AAFICS represents retired officials from the United Nations and its agencies and funds. Former officials of other international organizations are also welcome to become members. We offer a link to other UN retirees through occasional social events, as well as contacts for information and advice about retirement in Australia. We are affiliated to FAFICS in Geneva, the Federation of 57 associations similar to ours and an essential source of advice on pension-related issues and on after-service health insurance schemes.

This newsletter has been printed and posted with funds from the AAFICS membership.

Dear AAFICS Members,

Two years ago, AAFICS initiated a decentralization of its newsletter preparation. At the invitation of AAFICS President, Mary Johnson, Queensland kicked this off before, to mix my sporting metaphors, handing over the baton to Victoria. ACT and NSW prepared the two newsletters published in 2014. As few AAFICS members live in the other states of Australia, responsibility for preparation of the mid 2015 AAFICS newsletter returns to Queensland. Oh to live in the USA where this delightful responsibility would only revolve every 20 years or so!

As several of our Queensland members have lived in Papua New Guinea, Australia's nearest neighbor, either prior to, or during, UN service, we're bringing you a few personal vignettes of life in that part of the world. In addition, we have an amazing story from a Yeppoon-based member who found himself in the path of the destructive Cyclone Marcia. A couple of UN stories in the news might also be of interest and, hopefully, keep you amused.

Probably the issue of greatest interest to some members is the legal case which former World Bank staffer Andrew Macoun has been pursuing against the Australian Tax Office. His case is based on the premise that World Bank (and by implication U.N.) pensions should be received by Australian residents free of Australian Income Tax, in the same way that our salaries were. I won't repeat the complexities of the actions which have taken place over the past 12 months or so. Suffice it to say that in May 2015 Macoun advised Mary Johnson that he had been granted leave to appeal the previous court decision to the High Court of Australia. Apparently such leave to appeal is only granted in some 10-20% of cases. The hearing is scheduled for the 9th October, 2015. (See STOP PRESS at the end of this Newsletter.)

Macoun has taken on this case in a personal capacity. If successful, staff members of all the Bretton Woods institutions currently paying Australian Income tax on their pensions should benefit. A group of AAFICS members with experience in the legal area have reviewed the case in depth and consider that the chances would be good for a flow-on to UN pensioners. The downside is that should the case fail, Macoun would likely be liable for costs, probably running into six figures. A Defence Fund has been established by members of the so-called 1818 Group of World Bank pensioners which is overseen by Sydney-based ex-WB staffer, Jo Martins, with
whom Mary Johnson, myself and others have been in regular contact. In May, 2015 UN pensioners who stood to benefit from a positive outcome from this case were also invited to contribute to the Defence Fund. Efforts have also been made to involve Australians currently serving in the various UN agencies.

As of 28 May 2015 around $150,000 had been received in the Defence Fund, including contributions amounting about $8,000 from UN pensioners, along with $7,000 from former IMF staffers and $6,000 from former Asian Development Bank staff members. In addition, AAFICS will be making a grant of $5,000 from its reserves. It's certainly not too late to make a contribution to this fund. If you can’t find the payment details, please contact your State Coordinator. The worst-case scenario is that our contributions would help to alleviate the financial burden of someone who “took on the system”, with potential benefit to many of us, and lost. The best-case scenario is a win against the Australian Tax Office, with costs being awarded in favour of Macoun. In that case, our contributions would be returned to us – hence it is vital to ensure that any contribution you make is clearly identified with your name and address. Let’s all keep our fingers crossed for a favourable outcome in August or soon thereafter.

Many of you will be aware that there have been rumblings around the world concerning the administration of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund. Currently serving UN staffers have been at the forefront of the action while our Federation of Former International Civil Service Colleagues (FAFICS) have been following developments and circulating information. In March 2015 a ‘Town Hall’ meeting was held in New York attended by the Chief Executive Officer of the UNJSPF and the UN Secretary-General’s Chef du Cabinet. My personal view is that there is no particular cause for concern. However, following the old adage of “no smoke without fire” I am grateful for the vigilance of staff members and FAFICS and feel that this is certainly a subject which needs to be kept under review.

