. The most sensible outcome would be for the Queensland and Australian Governments to establish a new trust fund to assist in education for the Australian South Sea Islander community, as well as for education in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, and to assist the Australian descendants to re-link with their families back in the islands.

## **Chapter Sixteen :- Australian South Sea Islanders during the Twentieth Century**

After the 1901-1908 Deportation years around 2,000 to 2,500 South Sea Islanders remained in Australia, living mainly along the coast of Queensland and Northern New South Wales. With no regeneration from immigration, the Australian Government expected them to disappear as the original generation died and their children were absorbed into the Indigenous population.

### **Marriage and Population**

Because of their high reproductive capacity the ASSI started to increase by the 1940s, and in-marriage began to create multiple blood links between the families until today all ASSI are related by blood or marriage in some way and they have become one community although not in one location.

### **Work**

Theoretically free to choose their occupations, actually federal and state legislation designed to make a 'White' sugar industry forced them to leave the industry. Trade unions, particularly the AWU, stopped the Islander employment in the industry, even for the children of the original immigrants. The original generation were relegated to menial farm work or subsistence. They lived on the fringes of White society and continued to suffer racial discrimination.

### **Church, Education and Sport**

Their nineteenth century Christian Churches deserted them and they were drawn into the Assemblies of God and the Seventh-day Adventists. Children attended primary school for only a few years. The Islanders main involvement in the wider community was through sport.

### **De Facto Indigenous Australians**

Between the mid-1960s and the 1980s they were allowed to access special programs for Indigenous Australians in education (Abstudy), housing, health and legal services. They were told to forget their heritage and accept Indigenous benefits: some did, particularly if they had part-Aboriginal ancestry but others refused to compromise their heritage.

### **Political Pressure Groups**

As they began to be excluded from special Indigenous funding and as a flow on from Indigenous political activism, from the mid-1970s ASSI began to form local and national political pressure groups. These resulted in a series of government and institutional (i.e. Evatt Foundation) investigations in 1975-1977, 1991 and 1992, which led in 1994 to Australian Government recognition as a distinct disadvantaged ethnic group. These surveys showed ASSI to suffer significant economic and social disadvantage as a similar level to Indigenous Australians.

### **Culture and Re-Linking with their Islands of Origin**

After a sixty-year gap, in the 1960s and 1970s ASSI began to re-link with their families in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. Today there are inter-marriages, a flow of cultural groups and acknowledgement of land rights in the islands which have restored confidence and identity as a unique Pacific community. ASSI have preserved a Pacific value system with emphasis on qualities such as pragmatism, self-reliance, industriousness, reciprocal generosity and hospitality.

## Numbers

ASSI now number at least 20,000 and if Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines with South Sea Islander heritage are included, number in excess of 40,000.

## Chapter Seventeen :- Australian South Sea Islander Oral History Collection, 1974-1981

### Oral Testimony

Between 1974 and 1980, while tutors and later PhD students at James Cook University and the Australian National University, Patricia Mercer and Clive Moore recorded 87 cassette tapes with 75 Australian South Sea Islanders at Mackay, Bowen, Ayr and Home Hill, Palm Island, Ingham and Hervey Bay. Some were interviewed several times. There are supplemented by a further 9 tapes recorded at Mackay, Rockhampton, Tweed Heads, Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Ayr and Home Hill by Matt Peacock from the ABC for a three-part radio programme *The Forgotten People* in 1978. The tapes are supplemented by a few others with Europeans associated with the Islanders. The Islander tapes are held as part of the Black Oral History Collection at James Cook University and in the 1990s were converted to CDs for preservation.

This collection is unique and extremely valuable for preserving cultural traditions and identity in the community. The interviews were recorded in the 1970s mainly with the children and grandchildren of the first generation. The interviewees represent all major Australian South Sea Islander families. Participants were aged between their 30s and 99; most were 50 to 70 year old. There is a huge literature on the Islanders, but most of it written from European documents. The extensive collection of oral testimony is an essential part of Australian South Sea Islander history in that it enables access to the memories of a generation now largely gone. It provides an historical window back to the 1860s and 1870s and is a source of pride for the community.

