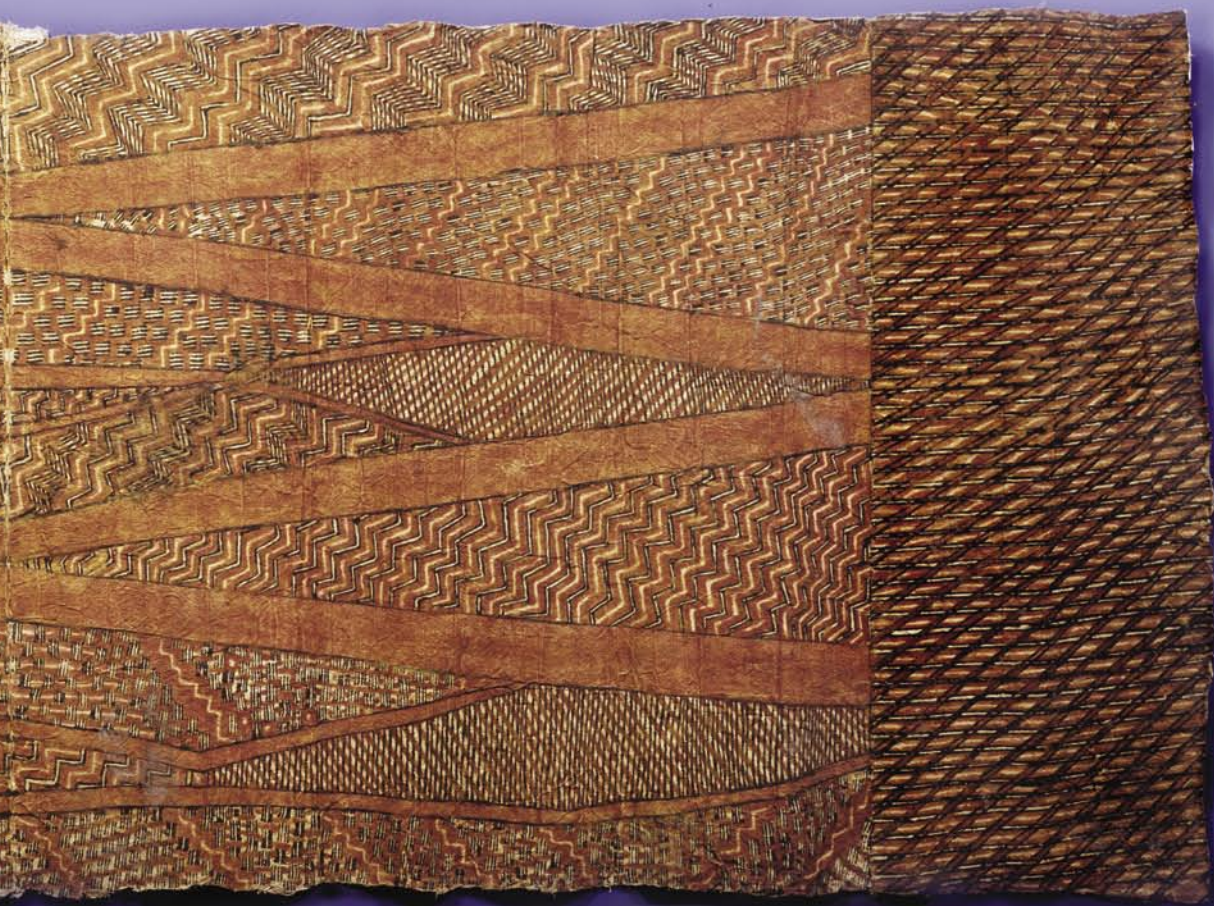


A U S T R A L I A I N T H E W O R L D

T H E F O R E I G N A F F A I R S A N D T R A D E F I L E S | N O 1



Australia and the origins of the Pacific Islands Forum

*Brought by aint Hood. when
with Captain Cook.
Mati worn as clothing
by natives of the
Friendly Islands.
End World of history*



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

COVER IMAGE: Sample of tapa
cloth brought back by Alex Hood,
Master's mate, HMS Resolution,
1772–1775: 349 x 61.5 cm.
National Library of Australia
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AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD
THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE FILES | NO. 1

AUSTRALIA
AND THE ORIGINS OF
THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

STUART DORAN

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Foreword by Minister for Foreign Affairs

It gives me great pleasure to launch *Australia in the World: The Foreign Affairs and Trade Files*, a new series of short historical studies drawn from past working papers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Until now, the principal work of my department's historical section has involved researching the scholarly series *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*—a project that was launched in 1975 and has produced more than twenty volumes of original documents. That series will continue to be the flagship of our historical publications program. But it is a series geared largely to in-depth research of primary source material, and as such is not easily accessible to many Australians.

Australia in the World aims to widen the readership of Australia's international relations history through a straightforward narrative form. My hope is that *Australia in the World* will constitute a valuable and long-term contribution to Australian democracy. Each study in the series will tell the story of a single issue, event, theme or service that has been managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in pursuit of its goal to protect and advance the overseas interests of Australia and Australians.