In May many of us received a circular through the mail from UNJSPF regarding the new Integrated Pension Administration System, or IPAS, which is scheduled to ‘be fully live during the summer of 2015’ (how a global body can blithely refer to July/August in that fashion when half the planet is experiencing the depths of the southern hemisphere winter makes my blood boil – but perhaps I’m just getting even more grumpy in my old age!). According to UNJSPF, the new IPAS will "provide a more integrated system environment that streamlines processing and provides increased capacity to accommodate future growth in the number of participants .... It will also strengthen the Fund’s internal control, risk management and reporting environment. Among other benefits, the new system will also provide our clients with enhanced self-service capabilities ...". I won’t offer any further comment. Suffice it to say that UNJSPF will be doing business differently in future. While it will probably offer fewer opportunities for personal interaction and communication, it is to be hoped that adequate provision will be made for those pensioners who are not fully immersed in the hi-tech world of electronic communications. AAFICS and similar organizations will be following developments closely.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the semi-annual AAFICS newsletter and find it enlightening. Queensland AAFICS will be holding our annual Brisbane lunch on Wednesday 4 November at a location yet to be determined. Should any interstate members be in our vicinity, you would be more than welcome to join us.

Mike Sackett,
AAFICS Queensland State Co-ordinator
Like a first love, a UN official’s first field duty station usually holds a special place in one’s memory. Fiji was my first field office, as far from the comforts and controls of ILO’s Geneva headquarters as it was possible to get. I loved the place, late 80’s, two coups d’etat notwithstanding.

We communicated with headquarters by telex, and if you stayed up late enough (that is, at the end of one bottle of Mouton Cadet white burgundy from the duty free allowance) you could telephone Geneva as there was a 12 hour time difference. Fiji is where I learned the truth of that old UN adage – in headquarters you deal with a problem a day; in the field you deal with a dozen problems.

I have always tried to stay in touch with friends in Fiji. In the last two or three years, I have received a number of emails from UN officials associated with the administration of the peacekeeping troops Fiji had proudly supplied over the years in the Middle East. The administrators were now nearing retirement and asking questions about the Pension Fund and issues such as the lump sum or withdrawal settlements. By the way, do any of you feel as I do, about Kevin Rudd’s ill-advised attempts when PM, to induce the United Nations to no longer employ Fijian troops as peace-keepers, as part of Australia’s sanctions against the undemocratic regime of Voreqe Bainimarama? In the end, Australia’s selective severity towards its near Pacific neighbours has created a diplomatic and economic vacuum rapidly filled by a very large country to our north.

Apart from Fiji’s role in UN peacekeeping, Suva, the capital city of the Fiji Islands, is the host to a range of United Nations specialised agencies, many of which set up their offices in the late 70’s and 80’s to cover many of the Pacific Island nations. In fact the UN Pension Fund statistics show there are now some 30 UN retirees residing in Fiji. Being an incurable busy-body and do-gooder, I wrote off to the UN Pension Fund in New York and to FAFICS, the Federation of associations such as ours, asking that they help me make contact with the retirees in Fiji. I thought the retirees might accept the idea of forming a UN retirees association, to better look after their interests and each other.

I knew I would be in Fiji over Easter this year, on a holiday with family and friends. It would be no trouble for me to meet any UN retirees who were interested, in Suva. The ILO Office director and his executive assistant gave me wonderful help with this idea.

On 9 February this year the UN Pension Fund posted an invitation letter to the 32 addresses of UN retirees in Fiji, for an informal discussion meeting to be held in Suva on 13 April, in the ILO meeting room, morning tea and sandwiches to be offered, and with a view to seeing whether the idea of setting up a retirees association was worth taking forward.
As the UN Pension Fund will not give out names and addresses of their pensioners, my contact with the Fiji retirees had to go through the Fund. One might think that 9 weeks was enough time to get ready.

The meeting took place on 13 April with about 16 people present, some of whom were already retired and some about to retire. Others were HR people from the various UN agencies interested in the issue. Copies of documents were provided, such as a draft constitution for a retirees association sent by FAFICS and a useful note on the pros and cons of taking a lump sum drafted by the UN Pension Fund at AAFICS request.

The meeting was a delight and for me, a joy to see some old friends again. Several retirees were enthusiastic about the idea of an association and I left them to get on with the preparation of a convening, foundation meeting for a possible Fiji FUN Association.

Thank goodness the ILO’s executive assistant Veronika Naiwaqa, a splendid person, and well attuned to how things work in the UN, had put out notices through the UN agencies and through local contacts giving information about the meeting and that is why we got a reasonable participation.

