

- Palau Creates World First Conservation Pledge
- Australia's Leadership Turmoil and Its Impacts on the Pacific
- Improving Healthcare in Rural and Remote Papua New Guinea

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“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other” ~ Mother Teresa



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PALAU CREATES WORLD FIRST CONSERVATION PLEDGE

The Republic of Palau in the Western Pacific has created the Palau Pledge, a world-first eco-initiative that asks all inbound visitors to make a compulsory promise, directly to the children of Palau, to preserve their home before they can enter the country.

Palau has become the first country to update its immigration policy and landing procedures to implement such legislation, aimed at preserving its vibrant culture and the beauty of its natural environment for future generations. It also hopes that other countries will follow suit to protect the planet for children worldwide.

The Pledge is based on the Palauan tradition of *BUL* - a moratorium declared by Palau's traditional leaders that places an immediate halt to the over-consumption or destruction of a species, place or thing. Written with the help of Palau's children, the Palau Pledge will be stamped and signed in the passports of every visitor. The initiative puts an onus on 'responsible, sustainable tourism' from the growing number of tourists who have visited the island in recent years. Palau is the thirteenth smallest nation in the world with a population of fewer than 20,000 people but it sees over 160,000 visitors to its shores each year.

The Pledge was deemed necessary after careless behaviour from visitors started to erode Palau's pristine environment and have a negative impact on its culture. Policies have also been put in place by the Palauan Government enabling action to be taken against those who

break the conditions of the Pledge, with fines of up to \$1 million USD for offences committed.

The pioneering project draws attention to the ecological challenges related to tourism, with the future of the Palauan children in mind. It further seeks to change the damaging impact of human activity on the local ecosystem, especially as the number of visitors to the island continues to rise.

“It is our responsibility to show our guests how to respect Palau, just as it is their duty to uphold the signed pledge when visiting,” said President of Palau, Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.

In June, then Foreign Minister Julie Bishop presented a donation of US\$60,000 on behalf of the Australian Government to Palau's Minister of State Faustina Rehuher-Marugg in support of the Pledge. Palau has a long history of world-firsts in conservation. It was the first country to create a shark sanctuary in its national waters, it was the first to ban the destructive practice of bottom trawling, and in 2015, its leadership created the Palau National Marine Sanctuary: the largest fully-protected, no-take zone in the world.

Sources: [Palau Pledge Press Release](#) | [Australia's FM Julie Bishop presents US\\$60,000 for Palau Pledge Initiative](#), Pacific Note, Bernadette H. Carreon, 4 June 2018 | Edits by Kendall Benton-Collins.

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AUSTRALIA'S LEADERSHIP TURMOIL AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PACIFIC

A new round of turmoil within Australia's political landscape has resulted in Scott Morrison recently becoming the fifth Prime Minister in five years! Australian Research Council Future Fellow at Griffith University, Susan Harris Rimmer, discusses how this change in leadership, coupled with Julie Bishop's departure from Foreign Affairs, may affect the South Pacific region.

With all the recent focus on new Prime Minister Scott Morrison's domestic challenges, less attention has been paid to the international impact of the leadership change and any new directions for Australian foreign policy. Morrison's foreign policy credentials are slim and his interest in foreign policy is low, not rating even a mention in his [first speech](#) to the nation as PM.

As immigration minister, Morrison presided over the [“stop the boats”](#) policy that was so unpopular with Australia's neighbours and negotiated the disastrous and expensive [Cambodia asylum deal](#). He may also be perceived by Muslim-majority nations as unfriendly to Muslims after the 2011 shadow cabinet leak that he [urged his party](#) to capitalise on the electorate's growing concerns about immigration and Muslims in Australia.

In many ways, Morrison's foreign policy positions are unlikely to be different from Malcolm Turnbull's. He will likely be perceived as friendly to the US and unfriendly to China on foreign investment, but a realist and pro-free trade. The leadership change was not predicated on policy disagreements, with the exception of different ideologies on [climate change](#). The change was rather more personality-driven, a question of style. **But style – and leaders – matter in diplomacy.** Many foreign policy experts have been distraught by [the damage done](#) to Australia's international reputation by such disruptive spills, and how our messaging to other countries on good governance will be undermined.