The original arrangement with the Moore/Mercer tapes was that access would be granted for research and for use by the direct families. The Peacock tapes were given to me (rather than be destroyed at the ABC) and I gave them to James Cook University; I also have a set on CDs. Recently, several Islander families have obtained their own copies of these recordings with their forebears. Now, with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first South Sea Islanders in Queensland, it is time to ensure that these recordings are preserved in public collections and if possible transcribed for use by the families.

The present-day community wishes to have the collection made more widely available and views the interviews as an essential part of reclamation of Islander identity.

**Those Interviewed:** Tom Ambertal; George Andrews; Gladys Andrews; Belle Backo; Blue Backo; Ishmael Backo; Melba Backo; Faith Bandler; Dennis Bobongie; Flo Bobongie; Henry Bobongie; Sam Bobongie; Vivian Bunn; Louisa Cassidy; Renie Cassidy; Malcolm Cole; Trixie Cole; Adelaine Corowa; Alf Corowa; Arthur Corowa; Eva Corowa; Olive Darr; Percy Darr; Annie Davis; Emily May Enares; Christian Fatnowna; Joan Fatnowna; Minnie Fatnowna; Noel Fatnowna; Norman Fatnowna ; Valroy Fatnowna; Ada Geesau; Esther Henaway; Jessie Heron; Ishmael Itea (visitor from Solomons); Mrs Kinch; Rhoda Lamon; Lisa Labanca Lampton; Simon Leo; Phyllis Macken; Shireen Malamoo; Gloria Malayta; Phlip Malayta; Ada Marlla; Winnie Miller ; Des Moonie; Gracie Motto; Sid Oba, Eddie Parter; Heather Pelayo; Bill Quakawoot; Mira Quakawoot; Henry Stevens Quaytucker; George Reid; Tom Rode; Andrew Satani; Noah Sabbo-Toga; Mary Swali; Charlie Tallis; Richard Talonga; Cecilia Tarryango; Winnie Tass; Bill Thomas; Ivy Thomas; Blanch Toas; Philip Tonga; Joe Viti; Sandy Viti; Leslie Willie; Jessie Willie; Les Womald; Caroline Yasso; Eddie Yasso; Ester May Yasso; Jessie Yatta

At the time, two copies of each cassette were made: a master copy and a copy for Trish Mercer and Clive Moore. Each participant was asked if they wanted a copy of their tape and these were supplied if

requested. Some requested copies but most did not. We also borrowed and copied some photos. On each occasion we returned copies of the photos and the originals to the owners. The tapes form part of the Black Oral History Collection at James Cook University. Access to them has always been through James Cook University by asking permission of either Trish or Clive. No one has ever been refused access, but we made an undertaking to the original interviewees that there would not be open access. There is sensitive family information on many of the tapes. Originally they were stored in the History Department, then in the History and Politics Department and latterly in the School of Arts and Social Sciences. In the mid-1990s the Department of History and Politics copied the original cassette tapes onto CDs to preserve them. I had my own set copied in Brisbane at much the same time.

The James Cook University Library now has possession of the master set of cassettes but the CDs have been mislaid, making my Brisbane set the only available copies. Neither Clive Moore or Patricia Mercer has the capacity to act as a CD copier and the decision has been made to close the collection for six months while we decide how to proceed. Our preference is to place my set of the cassettes and a copy of my CDs into a public collection (the State Library of Queensland, the National Library or the National Film and Sound Archives) and to transfer control over access to the chosen depository in consultation with the national Australian South Sea Islanders Secretariate. There are some copyright issues to be sorted out, and one of the things that the Interim National Body is doing is consulting with the ASSI community to ascertain how to proceed. We would prefer that all of the oral testimony remained on access, but some families could choose to close their materials, or to limit access to immediate family members.