The invitation letter posted by the UN Pension Fund in New York with insufficient postage, turned up 9 days after I had returned to Sydney.

VALE DAVID DUN

Dear Friends,

I have recently learned from David’s daughter, Anne, that David passed away at the beginning of May - aged 90. He was cheerful until the end, despite facing an increasing number of health issues. David was a regular at our AAFICS lunches and will be greatly missed, both by those who worked with him in FAO and those who got to know him in later life.

Mike Sackett
AAFICS Qld State Coordinator
FACING CYCLONE MARCIA
A tale from Yeppoon member Paul McCosker
(told by Sarah McCosker)

On the 20th February, 2015, Sarah McCosker was with Paul and Patricia in their Yeppoon home, which was built after 1985, apparently the cut-off date as regards a home being able to withstand cyclones of some magnitude. At 5am we heard, via the radio, that a Category 5 tropical cyclone was coming our way. There was still time to get out of the area but, after some deliberations, we decided to stay put.

We created a comfortable safer space with plenty of cushions, blankets and sustenance behind an interior brick wall some distance from possible shattered glass. We could still see and hear what was going on outside. The power went off at 9.38am and that was the last we would see of electricity for the next 7 days. From that point on we did feel very isolated as our nearest neighbours are about 200m away.

Paul, Patricia and Sarah moved to the safe space and were able to entice Mango the boxer x red cattle dog into the laundry room with a slice of corned beef. This was after a chase around the garden mid-cyclone proved ineffective!

We did not really consider the main Yeppoon Shelter because the radio announcements said that only those in low lying areas (i.e. those susceptible to inundation) should evacuate immediately to the shelter. We also felt there would not be enough room and that discomfort levels might be high. The shelter can only house a few hundred. The authorities also opened a large theatre/hall at St Brendan’s College, Paul’s Alma Mater, just down the road, but this too would not have been very comfortable/accessible for those advanced in years.

It is interesting to note that Paul has experienced both of the severe cyclones in Yeppoon in living memory. The previous one was in 1949 when he was a boarder at St Brendan’s. The School was not so lucky as the cyclone struck in the dark after lights out, with the roof of the dormitory being blown off and the boys evacuated to safety to another building carrying their sodden mattresses through the howling winds. At the time, no one realised it was a cyclone they were experiencing, although this became apparent the next day.

From 9.38am, the intensity of Cyclone Marcia rose until about midday when there was a lull and then it started up again. It was about 3.30pm when we ventured outside to survey the damage. The buildings were fine, but the garden was a mess with many trees down, one of which against the house. Sarah tried to get to her house about 5km away at around 4pm but only managed about 1km one way and 500m the other before returning home due to trees down and power lines scattered willy-nilly.
By this time, those with chainsaws were already out and about getting started on the clearing tasks. Then a massive clean-up, orchestrated by the Council, got into motion and it was wonderful to watch it unfold. Within a week, most roads were as good as new, with spiky leafless trees and tidy yards. There is still some work to do, but the worst of it has been completed.

Message from the Guest Editor:

Your humble scribe craves your indulgence for the late arrival of your AAFICS mid-year Newsletter. He has been heavily involved in continuing his life-long education (as encouraged by his former agency, UNESCO) and had a thesis to finish and submit. The days seemed to have flashed past and June became July and, suddenly, August was nigh. He promises to do better next time. Apologies for this delay.

Martin

Tongue in Cheek

How the Greek Economy Works

It is a slow day in a little Greek village. The rain is beating down and the streets are deserted. Times are tough, everybody is in debt, and everybody lives on credit. On this day, a rich German tourist is driving through the village, stops at the local hotel and lays a €100 note on the desk, telling the hotel owner he wants to inspect the rooms upstairs in order to pick one to spend the night.

The owner gives him some keys and as soon as the visitor has walked upstairs, the hotelier grabs the €100 note and runs next door to pay the butcher, who takes the €100 note and runs down the street to repay his debt to the pig farmer.

The pig farmer takes the €100 note and heads off to pay his drinks bill at the taverna. The publican slips the money along to the local prostitute drinking at the bar, who has also been facing hard times and has had to offer him “services” on credit. The hooker then rushes to the hotel and pays off her room bill to the hotel owner with the €100 note. The hotel proprietor then places the €100 note on the counter so the rich traveller will not suspect anything.

