



Pacific CONNECTION

Issue One, Winter 2004

The magazine of the Pacific Cooperation Foundation

IN THIS ISSUE:

Pacific perspectives on the PCF
Cold hard reality of Dunedin study
Go Tana



Contents

03	Introducing the PCF
04	Pacific perspectives on the PCF
06	Executive director visits Micronesia
08	Cold hard reality of Dunedin study
10	Diverse strengths on PCF Board
11	Go Tana
11	Staff appointments
11	Calendar of coming events

Edited extract from the Pacific Cooperation Foundation's Trust Deed

The Pacific Cooperation Foundation is an independent public sector/private sector Trust whose mission is to benefit the peoples of the Pacific Islands and the people of New Zealand by increasing cooperation and understanding among those peoples. In pursuit of our mission the objects of the Foundation are:

- (a) To promote:
- Media, cultural and public affairs programmes which increase mutual awareness and understanding;
 - Cooperative projects which benefit New Zealand and Pacific Islands businesses;
 - The contributions of Pacific Islands communities to New Zealand's identity as a Pacific nation;
 - Academic excellence in Pacific Islands issues.
- (b) To be a centre for information and a forum for the exchange of views about issues affecting New Zealand and the other countries and peoples (tangata Pasifika) of the islands of the Pacific Ocean.
- (c) To promote and assist activities that increase mutual understanding and constructive linkages between New Zealanders and Pacific peoples.
- (d) To provide a focal point and catalyst for the development of networks among New Zealanders and Pacific Peoples, to the benefit of both.
- (e) To promote increased awareness by New Zealanders of Pacific Islands' and Pacific Peoples' issues and aspirations.
- (f) To work in partnership with the New Zealand and Pacific Islands business communities.

The Pacific Cooperation Foundation, a registered charitable trust, is an independent public/private partnership which works to increase understanding and cooperation between New Zealand and her Pacific neighbours.

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Cover: Samoan-born Daniella Devoe, now studying in Dunedin. See page 8 for full story.
Photo: Jane Dawber, Otago Daily Times.



Welcome to the first issue of the Pacific Cooperation Foundation's magazine, Pacific Connection.

New Zealanders – whether working in business, government or other fields – have achieved much in the Pacific over the years. But today the pace of change in our neighbourhood is accelerating. New challenges and new opportunities are facing governments, private sectors and others in both New Zealand and Pacific Island countries.

I helped develop the idea for a Pacific Cooperation Foundation in the hope and expectation that it could become a valuable new tool as we seek to meet these new challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

Vibrant economic growth in some Island countries contrasts with increasing challenges in others. And in New Zealand itself, Polynesian population growth coincides with a resurgence of Maoritanga and, for many New Zealanders, an increasing sense of identity as a South Pacific nation.

Now Pacific leaders have called for a new Pacific Plan which will chart a course leading to greater cooperation and integration among Pacific countries. The outcome of this process could have profound effects on New Zealand as well as its neighbours. It's yet another reason for New Zealanders to know and understand the Pacific and its peoples better.

Traditional tools are no longer enough. Through cooperation with the media and with the support of government and private sectors, the Pacific Cooperation Foundation has already begun to promote a wider understanding of our Pacific neighbourhood within New Zealand. It has begun working with the universities to help promote academic excellence in New Zealand on Pacific issues. And plans are developing, in consultation with appropriate private interests, to promote business cooperation that will bring benefits to both sides.

In these and other areas, the Foundation can provide a forum for better dialogue and cooperation, and a catalyst for improvement where necessary.

We are grateful to Air New Zealand for their generosity in sponsoring our first issue of Pacific Connection magazine.

Thank you for your interest in the Pacific Cooperation Foundation. We look forward to sharing with you news about our activities and plans over the coming months.

Michael Powles
Chair, Pacific Cooperation Foundation

Nearly a year after its launch, the Pacific Cooperation Foundation is building momentum. With a full complement of staff appointed to its Wellington office, a healthy level of private and public sector funding, and a host of projects and programmes in the pipeline, the PCF is no longer a vision but a working reality.

Executive director Vince McBride – who took over from interim director Gerald McGhie in January – says that with the recent appointment of programme managers, “the pace of PCF’s work is set to accelerate”.

The PCF already has runs on the board. It has sponsored recent visits to the region by journalists from the *New Zealand Herald* (to Tonga), *The Press* (to Niue/Cook Islands) and the *Otago Daily Times* (about Samoan New Zealanders).

“The resulting coverage has been both extensive and high-quality,” says Vince McBride. “The New Zealand media’s treatment of Pacific news and issues is often negative or superficial. Now readers are being offered articles that deal intelligently with some of the region’s complex issues, and reflect the views and voices of the Pacific people affected by them.”