The big loss here is Julie Bishop, who has been a point of stability and continuity for Australia's international partners since 2009 when she became shadow foreign minister. The sudden, inexplicable loss of both Turnbull and Bishop will be hard for our allies (and most Australians) to understand. Bishop will be remembered for her path-breaking role as the first female foreign minister and first female secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

[According to Bal Kama](#), a PhD Candidate at ANU's College of Law, "There were notable improvements in Australia-Pacific relations under Bishop's leadership. Her representations at the highest level, and as the only female foreign affairs minister in the region, was an inspiration to women in the Pacific who are struggling for political leadership and recognition."

She did face criticism – as did the Coalition more broadly – for her inability or unwillingness to defend the aid budget from deep cuts, an asylum seeker policy that affected our international reputation, and an unwillingness to speak out on human rights.

Bishop's loss is ameliorated by two factors - the appointment of Marise Payne as Foreign Minister and the influence of Josh Frydenberg in the leadership team. Frydenberg, the new deputy Liberal leader and treasurer, has a strong interest and inclination for foreign policy, having worked for former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.

Anne Ruston has been appointed the assistant minister for international development and the Pacific. She has voted in the past against increases in foreign aid and has limited experience in the region.

Source: [With Bishop gone, Morrison and Payne face significant challenges on foreign policy](#), *The Conversation*, Susan Harris Rimmer, 29 August 2018 | Edits by Kendall Benton-Collins.

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TURNING ON HEALTH SERVICES REMOTELY

Dr Klara Henderson writes about Australian Doctors International's approach to healthcare on the frontline in rural and remote Papua New Guinea (PNG).

To identify practical opportunities to achieve [equitable access to health](#) in the Pacific and amplify Australia's development impact in this area, we need to gain access to often neglected populations. Across lower middle income countries, 63% of the population live in rural or remote areas. For those in the Pacific, receiving health care might mean walking over forested mountains or navigating open oceans for hours in small boats, options not always available even in the case of life or death.

Research on rural health services and the ratio of rural and remote population to health worker tells the sobering story that rural and remote health workers are not only under-skilled but often simply absent, particularly in low income countries. In short, skilled healthcare workers are most needed in the poorest areas within the lowest income countries. But providing access to health where it is most needed is not easy to do. How can we find ways to both up-skill and make rural settings attractive locations to work for healthcare workers?

[Australian Doctors International's](#) (ADI) solution to achieving equitable access to health for those living in rural and remote areas across the Pacific is to direct our attention and utilise our model of providing health access to remote communities by systematically up-skilling the



rural and remote front-line health workforce in PNG (and later, other Pacific countries) and tracking what skills and competencies that workforce has.

We know from [evidence presented by the World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and others, that if we can provide education in rural locations to healthcare workers that is focused on content that responds to their expressed needs, we can not only up-skill these scarce and much needed healthcare workers, but also increase their desire and motivation to remain and practise in areas where access to health is limited.

ADI's innovative solution presented at the [2018 Australasian Aid Conference](#) ties three components together to ensure healthcare workers feel supported and are incentivised to continue working in rural areas:

1. **Know** the rural and remote healthcare workers, what location they work in, what training they have received, what competencies and skills they have, when their last in-depth training session was. This informs us of the knowledge gaps across rural areas. ADI proposes to do this by building and managing a register of rural healthcare workers that align with rural health needs.
2. **Train** healthcare workers in training centres close to their homes on in-depth topics that meet their needs, mindful of the medical resources readily accessible to them, and thus start to fill gaps at both individual worker and system-wide levels.
3. **Support** the healthcare workers by backing up the in-depth training with case-based on-the-job training in the familiarity of their own health clinic by an Australian doctor, utilising the equipment and medicines they have regular access to.

ADI has been conducting in-depth training (recommendation #2) for the last four years in one province in PNG, so we know that this recommendation works. And over the last two years we have built in case-based and group-based training (recommendation #3) to our patrols. We argue there is a great need to support rural and remote healthcare workers by expanding these and implementing recommendation #1 – across other provinces in PNG and indeed other Pacific countries with under-serviced rural populations.

To our knowledge, this is a unique idea designed to address access to health by up-skilling rural healthcare workers on topics they need, in ways they need, and thereby also increasing their desire to remain in their rural location and achieve global health access goals and improve rural health outcomes. ADI aims to focus our efforts on building frontline capacity and health capital – by doing this we can improve access to health for the rural and remote poor across the Pacific.

Source: [Turning on health services remotely](#), DevPolicy Blog, Klara Henderson, 29 May 2018 | Slight edits by Kendall Benton-Collins.

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