At that moment the traveller comes down the stairs, picks up the €100 note, states that the rooms are not satisfactory, pockets the money, and leaves town. No one produced anything. No one earned anything. However the whole village is now out of debt and looking to the future with a lot more optimism.

And that, friends, is how the bail-out package for Greece works.

(Courtesy The Fitz Files, Sydney Morning Herald on-line)
Russia fails to stop UN staff benefits for same-sex couples

The UN has rejected an attempt by Russia to stop the spouses of General Assembly staff in same-sex marriages from enjoy the same family benefits as opposite-sex couples.

Last summer, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced plans which would see all staff in same-sex marriages receive perks, regardless of laws on same-sex marriage in their home countries.

Today, the General Assembly’s budget committee, which approves funding to pay for the over 40,000 staff members who would be affected by the change, voted against an attempt by Russia and other opponents of gay marriage to stop the measures.

UN deputy spokesman, Farhan Haq said “this means that the policy stands,” adding that Ban welcomes the affirmation of his authority under the U.N. Charter to make such decisions. Ban has been an outspoken supporter of gay rights.

Some 43 countries, including China, India and Zimbabwe, supported the Russian-sponsored resolution, 80 opposed it and 37 abstained.

Jessica Stern, executive director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, said “the vote offered a new twist on the kind of homophobic scapegoating we see globally.”

“This was a disingenuous effort to shed the dignity of LGBT employees at the U.N, while clawing at the authority of the secretary general,” she said. “Those who sided with Russia should be ashamed of such a craven vote.”

The proposition is the latest example of the Russian government's anti-LGBT stance, and comes after it introduced a controversial propaganda law in 2013.

When the country's deputy ambassador Petr Iliichev attempted to persuade UN members to vote for the resolution, he said the directive Ban issued last June can provide the basis "for legal conflict with national legislation" of UN member states.

“We think we should leave the status quo. It is an example of how the United Nations respects cultural differences,” Iliichev said.

(Courtesy: The Independent, UK on-line)

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HANDY INFORMATION

Cocktail Bar Etiquette

Symptom: Feet cold and wet.  
Fault: Glass being held at incorrect angle.  
Action: Rotate glass so that open end points towards ceiling.

Symptom: Opposite wall is covered with lots of fluorescent lights.  
Fault: You have fallen over backward.  
Action: Have someone tie you to the bar.

Symptom: Mouth contains cigarette butt.  
Fault: You have fallen forward.  
Action: Refer previous action.

Symptom: Beer tasteless, front of your shirt is wet.  
Fault: Mouth not open or glass applied to wrong part of your face.  
Action: Retire to toilets, practice in the mirror before returning.

Symptom: Floor looks blurred.  
Fault: You are looking through bottom of empty glass.  
Action: Ask someone to buy you another beer.

Symptom: Floor moving.  
Fault: You are being carried out.  
Action: Ask if you are being taken to another bar.
PAPUA NEW GUINEA EXPERIENCES

For many Australian development and aid workers, Papua New Guinea has been a country in which they first gained field experience and plied their trade. Several Queensland AAFICS members lived in the Australian administered Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG), as it was prior to Independence, and in the new nation of Papua New Guinea from Independence Day on the 16th September, 1975. They share their stories...

Sojourn in Port Moresby

by Mardie Holton-Cleave

I have great memories of life in the Territory of Papua & New Guinea where I worked for almost two years in the office of the Administrator, Sir Donald Cleland, in Port Moresby. The catalyst was my eldest sister and her engineer husband who had been posted there by their company to build roads through the jungle in search of oil. I applied to Canberra for permission to join them and was offered employment at the same time.

Port Moresby in those days was a pretty little township surrounded by lush tropical vegetation. Houses were built on stilts with attractive balconies while the native houseboy and the Mary - usually a married couple - lived on the grounds behind the main house. Ela beach was a palm-fringed strip of soft yellow sand, the continental shelf gently sloping out to deeper waters where I snorkelled for hours, losing all track of time, as the brilliant sunshine enhanced the colours of the fish, bright yellow sea snakes rode the currents and all around beche-de-mer sunned
themselves on the seabed. Tennis courts were not far away and were always in use after work and on weekends.