## Australian South Sea Islanders Chronology

- 1790s: Once New South Wales was established, so too was a food trade in salted pork to Tahiti. Pacific or South Sea Islanders began to arrive in Australia, to Sydney and Hobart, as boats' crews.
- 1788-1820s: The Pacific frontier was the most important economic element of British colonialism in Australia.
- 1847: First 122 indentured ASSI from the Loyalty Islands (now included in New Caledonia) and New Hebrides (Vanuatu) were brought to Eden in NSW by entrepreneur Ben Boyd. The whole venture was a disaster.
- 1840s-1850s: Some SSI made their way to Sydney as boats' crews. There were a few working on the docks in Sydney.
- 1860: The first Pacific Islanders are brought to work in the bêche-de-mer industry at Lizard Island in North Queensland.
- 1863: The first 67 South Sea Islanders arrived in Brisbane to work on Robert Towns' cotton plantation, Townsvale, on the Logan River. There were the first of 62,000 contracted labourers brought in a variety of circumstances from kidnapping to voluntary enlistment to work in the Queensland pastoral, maritime and sugar industries, 1863-1904. Quite large numbers came more than once and the overall number of individuals is thought to have been around 50,000. Ninety-five per cent were males aged in their teens to mid-thirties.
- 1863-1870: All ASSI labourers to Queensland were from the Loyalty Islands (now part of New Caledonia) and the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu)
- 1868: The *Polynesian Labourers Act* was passed by Queensland Parliament to regulate the labour trade.
- 1869: The Queensland Government created a Select Committee on the operation of the *Polynesian Labourers Act*.
- 1871: London Missionary Society missionaries arrived in Torres Strait.
- 1871: The first Solomon Islanders entered the Queensland labour trade.
- 1872: The Torres Strait Islands were annexed to Queensland (with a further extension in 1879).
- 1872: Britain passed the *Pacific Islander Protection Act* as an attempt to govern the labour trade to Queensland and Fiji.
- 1875: Britain annexed Fiji.

Britain passed an amendment to the *Pacific Islander Protection Act* as a further attempt to govern the labour trade to Queensland and Fiji. This enabled the establishment of the Western Pacific High Commission.

1875: The Western Pacific High Commission (based in Fiji) was established by Britain with jurisdiction over British subjects on specified Pacific Islands.

1880: The Queensland Government passed the *Pacific Islanders Labourers Act*, the first major legislative revision since 1868.

1882: The Anglican Selwyn Mission was begun by Mary Robinson at Mackay.

1882-1884: Queensland labour recruiting was extended into the archipelagoes east of New Guinea.

1883: Queensland attempted to annex South-east New Guinea.

1884: Britain annexed South-east New Guinea as a Protectorate.

The Queensland Government passed an amendment to the 1880 Act to limit the employment of ASSI to tropical agriculture but created an exemption category known as Ticket Holders who had arrived before September 1879 and were exempt from all further special legislation. There were 835 in 1884, 716 in 1892, 704 in 1901 and 691 in 1906.

1884 - 1885: The Queensland Government established a Royal Commission into Recruitment of Labour in New Guinea and Adjacent Islands.

1885: Queensland ceased labour recruiting in the archipelagoes east of New Guinea and henceforth recruited only from islands now included in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

Queensland signaled the end of the labour trade by 1890.

Queensland introduced an amendment to the 1880 Act to begin the Pacific Islanders' Fund, partly to distribute the wages of deceased ASSI.

1886: The Queensland Kanaka Mission was begun in Bundaberg by the Young family (more informally the mission began in 1882).

1888: Britain and France established a joint naval administration in the New Hebrides.

1892: Queensland Premier Griffith announced the extension of the labour trade "for a definite but limited period of, say ten years".

1893: Britain annexed the British Solomon Islands Protectorate; further expanded in 1899.

1901: There were 9,327 ASSI in Australia, spread from Torres Strait to the Tweed District in Northern NSW. The new Commonwealth Government of Australia legislated for a

'White Australia Policy', including the Pacific Islanders Act which ordered the deportation of all ASSI.

The Pacific Islanders' Association was formed in Mackay to argue against deportation and to achieve better conditions for ASSI.