In March, the Fijian Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, visited New Zealand. During his time in Wellington, the PCF and Te Papa co-hosted the Prime Minister at the museum, where he gave a public lecture on *A Vision for Fiji*.

As well as promoting media interest in the region, the PCF aims to foster academic excellence in Pacific issues. In 2003, it hosted a seminar in Wellington on the Solomon Islands conflict and New Zealand’s subsequent intervention, with Dr Jonathan Fraenkel of the University of the South Pacific as guest speaker. Academics from most New Zealand universities attended, as did Treasury and Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff.

More recently, the PCF brought together the heads of Pacific Studies departments from New Zealand universities to share information about their programmes. This information will soon be captured in a database, which Canterbury University’s Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies is compiling with funding from the PCF.

The Macmillan Brown Centre will also be the venue for October’s conference on conflict resolution, *Securing a Peaceful Pacific*, which the PCF is co-sponsoring. Says Vince McBride: “We’re particularly keen to direct our funding towards ensuring key people from Pacific governments, NGOs and universities join their New Zealand counterparts at this important forum.”

Introducing the PCF



Foundation looks to the future

The Foundation has come a long way since it was first mooted by a small group keen to increase New Zealanders’ understanding of their immediate neighbourhood.

As more voices lent their support, the Pacific Cooperation Foundation took shape. A trust deed was drawn up (see opposite), Board members with wide-ranging connections in the region were appointed, and the New Zealand Government pledged annual funding of \$675,000.

“[The Foundation] will establish a network linking the multitude of New Zealand interests in the Pacific, to encourage greater discussion and cooperation, thereby enabling us as a nation to respond more effectively, and with better understanding, to regional issues as they arise,” said Foreign Minister Phil Goff in April 2003.

Private sector support has also been vital. One leading company, Brother International, has committed \$60,000 to the PCF over two years. Others with a Pacific presence – including Air New Zealand, Fonterra, Reef Shipping, Pacific Forum Line and New Zealand Post – have expressed their support, and negotiations with these and other potential sponsors are continuing.

Looking ahead, the PCF has a full schedule of media and academic exchanges lined up. Two Radio NZ programmes made with PCF funding will air in coming months. Foundation members will take part in several forthcoming academic forums, including Transparency International’s regional conference on good governance; the Otago Foreign Policy School; *Securing a Peaceful Pacific*; and a Vanuatu conference on the interaction between electoral systems and traditional systems of governance (see p 11).

By helping New Zealanders connect with their closest neighbours – through business, cultural exchanges, the media and academic forums – the Pacific Cooperation Foundation is well on its way to becoming a focal point for New Zealand’s many-faceted involvement with the Pacific. 🌟

The New Zealand media can play a key role in building New Zealanders’ understanding of the Pacific.

Above, Walter Zweifel of Radio NZ International interviews Kessai Note, President of the Marshall Islands.

Pacific perspectives on the PCF

Creating people-to-people connections, shedding light on contentious issues, advocating for the region on the global stage: just some of the many roles that official representatives of Pacific nations in New Zealand would like to see the Pacific Cooperation Foundation play.

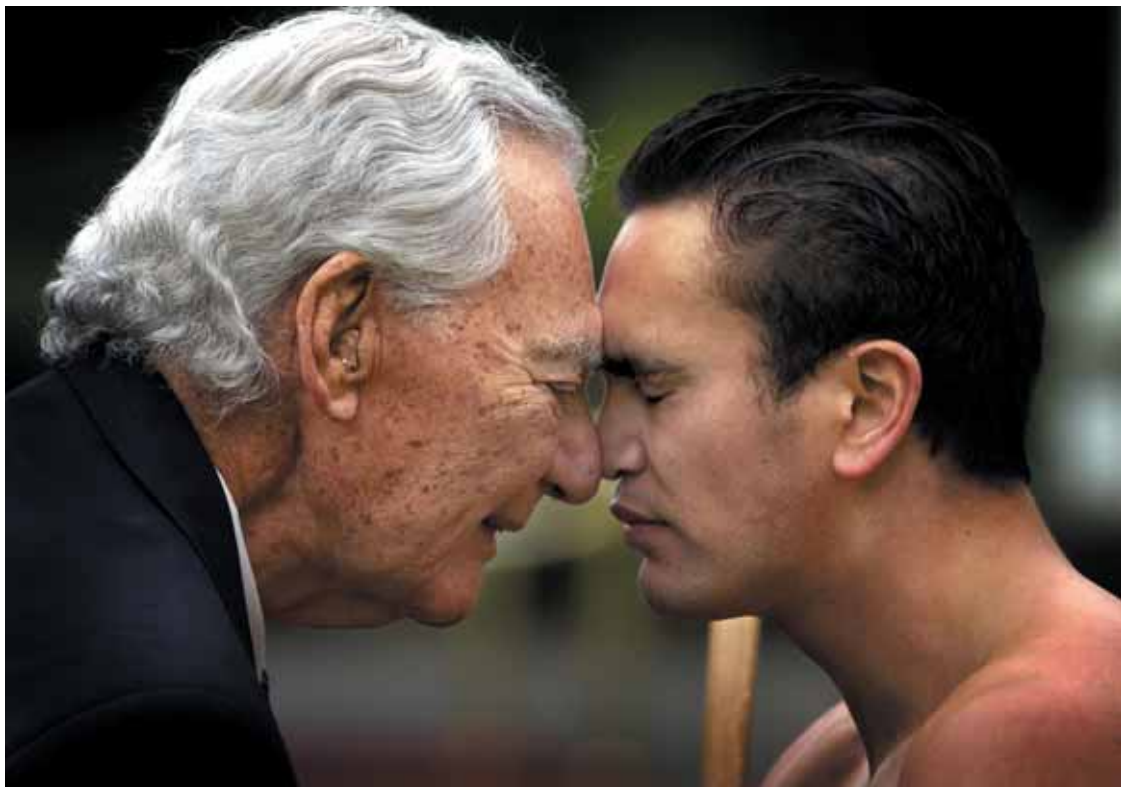
Wellington-based high commissioners unanimously agree that the key task of the Foundation is to build people-to-people connections and understanding between New Zealand and the Pacific.