I lived in a hostel for young women, some of whom I still keep in touch with today. We had individual apartments upstairs and all our kitchens were side by side at ground level which resulted in a lively dinner hour in the evening. We shopped for food at Krewalt's store, which was a large importer of frozen products with a small supermarket attached for the special needs of the Europeans, as we were called. We were driven to and from our various offices each day.

I worked in Konedobu, a delightful drive along the waterfront past Hanuabada, a picturesque native village built out into the sea on high stilts. The Hanuabadans felt that the sea and the height offered them protection from their enemies and cautiously accessed the shore in small boats.

At Konedobu the Administrator's offices were built in a square with a garden courtyard in the middle. My office was centre front with shutters open wide to check any visitor coming up the winding drive on business. As a high speed shorthandwriter I sometimes assisted the Legislative Council with their meetings and once took down proceedings at a 3-day military court martial.

There was no lack of social life in Port Moresby as the Australian Government and big Banks sent young people on contract to the Territory to cover each area of administration. We lived in groups according to where we worked and identified each other accordingly (he is a Bank Bod, she is from Comm. Works, for example). We made our own fun, hiring a lakatoi (a local boat) and a couple of able natives to sail us to one of the outlying islands for a picnic on the beach. There were no roads to speak of outside the township and whenever we hired a car it would turn out to be an old left-hand drive American jeep left behind after the War, the pull-on ignition looking something like a choke or a cigarette lighter on a string. I remember the boys in our group putting logs across a riverbed so I could drive my hired jeep across so we could proceed with our plans to drive through the coconut or rubber tree plantations on a day's outing.

Living in Port Moresby was a unique experience for me as a Melbourne city girl and I enjoyed exploring the area: driving up the hills for stupendous views, to the foot of Hombrom's Bluff where we could swim and picnic and smile at the shy natives who lived in a small settlement close by. The local markets were unusual as well, with carved wooden crocodiles, called puk pucks in Pidgin English, miniature lakatois made from the coconut palm and the brilliant plumage of the exotic bird of paradise recently hunted and killed in the dense jungle. On special holidays several different tribes from near and far would come to Port Moresby to perform a Sing-Sing in colourful costumes of feathers, masks and painted bodies.
Thinking back, it was a wonderful way to start my working life, a life which turned out to be more and more exciting as the years went by.

Q&A with John Elfick

Q: When did you work in PNG?
A: 1968 – 1979

Q: Who did you work for?
A: Australian government/Papua New Guinea government

Q: Where did you operate?
A: Daru, Sogeri, Port Moresby (Konedobu), Goroka

Q: Brief description of what you did.
A: Science and Agriculture Master at Daru High School, Science Curriculum Development and Teaching at Sogeri Senior High School, Professional Assistant Primary Curriculum at Department of Education Konedobu headquarters, Senior Lecturer in Education and Officer in Charge of One-year Teacher Training Courses at Goroka Teachers’ College.

Q: Do you recall any linkages with UN agencies?
A: Liaison officer with UNESCO science education project, which led to my later work as consultant in UNESCO projects (Pakistan, Solomon Islands) and work in the UNESCO Secretariat (Paris and Beijing).

Q: Did any significant family event occur in PNG?
A: Second child Josephine Tse-Mui born at Port Moresby Hospital.

Q: Did you come across anybody who you subsequently worked with in the UN?
A: Mike Sherrit, Brian Deutrom and others.

Q: Any other information to share?
A: While working at Goroka, I did an external PhD through University of London Institute of Education. So my PhD certificate has a postage stamp on it! I returned to PNG in the 1980s when working under an Asian Development Bank contract to develop the Solomon Islands primary science and junior secondary agriculture curriculum. I went there to get information about the latest developments in the PNG curriculum. Later I published my work in the Solomon Islands on my staff website: http://www.uq.edu.au/School_Science_Lessons/
I visited PNG in 1997 on behalf of FAO to help with the drafting of their fisheries legislation covering their 200 miles exclusive economic zone. My participation was curtailed, as FAO, with its limited funding in its Technical Cooperation programme (TCP), was not able to match the superior financial fire-power of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), so it was left to them. A very familiar tale to many of us seasoned bureaucrats, I suspect.