1903: Between 1903 and 1906 eight petitions were presented to the Queensland and Commonwealth governments on behalf of ASSI due to be deported. In March, two hundred ASSI from Rockhampton petitioned the Governor of Queensland.

In September, 3,000 ASSI signed a petition to King Edward VII.

The Commonwealth Government introduced the *Sugar Bounty Act* to subsidize sugar produced only with white labour.

1905: The Governor of Fiji agreed to take Queensland Islander deportees.

Prime Minister Watson visited Rockhampton and received a petition.

1906: A Queensland Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry recommended certain categories of ASSI be allowed to remain in Australia.

The Pacific Islanders' Association was revived and wrote to Winston Churchill, Secretary of State. 200 Islanders attended a meeting to plan tactics at the Royal Commission.

In September H.D. Tonga and J. Bomassy went to Melbourne to meet Prime Minister Deakin.

In October 1906 the *Pacific Islanders Act* was amended.

The QKM, Anglican and Presbyterian Missions to ASSI were closed. The QKM moved to the Solomon Islands and became the South Sea Evangelical Mission (later Church).

1907: 427 ASSI left to work in Fiji. Along with the existing labour recruits there they form the base of the present-day Solomoni community.

1907-1908: Except for the exempted categories, all remaining ASSI were deported. Around 2,000 remained and form the nucleus of the present-day ASSI community.

1908: Britain and France established the New Hebrides Condominium. The Pacific Islanders Branch of the Queensland Immigration Department was closed.

Amongst the ASSI who remained, there were 150 farmers in the Mackay district. The trend had been since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to lease small plots of land on steep hill sides, shunned by Europeans, to the Islanders for cane growing.

1913: Queensland's *Sugar Cultivation Act* required non-Europeans to apply for certificates of exemption in order to be employed in any capacity in sugar growing. They were

forced to take a reading and writing test with 50 words in any language as directed by the Inspector before they were allowed to grow or cultivate sugar cane in Queensland.

1919-1921: Queensland's Arbitration Court ruled that no 'coloured' labour could be employed on cane farms, except where the farm was owned by a countryman, and in 1921 the Court granted preference in employment to members of the Australian Workers Union (AWU). The effect of the 1900s-1910s occupational restrictions was to relegate ASSI, notably the original immigrant generation, to the more menial poorly paid and itinerant farm work.

1920s: Banks refused to lend money to ASSI, leaving them increasingly insecure given increasing mechanization in the sugar industry.

In the 1920s and 1930s most of the ASSI followed prominent Islanders into the Assemblies of God and Seventh-day Adventist Churches. In Rockhampton several families remained Anglican.

1930s: By the late 1930s only a handful of Islander farms remained.

Elderly ASSI were paid an 'Indigence Allowance' in the 1930s, that was converted to an Old Age Pension in 1942 once the restriction on non-Europeans receiving the pension was removed.

1940s-1950s: After the war occupational restrictions were lifted, however, the increasing mechanization of the harvesting process in the sugar industry meant that jobs as cane-cutters and field labourers disappeared and ASSI men were forced to find work labouring or blue collar work, often less well paid, in the sugar mills, on the railways, or in the new coal towns in central Queensland. In the non-sugar areas, they engaged in cash-crop farming, in tropical fruit production (such as banana growing in northern NSW) , or in seasonal employment in the meatworks in Rockhampton, Mackay and Bowen.

1960: University of Queensland history postgraduate student Peter Tan interviewed 19 ASSI, including some of the original immigrant generation. He did not complete his research or publish his findings.

1963: Alex Daniel Solomon, from Guadalcanal Island, died at Mackay in 1963, the second last of the original immigrants there.

1964: Ohnonee (Thomas Robbins) died at Mackay, the last of the original immigrant generation in that district.

Linguist Tom Dutton recorded interviews with Peter Santo and Tom Lammon, two of the last survivors of the original immigrant generation in North Queensland. These interviews were published in 1980. Tom Lammon died on 11 August 1965 and Peter Santo died on 27 March 1966, said to have been 105 years old.

