



Law Research Briefing April 2024

Ocean of Peace

Advancing the Vision of the Pacific as an Ocean of Peace Through Collaborative Research and Stakeholder Engagement

Professor Sue Faran

- ◆ Professor Sue Farran from Newcastle University led a team of UK academic experts in Peace Studies and Peace-building on a research trip to Fiji in April 2024. The trip was initiated following a request from the British High Commissioner in Fiji, facilitated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Fiji, due to the Prime Minister of Fiji's 2023 announcements about his vision for the Pacific as an 'Ocean of Peace.' The aim was to engage with various stakeholders to gather understandings and opinions about the vision and to provide detailed input for the Pacific Islands Forum, which had endorsed the concept but sought more detailed proposals.
- ◆ The team conducted a week-long engagement with stakeholders, which included a significant meeting with the President of Fiji and a follow-up meeting with the Prime Minister of Fiji in London. Two main outputs were produced for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: a spoken word poem capturing stakeholders' responses to the question "An Ocean of Peace is ...?" and a statement of Principles, including rationale and potential steps forward.
- ◆ Professor Farran was instrumental in selecting and coordinating the team of UK academics, a role acknowledged in the official diplomatic report. Despite not being an expert in peace studies, her extensive knowledge of the Pacific region, including the history of coups in Fiji and geopolitical tensions, provided essential context for the team. Her personal network of contacts in Fiji helped ensure a positive reception for the team's efforts.
- ◆ Professor Farran's leadership bridged the gap between policy and academia, facilitating valuable contributions to the detailed vision for the Pacific as an Ocean of Peace. The initiative is set to influence the Pacific Islands Forum's discussions in August 2024, potentially leading to a declaration and subsequent steps towards the vision.
- ◆ The academic team, along with non-travelling members, are co-authoring an academic article and using the new contacts to enhance their networks, indicating ongoing collaborative efforts and influence on public policy. The next steps will be to see what emerges from the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in August and whether a declaration is made regarding the Pacific as an Ocean of Peace.



Professor Sue Farran is a Professor of Comparative and Plural Laws at Newcastle Law School, which she joined in 2019 from the University of Northumbria. She has previously held academic positions at the University of Dundee, the University of the South Pacific in Vanuatu, the University of the West of England, and the University of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa. Additionally, she is an Associate of the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of St Andrews.

Sue's research interests are in human rights and property, focusing on the rights of women, children, and indigenous peoples, as well as land, natural resources, and intellectual property. Her work often uses case studies from Pacific Island states to explore broader themes, with a particular interest in legal pluralism and the interface of traditional and modern legal systems.

Currently, Sue is one of six Research Fellows funded by the AHRC/ESRC/FCDO, seconded to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK government. She works within the Asia Pacific Research Group of the South East Asia and Pacific Directorate, preparing research papers, briefs, and minutes for policymakers, diplomats, and ministers. Her role draws on her extensive research on issues relevant to Pacific Island States and other regional matters.

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Recent Publication:

Farran, S., 'Vanuatu leads drive to secure an opinion from the International Court of Justice on State responsibilities to turn words into action on climate change' (2023) 42(3) *Queensland Journal of International Law* 411-432