More recently, - the last quarter of 2014 in fact – I was asked back there, this time on behalf of the FFA, (the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency). For those who love acronyms in this acronym drenched world, FFA, while independent, is a CROP body – Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific, which itself is chaired by the PIF (Pacific Islands Forum).

The reason for my return was to help on an audit by the EU of PNG’s fisheries management and legislation. At the risk of a digression, the EU has to be the ultimate achievement in bureaucrating, Now, these audits are nasty beasts: basically, the EU undertakes a preliminary study of the fisheries sector of a country, it then meets with representatives of the government, usually with an in-country visit, and discusses its concerns. If these concerns are not met, the country receives a formal notification published in the Official Journal of the EU that it will be subject to trade measures if improvements are not made within a certain period of time. This is called, informally, a ‘yellow card’. If the country is able to make these improvements, the threat is eventually removed. If not, the country runs the risk of receiving a ‘red card’, and its fisheries products will be prohibited from entry into the EU – the world’s largest market for fish products. A few countries already have received ‘red cards’.
The EU auditors are working their way around different regions undertaking these activities. In the Pacific, they have audited, or are currently auditing, several countries (PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji, FSM, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and probably a couple more).

I must admit to having mixed feelings about these audits. The EU is undoubtedly performing a valuable service in getting countries to improve their fisheries management practices and to help eliminate so-called ‘IUU’ (illegal, unreported, and unregulated) fishing. It requires countries audited to introduce robust legal and management provisions to deal with such fishing, as well as putting in place the staff to implement these new proposals effectively. These audits draw heavily on an International Plan of Action on Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing (IPOA-IUU – surely a powerful contender for the ugliest acronym), a voluntary instrument that has been credited with more impact than some binding treaties.

On the other hand, there does seem to be an undue focus on smaller developing countries as the targets of these audits, while the threat of trade sanctions does seem a bit heavy handed, and possibly sails close to the wind in terms of WTO (World Trade Organization) law.

Interestingly, while the EU is quite intrusive in its demands, it does not care all that much if a country has an “open registry”, or more pejoratively, a flag of convenience registry. It seems to take the practical view that if a country wants to have an open registry, that is not in itself a problem—PROVIDED that it is prepared to put in place acceptable systems in order to achieve effective control over the fishing vessels it has registered. For lovers or collectors of acronyms, a new one to add is FONCs – Flags of non compliance.

But I digress.
To digress even further, the small island States of the Pacific along with Australia and NZ have been negotiating a revision of the multilateral fisheries agreement with the US, first completed in 1987.

When the negotiations for the present round started in 2009, the US was paying US$21 million for access to the tuna resources of the Pacific Island Parties. For the period mid-2012 to mid-2013, the countries received US$45 million, then negotiated US$63 million for the period mid-2013 to end of 2014, and US$90 million for 2015 for 8301 fishing days. The fifteenth round of negotiations is due to take place in May.

To come back to PNG, at one point of the negotiations about three years ago, PNG announced that it was withdrawing from the treaty, which, in accordance with its terms, would have triggered the collapse of the treaty itself. PNG later withdrew its withdrawal from the treaty. For treaty enthusiasts, both the withdrawal from the treaty and the withdrawal of the withdrawal were addressed by PNG to PNG as depositary to the treaty - truly exciting stuff if you are treaty lawyer. However, the PNG action and the negotiating approach it adopted certainly helped focus minds of the Parties, not least on the US side in the fisheries treaty negotiations.

Of course, the question has to be asked: if the US has shifted so far in the last few years from US$21 million to US$90 million and still counting, how poorly treated were the Pacific Island Parties since 1987 when the treaty was first negotiated? And that is just the US! Other distant water fishing nations (EU, Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan among them) have presumably been having a fishing bonanza at the expense of the island States. For some SIDS (small island developing States), the valuable tuna resources are virtually their only source of income. A group of countries known as the PNA (Parties to the Nauru Agreement - which has nothing to do with immigration, refugees, or children in detention) has in recent years been very successful in coordinating the bargaining position of the countries with the largest tuna stocks in the Pacific in their dealings with distant water fishing nations. But that is another digression!