They say the PCF's support for wider New Zealand media coverage of Pacific affairs is a good example of the practical work that can be done. Sponsoring New Zealand journalists to travel to Pacific countries helps introduce new perspectives into New Zealand media coverage of Pacific issues and cross-cultural issues generally, they believe.

The representatives urge the Foundation to not only continue its media programme, but also develop regular artistic and cultural exchanges within the region.

The formation of the Foundation comes at a time when many of the New Zealand government scholarships once available to Pacific students have been phased out in favour of support for in-country education and training. Many of the high commissioners see the PCF as a way for New Zealand to strengthen regional ties that were traditionally cemented through the education system.

Cook Islands High Commissioner, former Prime Minister and space scientist Sir Tom Davis, arrives at Government House to present his credentials. At 87, Sir Tom may well be the world's oldest diplomat.
Photo: Kent Blechynden/
Dominion Post



The decline in scholarships for Pacific students in recent years may be New Zealand's loss, believes Niue's High Commissioner Hima Takelesi. As fewer Pacific leaders receive higher education in New Zealand, he suggests this country could find "its influence in the Pacific is not as great as it may have thought."

Samoa High Commissioner Feesago George Fepulea'i agrees. Any more reductions in educational links – not to mention occasional rumours of cutbacks in Radio New Zealand International services – would be detrimental to all, he says. "New Zealand would be the real loser because it means Pacific people wouldn't be getting New Zealand's perspective on events. People who return to Samoa [after higher education in New Zealand] will always be in New Zealand's corner."

Bal Ram, the Fijian High Commissioner believes that by facilitating this sharing of perspectives, the PCF can help create a sound platform for future relationships between New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours. He speaks of the "gap of understanding" that became apparent between New Zealand and Fiji after the coups in both 1987 and 2000. "If people have a better understanding of the dynamics of different countries in the region, this will pave the way for the Foundation to work in other sectors," he says.

Future directions

One sector where the high commissioners see plenty of scope for the PCF is in strengthening New Zealand-Pacific business ties. Papua New Guinea's High Commissioner, Lucy Bogari, suggests the Foundation work alongside existing organisations such as the

Auckland-based Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission to further two-way trade.

Cook Islands High Commissioner, Sir Tom Davis, says the Foundation should give priority to supporting Pacific states' efforts to build their economies.

"If the Foundation is to be of value, it must look very closely at the economic potential of each country and the methodologies being followed, and support them. The Foundation could best serve the Cook Islands by promoting economic policies and methods that make each country self-reliant and economically independent."

For countries such as the Cook Islands and Niue, economic growth and population loss are very much entwined. Both Hima Takelesi and Sir Tom Davis believe overseas aid and development assistance alone cannot reverse economic migration: expatriates must be attracted to return home because they see real economic opportunities awaiting them.

Says Mr Takelesi: "We need a core of well-educated people to build our country, and the PCF has a role in getting this message across. We can't sit back and wait for other people to come and develop our country to a standard where expatriates will want to return home."

At a time when Pacific nations are increasingly subject to the forces of globalisation, the Foundation's establishment is especially timely, says Hima Takelesi. And he believes the PCF's formation signals that New Zealand is, quite properly, paying greater attention to the region he refuses to describe as its 'back yard':

"As the global village becomes more important, we need to take care of each other in our own front yard. The Foundation can help allay small nations' fears about globalisation."