- 1965: The Queensland Government removed legislative restrictions imposed on non-Europeans, principally through the *Aliens Act* of 1965, which repealed legislation such as the *Sugar Cultivation Act* of 1913.
- 1967: Peter Corris, then a PhD student at the Australian National University, interviewed descendants of ASSSI in Solomon Islands, Fiji and Australia. None of his interviews have survived.
- George Dan (also known as George Melekula) died in Cairns, thought to have been the last of the original immigrant generation. (The death may have occurred early in 1968.)
- 1972: The Australian South Sea Islanders United Council was established by Robert and Phyllis Corowa. By 1974 there were branches in several areas of NSW and Queensland.
- 1973-1981: Between 1973 and 1981 Clive Moore and Patricia Mercer, PhD students at James Cook University and the Australian National University, recorded more than 100 tapes with ASSSI.
- 1975: Papua New Guinea becomes an independent nation.
- The first national ASSIUC conference was held in Mackay in May. Delegates attended from Ayr, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville, Gladstone, Nambour, Bowen, Tweed Heads, Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra.
- Prompted by an ASSIUC delegation, in August 1975 the Commonwealth Government established an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) to investigate ASSI claims of disadvantage.
- 1976: The Queensland Government under Premier Bjelke-Petersen appointed Noel Fatnowna as Special Commissioner for Pacific Islanders and recognized ASSI as a “distinct ethnic group”. Noel Fatnowna held this position until 1984 when the Commission replaced by an Aboriginal Coordinating Council, the functions of which excluded ASSI.
- 1977: Faith Bandler published *Wacvie*.
- The Interdepartmental Committee Report was published in July 1977. It concluded that “Their socioeconomic status and conditions have generally been below those of the white community thus giving the group the appearance of being a deprived coloured community.” Thirty-seven per cent of those surveyed lived below the poverty line (as defined by the Federal Commission of Inquiry into Poverty). The comparative figure for the total Australian community was 12.5 per cent.
- 1978: Solomon Islands became an independent nation.
- 1979: *The Forgotten People*, three hours of ABC Radio programs of interviews with ASSI, produced by Matthew Peacock, were put to air, and published as a book, *The*

*Forgotten People: A History of the Australian South Sea Island Community*, edited by Clive Moore, in 1979.

- 1970s: By the late 1970s ASSIUC ceased as a political force, beset by internal rivalries and splits, although in name ASSIUC continued to operate until the 1990s.
- 1980: Vanuatu becomes an independent nation.  
Faith Bandler and Len Fox published *Marani in Australia*.
- 1984: Faith Bandler published *Welou: My Brother*.
- 1988: The Queensland Government gave ASSI full access to the programs of the Department of Community Services, which primarily catered for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.  
Thomas Lowah published *Ebed Mer (My Life)*.
- 1989: Beset by internal rivalries and splits, ASSIUC ceased to operate.  
Noel Fatnowna published *Fragments of a Lost Heritage*.  
Faith Bandler published *Turning the Tide: A Personal History of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*.
- 1991: Evatt Foundation released a report on ASSI.
- 1992: The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission published *The Call for Recognition* on ASSI.  
Mabel Edmund published *No Regrets*.
- 1994: The Commonwealth Government recognized ASSI as a disadvantaged ethnic group.
- 1995: ASSI historical exhibition toured in Australia and the Pacific.
- 1995: NSW Premier Bob Carr sent a memorandum to his departments asking that they support inclusion of ASSI as a special needs group.
- 1996: Nasuven Enares began the ASSI Secretariat, located initially in Sydney.  
Jacqui Wright and Francis Wimbis published *The Secret: A Story of Slavery in Australia*.  
Mabel Edmund published *Hello, Johnny!*  
*Australian South Sea Islanders – Storian blong olgeta we oli bin go katem sugarken long Ostrelia*, by the Australian National Maritime Museum.
- 1997: Clive Moore, Max Quanchi and Sharon Bennett published two books of curriculum materials in collaboration with the ASSI community: *Australian South Sea Islanders: A Curriculum Resource for Primary Schools*, and *Australian South Sea Islanders: A*

*Curriculum Resource for Secondary Schools*, Brisbane: Australian Agency for International Development, in association with the Department of Education, Queensland, 1997.