The histories will be researched directly from the archived working files of the department, providing access for all Australians to the original analysis, internal debates and resulting processes through which our diplomats, consuls and administrative staff pursued Australia's national interests. In so doing, the series will open a new window not only on what happened in our international relations history but how it was done and what role was played by key personalities. Although focused on historical issues, the series will also help readers understand much about how the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade works today.

We have chosen to launch the series with a study of Australia's part in the creation of the Pacific Islands Forum to reflect the ongoing importance to Australia of close engagement with our Pacific Island neighbours. As the Forum prepares for its 35th meeting since 1971, member countries can look back on an extensive range of significant achievements in many areas of mutual support and shared endeavours, and look forward to a future of continuing cooperation.



Alexander Downer

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Preface

This monograph is the first in a new series of occasional papers prepared by the Historical Publications and Information Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). DFAT has launched the series to make the fascinating history of Australia's engagement in international affairs, which can be found in the Government's old working files, more accessible to general readers. By telling some of these stories in short narratives based on detailed, professional historical research of the files, DFAT will better inform the public about work it has done in the past and how it has done it. We hope the series will also increase readers' understanding of how the department does its contemporary work in the sometimes arcane world of international relations.

There are many interesting, but often previously classified, stories to tell from the foreign affairs and trade files. Over the years, ministers and officials of the Australian Government have been closely involved in events and issues of major national, regional and global importance. They have played key roles in advancing and protecting Australia's overseas interests and, in doing so, rubbed shoulders with many world leaders and influential personalities. In addition to matters of foreign and trade policy, there are many facets of DFAT's work that have taken place behind the scenes yet touched the lives of many Australians—consular staff in distant places have helped Australian travellers in difficulty, administrative staff have assisted ordinary Australians realise personal dreams like overseas adoption, and IT specialists have managed sophisticated government communications systems. These are just a few examples of the work that has been done and continues to be done by DFAT, and which fills the working files.

The series will be a set of ad hoc occasional papers prepared by historians in the Historical Publications and Information Section of the Information Resources Branch of the department. For future publications in the series, a committee will provide advice on the choice of topics and other editorial issues. The Advisory Committee will comprise senior departmental staff; Dr David Lee, Director of the Historical Publications and Information Section; a representative of the National Archives of Australia; Mr David Sadlier, former Australian Ambassador and Chairman of the Editorial Advisory Board for the series *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*; and an eminent historian from the same board. (The committee was not yet in place at the time of preparing this first paper.) The topic *Australia and the Origins of the Pacific Islands Forum* was approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, on the basis of a recommendation from the department. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will approve all future topics, taking into account the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

Australia and the Origins of the Pacific Islands Forum has been expertly researched and written by Dr Stuart Doran. Administrative direction of the project was provided by Janette Ryan, Assistant Secretary of the Information Resources Branch, and Dr David Lee in his capacity as Director of the Historical Publications and Information Section.

The files researched by Dr Doran are held now by the National Archives of Australia, whose assistance in locating and accessing the files is greatly appreciated. Dr Doran was ably assisted in interrogating the files by access examiners in DFAT's Document Access and Freedom of Information Section, including Ian Brown, Ian Wille and Jeffrey Stroud. The role of access examiners is to assess old files that were originally classified to determine whether the information they contain can now be declassified and made available to the public.

Thanks are also due to George Atkin (Assistant Secretary), Keith Scott, Vanessa Wood and Geoffrey Leach in DFAT's Pacific Islands Branch, and to Rick Nimmo, formerly in that branch, who read the manuscript and supported the project enthusiastically. Input was also provided by John Trotter, a retired senior officer of DFAT with expertise on Australia's engagement with Pacific Island countries.

Research to locate the photographs was conducted by Jillian Jochheim who manages DFAT's Visual History Library, and Jane Doulman who works with the publisher, Wilton Hanford Hanover (WHH). Special thanks are due to Virginia Wilton and Bruce Hanford at WHH for their patient professional assistance in designing the series and preparing this monograph for publication, and to Deborah Frankham of Octavo for graphic design. The map was provided by Laurie Whiddon of Map Illustrations, to whom our appreciation is also due.

Janette Ryan
Assistant Secretary
Information Resources Branch

Introduction

During the 1950s and 1960s, the worldwide phenomenon of decolonisation attained critical mass. In these two decades, more than 40 countries gained full independence. Much of the publicity surrounding this dynamic change focused on British and French territories in Africa and Asia. But the Pacific was not untouched. Under the impetus of world expectation and of Britain's accelerating withdrawal from the Asia-Pacific, New Zealand granted independence to Western Samoa in 1962 and internal self-government to the Cook Islands in 1965. In 1968, Nauru became independent of Australia, New Zealand and Britain, and by mid-1970 preparations for Fiji's independence from Britain were well advanced. It was left to the emerging Island states to adjust to the evolving demands of greater self-reliance. This was true, too, of Australia and New Zealand, who were concurrently confronted by a loss of authority in relation to former dependencies. And so it was at this juncture that decolonisation's converse and equally global forces began to take shape: decolonisation was not simply about the withdrawal of great powers; it was also inherently a re-definition of relationships. Nations that had ruled, or had concentrated on relations with the metropolitan power—in some cases delegating aspects of foreign policy to it—began increasingly to explore the possibilities and complexities of unfettered relations with each other. The development of the South Pacific Forum was part of this process.