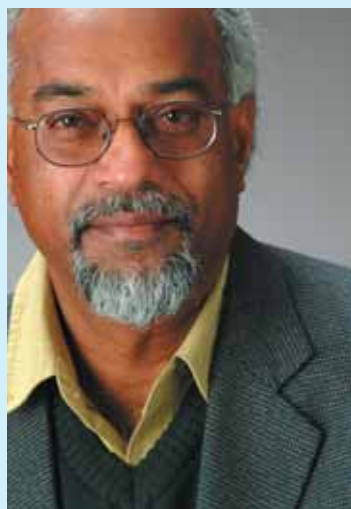
Pacific representatives also see the PCF in the context of broader New Zealand involvement in the region, especially in Melanesia.

Says Lucy Bogari: "In the past, the perception may have been that Australia took care of one part of the Pacific and New Zealand the other. But recent developments – such as New Zealand's involvement in both Bougainville and Solomon Islands – show that New Zealand can make a positive contribution to that part of the region too, without stepping on Australia's toes."

Working with Pacific people to find solutions to such regional crises is an important role for the PCF, believes Feesago George Fepulea'i. The Foundation should "speak out", he says, and "put greater light" on issues of concern.

But perhaps the biggest challenge for the Foundation, says Lucy Bogari, is not building understanding within New Zealand or even within the region. She would like to see the Foundation become an advocate for the region on the world stage.

"Whenever the 'Asia-Pacific' region is discussed internationally, the 'Pacific' part tends to drop off. I believe the Foundation has a bright future as an apolitical advocate for Pacific issues globally, and to create understanding between peoples. Governments in the region need to understand this, and give the Foundation their support." 🌐



The Pacific Cooperation Foundation has set itself a pivotal role, writes **Vijay Naidu**, Director of Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington.

In its fourfold objectives of promoting media, business, Pacific people's contributions to New Zealand's identity as a Pacific nation, and academic excellence, PCF will work in critical

areas to increase understanding of issues facing island states and ways in which these could be resolved for the benefit of the region as a whole.

The ties between New Zealand and the island countries are long standing and diverse. With the process of globalisation and the likelihood of regional trading and political blocs emerging to ensure both the protection and promotion of the interests of countries within these blocs, a deeper understanding of common interests among island neighbours and New Zealand will have significant positive impacts. These include the ability for this region to negotiate with other blocs from a position of strength.

There has been a certain amount of negative framing of the islands by the media in New Zealand. There is a tendency to report copiously on natural and man-made disasters, and not on how island peoples are meeting the numerous challenges of a rapidly changing international economic and political environment. Successful region-wide events, like the South Pacific Games and the South Pacific Cultural Festival, are not given the coverage that they deserve. By promoting a more balanced and responsible coverage of events in the islands, PCF will be doing a great service for both the people in the islands and New Zealanders.

New Zealand and Australia are the major economic partners of island states, with the balance of trade firmly in favour of these two bigger neighbours. Lack of economic growth as a result of limited investment in the islands will not only affect their wellbeing but also have consequences for New Zealand. There are numerous areas of expertise and entrepreneurship in New Zealand that can contribute positively to economic development in the islands. There are business people in the islands looking to export products to New Zealand, and seeking business partnerships. The promotion of business ties is therefore a most welcome objective for the PCF.

Some island states in the recent past have experienced political turmoil and open violent conflict. There is a serious gap in the understanding of the factors that are contributing to these difficulties. Economically, even though island states in the Pacific are amongst the biggest per capita recipients of aid, their growth rates have been generally rather low. This has contributed to an increase in social problems and also unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. The promotion of research and scholarship on the forces at work in the islands would contribute to a more in-depth understanding of their situation and options for more meaningful policy-making.

I believe the Pacific Cooperation Foundation can be a powerful organ for dialogue on matters affecting the Pacific islands and island people in New Zealand. In doing so, it can promote the inter-dependence of the Pacific states and New Zealand on the basis of a solid long term partnership that is beneficial for this region. By bringing under its fold journalists, business people, academics and Pasifika people, it will be a catalyst in generating the partnerships between peoples and governments of island states and of New Zealand that are so vital for the region at this time.

Executive director visits Micronesia

In June, PCF Executive Director **Vince McBride** was part of the delegation led by Foreign Minister Phil Goff to Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Solomon Islands. He writes:

Despite all the years I have spent in the Pacific, this was my first venture into Micronesia. First stop was Palau. It's a long, long way from New Zealand: even in the new RNZAF Boeing 757, it took almost 10 hours flying time.

Palau is only just in the Pacific – its neighbours are Indonesia and the Philippines. But it is part of the Pacific Islands Forum and Greg Urwin, Secretary-General of the Forum, travelled with us to make his first official visit to both Palau and the Marshall Islands.