2000: The Queensland Government recognized ASSI as a disadvantaged ethnic community.

Cristine Andrew and Penny Cook edited, *Fields of Sorrow: An Oral History of Descendants of the South Sea Islanders (Kanakas)*.

2001 *Refined White* – Centenary of Federation Project

A touring exhibition and secondary school resource which examines the struggle that governments and the sugar industry had in meeting the demands of the White Australia policy and its social impact on Australia's the South Sea Islander people. The project celebrated the culture and contribution of the Australian South Sea Islander people. Australian Sugar Industry Museum, This exhibition toured 12 national, state and regional venues in ACT, Queensland and NSW, 2001–2004

2002: “Across the Coral Sea: Loyalty Islanders in Queensland” exhibition.

A photographic exhibition based on historical images from the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland which portray the way in which South Sea Islanders arrived, lived and worked in Queensland in the nineteenth century.

Marilyn Lake published *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gently Activist*.

Terese Fatnowna published *Faith of Our Fathers: A journey of Three Fatnownas, 1866-1999*.

2011: “My Island Homes”, Exhibition, Floating Lands Festival 2011 Butter Factory Arts Centre, Cooroy, Sunshine Coast Regional Council

Collin Terare and Brisbane community hosted an ASSI / ni Vanuatu delegate forum at Bald Hills Queensland which initiated the call for the establishment of a national voice.

2012: Cedric Andrew Andrew, born at Sandy Creek outside of Mackay in 1911, died on 16 October 2012. He was then the oldest ASSI in Australia. In 1931 he married Marva Rutha Malasum with whom he had seven children. His grandparents, Charles Querro and Lucy Zimmie were kidnapped from Ambae (Oba) Island in Vanuatu.

Wantok 2012 conference held in Bundaberg. ASSI (Port Jackson) Branch elected as the Interim National Body, with the main coordinators Emelda Davis and Danny Togo.

Sydney Lord Mayor, Clover Moore opened 2012—20 Years on since The Call for Recognition dinner for the ASSI.PJ.

2013: The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first ASSI in August 1863 was commemorated in various places in Queensland and New South Wales in various forms, from formal dinners to exhibitions and booklets.

*Joskeleigh: Homeward bound*, Joskeleigh Museum

Exhibitions as part of ASSI 150 SEQ Commemorative Program:

*Echoes ASSI 150*, The Centre Beaudesert

*The Australian South Sea Islanders*, State Library of Queensland

*Journeys to Sugaropolis*, City of Gold Coast

*Two islands, one home, the story of belonging*, Artspace Mackay

*Sugar*, Queensland Art Gallery

*Journey blong yumi: Australian South Sea Islander 150*, Logan Art Gallery

Key Events as part of ASSI 150 SEQ Commemorative Program:

*Weaving the Way*, Multicultural Art Centre

*Memories of a Forgotten People*, Cultural Precinct, Brisbane

*This is Our Story, Commemorative Walk*, Harvest Point Christian Outreach Centre, Beaudesert

Publications as part of ASSI 150 SEQ Commemorative Program:

*Journeys to Sugaropolis*, City of Gold Coast

ASSI 150 SEQ Newsletters August 2012 - November 2013, ASSI 150 SEQ Committee

ASSI 150 Website, ASSI 150 SEQ Committee <http://www.assi150.com.au>

ASSI Blog, State Library Queensland <http://blogs.slq.qld.gov.au/assi/>

A Commemoration Ceremony was held in Port Vila on 28<sup>th</sup> July in remembrance of the anniversary of the first ni-Vanuatu to go to NSW and Queensland, hosted by the Vanuatu Government. The PM called for an apology for descendants. Guest speakers Mrs Bonita Mabo, Emelda Davis and symposium participants Professor Clive Moore, Associate Professor Doug Hunt. Over 100 ASSI community delegates attended the ceremonies.

The New South Wales Government recognized ASSI as a disadvantaged ethnic group. The motion was put by the Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich. There were seven recommendations that saw bipartisan support.

