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WELCOME TO YOUR NEW PACIFIC BULLETIN

It's with great pleasure that I welcome you to the inaugural issue of the *Pacific Outlook* bulletin. *Pacific Outlook* is a companion to the existing [Global Justice Overcoming Poverty](#) (GJOP) bulletin. The GJOP bulletin can only occasionally delve into issues relating to the Pacific, as most readers live in other parts of the world and have little relationship with our region.

Within this publication, we'll highlight issues of concern for the Oceania region¹. Our focus issues will include:

- ✓ Economic Partnership Agreements
- ✓ Peace, Justice and Development
- ✓ Marine Conservation and Fisheries
- ✓ Mining
- ✓ Forestry

The Grail in Australia has had decades of involvement in some of the Pacific islands and we would like to continue this. This bulletin is an additional way we might contribute something worthwhile to our Pacific neighbours. Kendall Benton-Collins, our Administrative Assistant based in Sydney, has herself lived and worked in Fiji for several years. She has taken on the role of Editor of Pacific Outlook.

Alison Healey

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Behold the sea!
Opaline, plentiful and strong,
yet beautiful as the rose or the rainbow,
full of food, nourisher of humankind,
cleanser of the world,
creating a sweet climate and
in its unchangeable ebb and flow giving a hint of that which changeth not and
is perfect.

(Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1856)

¹ Australia, New Zealand and the small island nations of the Pacific.

GOOD NEWS AT LAST FOR THREATENED SHARKS AND RAYS

Silky sharks, thresher sharks and devil rays all won new protections at a global wildlife summit in October. The landmark decision was reached during the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)), summit in Johannesburg.

Mike Donoghue, Threatened and Migratory Species Adviser at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program ([SPREP](#)), says the listing is significant as it means these endangered species will no longer be under the control of fishing interests.



As the ocean's top predators, sharks play a pivotal role in the marine ecosystem. However, the sad truth is that **many species have been decimated by uncontrolled fishing**, particularly for the trade in fins which are used in soup in Asia. About **100 million sharks are killed every year**, driven by a \$1bn annual trade, and only a fraction have had any protection. Where data is available, thresher and silky shark numbers have dropped 70-90% in recent decades.

The newly protected species - **silky sharks, all three species of thresher sharks and all nine species of devil rays** - are slow to mature and produce only a small number of pups at a time. This makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

According to Mr Kosi Latu, Director General of the Secretariat of SPREP, "Both sharks and large rays are cultural icons in many Pacific island countries and they make a significant contribution through ecotourism to the economies of many SPREP members."²

Sources: [Endangered sharks and stingrays to be protected by CITES listing](#), Pacific Beat, ABC News, Kerri Worthington, 6 October 2016 | [Sharks and rays win new protections at global wildlife summit](#), The Guardian, Damian Carrington, 4 October 2016 | [Sharks and Rays get CITES protection in landslide votes](#), SPREP, 5 October 2016. Edited by Kendall Benton-Collins.

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PACIFIC PEOPLES FIND STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY AND PRAYER

In early September, Pacific Island communities gathered together to summon the strength to confront the climate battles ahead. They were joined by people from all over the world in a show of solidarity and support to **collectively hold space for the Pacific**. As a non-denominational event, people from all faiths were encouraged to take part.

The inclusive event was conceived as a way for people living in the Pacific island nations to find the strength to continue the fight to protect the planet that was gifted to us. Not a planet that we have dominion over, but a planet we are stewards of. According to non-profit *350.org Pacific*, there were 123 events held in 23 countries, with an estimated number of 9905 people

² SPREP Members comprise [21 Pacific island countries and territories, and five developed countries](#) with direct interests in the region



participating. Members of The Grail Australia were also encouraged to participate in their own ways.

“We cannot build a Pacific Climate Movement without engaging our faith communities,” says Koreti Tiimalu, 350.org Pacific Coordinator, “Faith is pivotal to our people, and like the ocean, it connects us. In the face of the climate crisis, we need prayer to carry our people and faith to build resilience.”

Sources: [Pray for our Pacific: finding strength in solidarity](#), Greenpeace Australia Pacific, Joeteshna Zenos, 19 September 2016 | [Pray for our Pacific](#), 350.org | [How Pray for our Pacific is strengthening the Pacific Climate Movement](#), 350 Pacific, 28 September 2016. Edited by Kendall Benton-Collin

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FIJI TAKES A BOLDER STANCE ON PACER-PLUS

The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) is a framework agreement to deepen trade and investment liberalisation in the broader Pacific on a step by step basis. It was signed in 2001 and came into force in 2002.

In August 2008, Simon Crean, Australia’s Trade Minister at the time, started advocating a "PACER-Plus" agreement, that is, an extension of PACER into a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement fully consistent with the rules and procedures of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Pacific Islands³ Forum Leaders launched negotiations on PACER-Plus at their fortieth meeting in August 2009.