We received a very warm welcome from the Palauans and had an interesting exchange with NGOs on issues facing the community in Palau. Among their major concerns are a range of problems facing youth, domestic violence and the threat of HIV/AIDS. A further issue for the NGOs is that Palau's US-based legislation does not provide useful guidelines for implementation of NGO activity and interaction with government. We encouraged them to look to the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs for support in setting up an umbrella group.

Although Palau has been administered by the Germans, the Japanese and the Americans, its people are keen to maintain their traditional Palauan culture.

But this is a struggle in the face of 21st century living. Young people leaving home to attend high school in the capital, Koror, miss the supportive influence of their home and traditional culture. This affects their academic performance and is reflected in the high dropout rate from school and high youth unemployment.

Palau has fewer than 10 recorded cases of HIV/AIDS and there appear to be good education programmes in schools, supported by local churches. In the area of domestic violence, the New Zealand Police may be able to assist through an extension of work already done elsewhere in the Pacific.

Palau is reputed to be one of the jewels of the Pacific and our hosts set out to prove that with a boat trip to the beautiful Rock Islands where some of us swam in 'Jellyfish Lake' among millions of non-stinging jellyfish. The visit was capped off by a reception hosted by Vice President Sandra Pierantozzi at the world renowned Palau Pacific Resort.

To the Marshall Islands

Then the vastness of the Pacific was brought home to us again by the five-hour flight to the Marshall Islands, flying across the Federated States of Micronesia.

In contrast to the lush green islands of Palau, the Marshall Islands' capital Majuro straddles a long narrow atoll with the lagoon on one side and the deep ocean on the other. Cleverly, the runway is used as a catchment for the capital's water supply.

While Palau has around 80,000 tourists – about four times its population – the Marshall Islands attracts around 2000, or one twenty-fifth of its population. The main attractions are diving and deep-sea fishing, reputed to be among the best in the world. Ironically, Bikini Atoll – undisturbed for nearly 50 years because of the atomic bomb testing from 1946 to 1958 – is now being marketed as one of the most pristine dive sights in the world.

The issues raised by the NGO community were similar to those in Palau – youth unemployment, high rates of STDs and teenage pregnancies, and concerns about the effectiveness of the education system. There is an umbrella NGO Council which is increasingly interacting with Government. Progress is slow, however, and those we met were all very heartened by the presence of NGOs in the delegation.

We visited an impressive NGO project, 'Waan Aelon In Majel', run by American boatbuilder and long-time resident, Dennis Alessio. Dennis has drawn on the skills of

*This page:
NZ official Lesieli
Tongati'o, Ministry of
Education (left) takes a
break with Marshall
Islands Protocol Officer
Neijon Edwards.*

*Opposite left:
Majuro, capital of
the Marshall Islands,
from the air.*

*Top: excited fans greet
the successful Solomon
Islands soccer team.*

*Bottom:
Vince McBride.*



older Marshallese to teach at-risk youth the art of traditional outrigger canoe building and sailing. As well as boatbuilding skills, the young people (both girls and boys) learn the stories, history and traditions of their forbears. The project has branched out into building fibreglass canoes: soon each school on Majuro will be provided with a canoe in its own colours and a sailing competition is to be organised.

The delegation also visited the University of the South Pacific's Extension Centre, an excellent facility run by enthusiastic staff that provides courses to about 400 Marshallese annually. Video lectures are beamed out by satellite from Suva and students also engage in interactive tutorials with the course lecturers. The Centre will soon be able to offer full degree courses, all through distance learning.

Although little closer than Palau, the Marshall Islands are more closely oriented towards New Zealand and are keen to maintain links with us through scholarships and working with NGOs. I met five former Waikato students, two of whom are now in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one who was recently appointed to head the Marshall Islands Visitors' Bureau. 🌿



“Go Solo Go!”



The delegation's visit to Solomon Islands coincided with the country's soccer team's historic draw against Australia in the World Cup qualifying round, thereby getting the chance to go forward to the next qualifying stage. The New Zealanders literally became part of the celebrations, Vince McBride writes:

As the final whistle blew, around midnight Solomons-time, Honiara erupted to the sounds of car horns, ships' hooters and the jubilant shouts and cheers of thousands of soccer-mad locals. People spilled outdoors and the huge street party that followed lasted almost until dawn. The whole country was buoyed up in a state of euphoria not seen since before the ethnic tension boiled over in June 2000.

Preparations were immediately put in train for a national welcome home for the team. So it was that a few days later, leaving our last appointment, our delegation encountered the welcome home parade. Hundreds of vehicles were going past – many grossly overloaded with rejoicing, flag-waving soccer fans – and thousands of excited residents lined both sides of the main road all the way from the airport into Honiara.