Sydney University partnered with the ASSI.PJ to deliver 'Sydney Ideas - Human Rights for a Forgotten People' symposium in recognition of 150 years for ASSIs in Queensland.

A digital media campaign focused on historical awareness of the atrocities faced by SSI/ASSI was produced by the ASSI.PJ in recognition of 150 years for Queensland.

The Commonwealth approved significant funding under the 'Community Cohesion' grants initiative to capacity build in ASSI communities, to the value of \$50,000.

In November the Wantok 2013 conference was held at the Queensland State Library in Brisbane 1-3 November. The result was nomination of a national representative secretariat and board.

Wantok Tweed Heads was held between 7-8 December in support of a national voice, supported by 200 community members.

2014: Wantok Mackay QLD was held between 28-31 March and saw the election of a national governance working group to develop a national constitution.

May 15<sup>th</sup> National Solomon Islands Museum 'Blackbirding' exhibition as a part of the International Museums day saw ASSI delegates participate, on invitation from the Solomon Islands Government, as a part of the opening ceremony speeches and in the day 2 symposium accompanied by Professor Clive Moore, Clacy Fatnowna, Emelda Davis and Marcia Eves.

Raechel Ivey (née Togo) was the first Australian South Sea Islander to obtain dual citizenship with Vanuatu, September under a new provision of the Vanuatu Constitution.

September 1<sup>st</sup> saw a Federal Parliament motion of regret and a call for inclusion of ASSI in census, education, training and health programs as well as diabetes research

Christensen Capacity-Building Workshop was held in Honiara, Solomon Islands between 28 November to 1 December.

**Torres Strait at 'heart' of South Sea Islander history**  
 By MARK BOUSEN

TORRES Strait Islander people are in the heart of South Sea Islander history in Australia and their input IS vital in obtaining recognition and recording history, a prominent spokesperson has said.

Mrs Natalie Pakoa, the president of the board of Directors at Wantok, was speaking at the Australian South Sea Islanders' Capacity Building Forum at Tweed Heads on December 7-8.

Mrs Pakoa says she was "very happy" with the response to the Forum.

"We informed the community about the purpose of the national body and working together as a community to promote recognition and our culture.

"There was a great deal of sharing stories and having conversations which connect to our history.

"We also informed the community about the links that have been built with Vanuatu and Solomon Islands families."

Mrs Pakoa says the group will be working closely with ASPJ (Australian South Sea Islanders Port Jackson) to lobby the Government about the policies for the ASSI community.

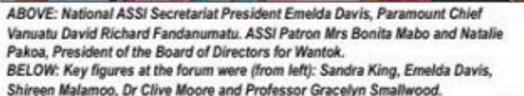
"The forum has been a success for the Tweed Heads South Sea Islander community."

The first South Sea Islanders were brought to Australia about 1863.

Mrs Pakoa (nee Willie), who is of Aboriginal (Gureng) and ASSI (Vanuatu) descent, estimates there are about 2000 ASSI residents in the Tweed Heads area, and between 4000-5000 in the area south to Byron Bay.



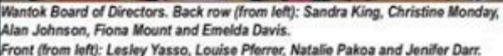
ABOVE: National ASSI Secretariat President Emelda Davis, Paramount Chief Vanuatu David Richard Fandanumatu, ASSI Patron Mrs Bonita Mabo and Natalie Pakoa, President of the Board of Directors for Wantok.



BELOW: Key figures at the forum were (from left): Sandra King, Emelda Davis, Shireen Malamoo, Dr Clive Moore and Professor Gracelyn Smallwood.



Wantok Board of Directors. Back row (from left): Sandra King, Christine Monday, Alan Johnson, Fiona Mount and Emelda Davis.



Front (from left): Lesley Yasso, Louise Pferrec, Natalie Pakoa and Jenifer Darr.

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**Graham Mooney speaks at  
Wantok Tweed Heads Workshop held between 28-31 March 2014**

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#### **Wantok Tweed Heads Workshop was held between 28-31 March 2014**