In 2016, the Fijian government has shown increasing unease regarding PACER-Plus. However, despite a flurry of international media over the past two months claiming that Fiji has walked away from PACER-Plus negotiations, Fiji’s Minister for Industry, Faiyaz Koya says that they will only withdraw if Australia and New Zealand refuse to be flexible on key concerns.

"Let me emphasise here, Fiji wants further negotiations on two very critical issues, on Infant Industry Development and the Most Favoured Nation Clause⁴ that will have an implication on Fiji's development aspirations," says Koya.

During the Fiji Trade and Investment Symposium in Sydney in October, Prime Minister Bainimarama argued that PACER-Plus “in its current form not only fails to meet Fiji’s requirements but it would also have an adverse impact on Fiji’s development and the development of our Pacific Island neighbours.”

Sources: [Fiji minister says it's not withdrawing from PACER-Plus](#), Radio New Zealand, 15 September 2016 | [Fiji is the place to be – PM](#), Fiji Village, Vijay Narayan, 14 October 2016 | [PACER & PICTA](#), May 2012. Edited by Kendall Benton-Collins.

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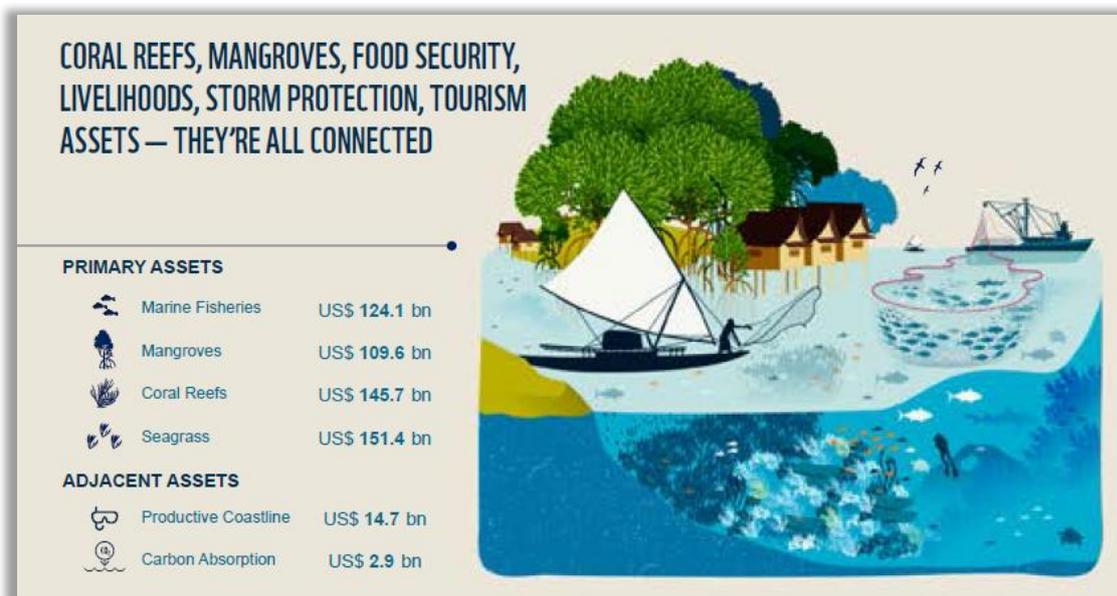
³ Includes: The Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, along with Australia and New Zealand

⁴ Free Trade Agreements often contain provisions that mean that contracting Parties will benefit from concessions granted to other countries in the future



MELANESIA'S OCEAN ECONOMY VALUED AT OVER HALF A TRILLION US DOLLARS

A new World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) report written by Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg and Dr Tyrone Ridgway has revealed that the ocean and coastal assets of Melanesia have an estimated annual economic value of at least US\$5.4 billion and a **total ocean asset base estimated conservatively at US\$548 billion.**



Melanesia is a large sub-region in the Pacific that extends from the western end of the Pacific Ocean to the Arafura Sea, and eastward to Fiji. The region includes Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Astoundingly, if the region's ocean were its own economy, the new analysis finds that it would generate about as much annual economic output as Fiji and the Solomon Islands combined. Across the region, overfishing, climate change, resource development projects and other pressures threaten food security, coastal protection and long-term economic opportunity. By 2030, 100% of coral reefs in PNG will be at risk from local human impacts and climate change, up from 55% in 2012. Overfishing and destructive fishing affect more than 65% of reefs in the Solomon Islands and 50% of reefs in PNG.

“This new analysis adds considerable weight to the case for ocean conservation to be an even higher priority for Melanesian leaders,” says WWF’s Pacific Representative, Kesaia Tabunakawai, “We have seen good commitments in the past but the objective analysis shows that we are running out of time and need action at a much greater scale and urgency if Melanesia is to have a healthy and prosperous future.”

Sources: Hoegh-Guldberg, O. et al. 2016. [Reviving Melanesia's Ocean Economy: The Case for Action – 2016, Summary](#). WWF International, Gland, Switzerland, 20 pp. / [Melanesia's Ocean Worth Half a Trillion USD but Under Pressure](#). WWF-South Pacific, 18 October 2016. Edited by Kendall Benton-Collins.

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