Our small motorcade joined the traffic, and for a while we became part and parcel of the parade. In true Kiwi fashion, we got right into the spirit of the occasion. Then our police escort decided the parade was not for us, and took us ahead on the wrong side of the road. Soon we had passed the truck bearing the victorious national soccer heroes. Now we were in front of the parade, and the populace assumed that our flashing lights heralded their heroes - only to discover the New Zealand High Commissioner's vehicle with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his entourage were leading the charge! We maintained the spirit of the occasion, however, and continued to greet the thousands of ardent fans lining the main street of Honiara with spirited renditions of “Go Solo Go!”.

It was a historic moment for Solomon Islands, a highlight of the trip and a truly memorable occasion.



Cold hard reality of Dunedin study

Encouraging more New Zealand media coverage of Pacific issues has been a key priority for the Pacific Cooperation Foundation since its formation. Earlier this year, the *Otago Daily Times* published a colourful five-part series, 'The Southern Samoans', with PCF support. In this edited extract, journalist **Chris Morris** talks to Otago University student, Daniella Devoe from Samoa.

Daniella Devoe is a young woman on a mission, one of a new generation of bright young Samoans trading tropical temperatures for a polar blast in Dunedin to study at the University of Otago.

Miss Devoe (17) arrived in Dunedin in late February for the first of five years studying Health Sciences and Pharmacy. The ultimate aim: graduate, return to Samoa and get stuck in helping out.

In the meantime, however, there's a winter in Dunedin to get through, and Miss Devoe is already gritting her teeth.

"I have got two duvets on my bed and my heater in my room, and I need to get an electric blanket and some thermals. It was actually OK for the first couple of days and then it really hit me - and it just seems to be getting colder," she laughed.

Right. Samoan student Daniella Devoe is thriving in New Zealand's deep south. Photo: Jane Dawber.

Far right: The manager of the Pacific Islands Centre at Otago University, Nina Kirifi-Alai. Photo: Peter McIntosh.



Miss Devoe's chilly predicament is one faced by a growing number of Samoa's best and brightest young students, exported to study abroad by their Government before being imported again as graduates ready to contribute to the nation.

Australia and island nations including Fiji are popular destinations, as is, increasingly, Dunedin. The number of Samoans travelling from the islands to study here has increased from 13 in 1998 to 22 in 2004.

Together with New Zealand-born or permanent resident Samoan students, the campus boasts a Samoan population of more than 200. It is the Samoan government's scholarship programme, however, that generates intense competition within Samoa for a place at the University.

The country's top 250 students, based on sixth-form marks, forgo their seventh-form high school year in Samoa in favour of a "foundation year" at the National University of Samoa, in the capital Apia, aimed at preparing the best for tertiary life.

Lectures, tutorials and workshops replace classrooms and at year's end the top five students get their pick of scholarships to study in New Zealand or Australia. The next 15 choose from destinations in New Zealand.

The government scholarships are funded by the overseas development aid contributed to Samoa by countries including New Zealand. Students accepting the scholarships are bonded back to Samoa to work as graduates, giving something back for at least the length of their time overseas.

This year 20 of the 22 coming from Samoa to study have done so on scholarships.

Miss Devoe was first tracked down by the ODT in the early February heat of

Apia, wearing a light cotton short-sleeve top and bubbling with enthusiasm as she prepared for her upcoming sojourn south.

"I have been on the Internet and checked it out and I know Dunedin is very, very cold, but I hear the University is very good so I'm looking forward to it," she said then.

The scheme provided accommodation, living costs and an allowance for the five years of her study, plus a ticket home to Apia each summer to visit her family.

More importantly, she said, during a break from her part-time job waitressing in an Apia cafe, it meant a chance for a better life when she returned to Samoa, both for the people she would help, her family and herself.

While there were alternatives to travelling to Dunedin, such as studying in Samoa, Fiji or through the Oceania School of Medicine, a largely Internet-based learning programme, Miss Devoe said they were not really an option for her.

"The whole reason I wanted to do it was to come back here and help out here . . . Qualifications from overseas give you an advantage over what you're learning [in Samoa]. You are given more respect if you learn from overseas. I think it's just the way it is. I reckon Otago is the place to go to university."

Miss Devoe's marks at the end of her foundation year had made her the 17th best student in the island nation, but, in her own words, she said she had "just made it". Now she was determined to do well in Dunedin, graduate and return to work in Samoa.

Her drive was a trait evident in many of the Samoans arriving in Dunedin from the islands to study, according to Nina Kirifi-Alai, manager of the Pacific Islands Centre at the University of Otago.

"They are on a mission. They come here, get on with the work and then go back," she said.

About half of the 440 Pacific Island students supported by the centre were Samoan. Most were privately-funded New Zealand-born or permanent resident students from Auckland or Wellington, she said.

"They come here for the things Otago is well-known for - medicine and law and other disciplines as well, like physical education and health sciences courses."

The influx of Samoan students has spawned Samoan-orientated organisations within the campus environment, including the Pacific Island Centre and the Samoan Students Association.

The association met Samoan students regularly in the office of the Pacific Island Centre, offering support and networking opportunities for the students, association secretary Danita Strickland (19) said.

New to Dunedin herself last year, Miss Strickland well understood the need to support and nurture Samoan students new to the south. "I'm in a class of hundreds of kids and I don't see any Pacific Islanders anywhere. That's something. Sometimes I get uncomfortable.

"The university is very big and it's a place for them to come and get together and maybe at the same time practise what they are used to, like the [Samoan]



language. At the same time we try to organise cultural activities so we can perform our own culture, so we can keep in touch with our identities," she said.

Mrs Kirifi-Alai said many Samoan scholarship students, despite being the country's best and brightest, faced traps other than the work that could end in tears. Chief among them was the pressure of expectation, despite their abilities, that could compound other problems including home-sickness.

"I let them cry and sometimes they break down, but they understand they are here on a mission and their mission is to be successful. They realise they are very lucky, so they can't afford to muck up or their spot should have gone to someone else."

It is something Miss Devoe had already encountered when the ODT caught up with her again in Dunedin, just weeks after meeting our Apia meeting but a world away. She had found a home at Carrington Hall, survived the chaos of Orientation and was recovering from the shock of 8am lectures attended by "huge" crowds of students, but family still felt far away.

"I miss my family so much. I have my friends down here but it's my mum and my dad and my sister I miss. I talk to them about once a week and email them and send letters, so that's all right, but still I miss them," she said.

However, Mrs Kirifi-Alai was confident Miss Devoe, like many before her, would eventually wipe away the tears and carry on to do well.

"The pressure of home-sickness is not comparable to the pressure of having to do well. They stay, and by the end of first semester they are fine," she said. ☺

Diverse strengths on PCF Board

Former diplomat **Michael Powles** spent much of his childhood in Samoa and was later New Zealand's High Commissioner to Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru. After leaving New Zealand's foreign service, he began working to establish the PCF, becoming its first chairman in 2003. His wide-ranging involvement in Pacific issues includes facilitating the Pacific Forum Eminent Persons' Group reflections panel in 2003, and this year chairing the Pacific Islands Forum Roundtable on Counter-Terrorism. Michael is a member of both the Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control (PACDAC) and the National University of Samoa's Council.

Fa'amatuainu Tino Pereira is well-known as a journalist and broadcaster. A Samoan matai (family and village chief) with strong links back to Samoa, he has had leadership responsibilities in many Samoan and pan-Pacific organisations. Tino currently runs a consultancy business based in Wellington, and became involved in the PCF because it was an opportunity "to do some great work on increasing New Zealanders' sense of Pacificness, and for the region to continue to tell its stories to Kiwis."

Gerald McGhie, has been interested in the Pacific since the 1960s, when he served in the New Zealand High Commission in Samoa. Later, as High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, he was concerned that "in spite of considerable expressions of interest and solid contributions by individuals, New Zealand still appeared not to get fully to grips with the real needs of Pacific people". He describes the PCF's aims as essentially "explaining New Zealand to the Pacific and the Pacific to New Zealand". A key challenge, he says, is "to develop the ability to listen to the Pacific outside the context of clichés and the generally accepted norms".

Businessman **Giff Davidson** was born in Fiji where his family has connections spanning three generations. After nearly forty years as a senior manager with Shell, Giff is now a professional company director and involved with numerous business and community groups. He is a past-president and active board member

of the Institute of International Affairs, and chairs the Korea/New Zealand Business Council. He maintains strong links with the Pacific business community through the Wellington Chamber of Commerce, and is keen to "assist business opportunities and relationships between New Zealand and other countries important to our mutual interests".

A Wellington consultant active in arts, tourism and governance issues, **Neil Plimmer** began "a life-long interest in New Zealand's Pacific relationships" while working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Samoa. His more recent involvement in tourism and the arts has also brought him into ongoing contact with these areas of Pacific Islands development and creativity. He sees "rich possibilities" for expanding both Pacific Islands' and New Zealand's links and capabilities through the PCF.

Markerita (Meg) Poutasi is a Wellington solicitor. She first became involved with the PCF as a student volunteer. A member of the Pacific Island Law Students' Society at Victoria University, she contributed early feedback on the PCF concept and helped complete an early draft of the Trust Deed. Markerita sees the Foundation's role as building "an understanding of the Pacific and her communities in New Zealand" with the goal of "fully appreciating and participating in our Pacific neighbourhood".

John Mills spent his childhood in Fiji, and Pacific affairs have played a large part in his life ever since. As a diplomat, he was High Commissioner to Kiribati and ambassador to three other Micronesian countries. Now retired from MFAT, he sees his involvement with the PCF as a way to put his Pacific experience to practical use – especially in respect of Micronesia. "I'm particularly keen to see closer contact with a region of the Pacific that is virtually unknown territory for many New Zealanders."

Executive Chairman of Brother International (NZ) Ltd, one of the PCF's founding sponsors, **Graham Walshe** believes that New Zealand is moving slowly towards embracing more of a Pacific culture. "As a company Brother International (NZ) Limited is fully committed to exploring all that this means through partnering with Government to foster deep reconciliation and mutual understanding among all peoples."

Ian Johnstone is well known as a broadcaster, and was instrumental in establishing Radio New Zealand International. He now works as a media consultant in several Pacific countries. Ian is currently in the UK on a study fellowship. 🌿

The PCF Board, left to right: Gerald McGhie (separate photo), Giff Davidson, Fa'amatuainu Tino Pereira, Michael Powles, Meg Poutasi, Neil Plimmer, Brian Lynch (who steps down from the Board this month), Graham Walshe. Absent: Ian Johnstone, John Mills.



Go Tana



Photo Andrew Gorrie/Dominion Post

The PCF, along with just about everyone else in New Zealand, was delighted at the recent appointment of New Zealand-born Samoan Tana Umaga as All Black captain.

Says Vince McBride: "We support the many contributions of Pacific Islands communities to New Zealand's identity as a Pacific nation. What could be a better example than the first Pasifika player to hold the top job in New Zealand rugby – a sport that occupies such a symbolic place in our national identity."

Reaction to Tana Umaga's appointment has focused not only on his playing talents, but also on his Pacific roots. Tana was born in 1973 in Lower Hutt to Samoan migrants Falefasa and Tauese Umaga. He grew up in Wainuiomata where he still lives and his parents are senior members of the Samoan community.

Family friend and rugby league identity Ken Laban told the *Dominion Post*: "Because he is so well grounded in the community, he has never gotten carried away with his own importance. He still does a huge amount of unpaid work in the community."

News of Tana's appointment attracted attention well beyond the sports pages. The *New Zealand Listener*, which devoted an entire editorial to what it called 'Tana mana', commented:

"Tana Umaga is a reflection of the new face of New Zealand society at a time when we are struggling with identity. There's a paradox here, and it's all positive: here is a New Zealander of Samoan heritage who represents a break in the traditional lineage of All Black captains and yet captures better than many before him the values we hold so dear in All Black history and this nation's history. Go, Tana." ❀

Staff Appointments



PCF's executive director **Vince McBride** is well-known to most people with an interest in New Zealand-Pacific relationships. He brings to the job 28 years experience with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, much of it working in the Pacific. For the past four years, he was deputy director of MFAT's Pacific division, and has held postings in Suva and Rarotonga.



Programme manager **Tina McNicholas** has joined the PCF from the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, where she was national manager for Pacific programmes. She has extensive experience in the public sector, especially in health; has worked as a consultant on many issues affecting Pacific people in New Zealand; and has been an advocate for the Pacific and Fijian communities in international, national and regional forums.



The PCF's other new programme manager, **David Vaeafe** has extensive experience in both the tourism industry and the media. As a journalist in both New Zealand and Samoa, he wrote for national newspapers, travel magazines and business publications. In 1993, he established the community newspaper, the *Tamaki Times*, and was editor for more than three years. David left journalism in 1996 to set up the New Zealand office of the Samoa Tourism Authority in Auckland, where he spent the past eight years promoting Samoa nationally and internationally.



Administration manager **Florence Aiono** has 10 years experience in executive assistant roles, most recently at the Open Polytechnic, and a wealth of administrative, financial and project coordination skills. Florence is also a keen writer who is currently working on a Samoan culture handbook, and is a member of Creative New Zealand's Pacific Writers' Network.



After holding the post of interim director before Vince McBride's arrival, **Gerald McGhie** is now working part-time as academic projects manager while also serving as a Foundation trustee. His career in New Zealand's foreign service spanned several decades and included postings in Apia, Port Moresby, Hong Kong, Seoul and Moscow. He is also a former Director of the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs.

Coming Events

August 3-10

35th Pacific Islands Forum, Apia, Samoa.

July 10-12

Gerald McGhie to participate in 'Political Culture, Representation & Electoral Systems in the Pacific'. This conference at the University of the South Pacific's Vanuatu campus is organised jointly by USP's Dr Jonathan Fraenkel and Andrew Ladley, director of the NZ Institute of Policy Studies.

October 10-12

Concepts and Institutions of Polynesian Customary Law, University of the South Pacific, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

October 15-17

PCF to co-sponsor 'Securing a Peaceful Pacific', a conference on conflict resolution, at the Macmillan Brown Centre, Canterbury University.

July 22-31

Pacific Festival of the Arts, Palau.



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