Kundus and sunrise: radio days in the TPNG

by Martin Hadlow

I arrived in Port Moresby in 1972 from the crowded enclave of Hong Kong, where I had been working with the Government broadcasting station, Radio Hong Kong, which had studios in Broadcast Drive in Kowloon. My recruitment to a job in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea had actually started sometime before, when I attended an interview in Sydney after seeing a newspaper advertisement for the role of Assistant Station Manager with the Department of Information and Extension Services (DIES). My career background was in radio broadcasting in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and, born of a pioneering and adventurous spirit, I couldn't resist the temptation to make an application. The recruitment process was lengthy, which is why I had ended up working in Hong Kong, my long-suffering fiancée, Anne, then still being back in Australia where we had met when she was a Flight Hostess with Ansett Airlines and I was an international Flight Steward with QANTAS. But that's another story.
Upon reaching Port Moresby, I was housed in the infamous Raniguri Hostel at Konedobu. It was a huge, single-men’s outfit, from what I remember, its key advantage being that it was located just across the road from the DIES headquarters in Konedobu, where I was assigned to the Central News Room (CNR) while I got my bearings.

Within weeks, I was on my way out of Port Moresby to Kerema in the Gulf District where I was to be Assistant Station Manager of Radio Kerema, *Voice of the Seagull*. I never did work out how it got that name as I never once saw a seagull in the whole time I was there. Isolated spot? Yes, especially as the airfield would flood and the twice-weekly Twin Otter flight from Port Moresby would bypass us and head straight to Daru. Quiet? Yes, and quite a shock to the system after Hong Kong. There were only about 20 or 30 expats in the whole place but, for a young chap such as myself, it was all an exhilarating experience, especially the recording patrols I undertook by open dinghy to the villages amongst the swamps of the Kikori and Baimuru River areas. Our radio station broadcast the news in six languages every day (simple English, Motu, Toaripi, Oroko, Kerewo and Koriki) and we gathered local music, traditional stories and other materials from villagers for broadcast.

Anne and I were hoping to get married, but there was no housing available in Kerema. As it was, I was sharing a two-man Donga with an old Irish chap who taught at the local school. He was set in his ways and was rather peeved to have to be sharing his abode. Fortuitously, an opening for a Station Manager position became available in Lae at the DIES station Radio Morobe, *Maus blong Kundu (Voice of the Kundu Drum)*.

I headed off there and Anne grabbed the Ansett Electra flight from Brisbane (a flight she had once crewed). She brought with her wedding rings, wedding dress, bouquet and even part of the cake! I had only been in Lae a few days before she was due to arrive, so I made a bee-line for the Anglican Church, where the Vicar kindly agreed to marry us. I then hurriedly asked the chap I was replacing at Radio Morobe to be the best man (we had never met before) and another to give the bride away. While awaiting Anne’s arrival, I fumigated our small Government house (an AR217) with cans of spray to rid it of cockroaches and, in the process, nearly asphyxiated myself. I was still coughing when Anne arrived two days later and we were married the next afternoon! There were only about five of us, plus two or three young PNG curates (who sang beautifully), in the church. (Anne and I are still happily together, 43 years later.)
After about six months in Lae, I 'localized' the position (replacing expatriates with Papua New Guineans was an important process at that pre-self government stage) and was posted to be Station Manager of Radio Bougainville, *Maus blong Sankamap (Voice of the Sunrise)*, in Kieta. At the time (1973-74) the copper mine at Panguna was in full swing and a pro-secessionist movement was also underway. Politically, it was an extremely difficult posting as our radio station had to attempt to walk a neutral path between the positions held by the Government and the secessionists. Come what may, it was a very fulfilling place to live and work. The tragedy of the civil war which erupted in the 1980s (some 15,000 being killed) hangs heavily over Bougainville, the once tranquil island being plunged into chaos. The radio station in Kieta was burned to the ground during the fighting, its irreplaceable collection of audio-tapes of traditional music and old stories being destroyed.

I again 'localized' the Station Manager role in Kieta (the DIES was well ahead of many other Government agencies in placing Papua New Guineans into senior positions) and we were then on our way to a posting back in Port Moresby. However, by then, Anne and I were ready for new challenges and we left PNG at the conclusion of my contract to enable me to undertake a study programme at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. But that, too, is another story...

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**A Vet in the Highlands**

*by Sarah McCosker (on behalf of Paul McCosker)*

Paul worked in PNG briefly in the early 1950's as part of his practical experience towards his Veterinary degree from the University of Queensland. This was his first ever overseas posting. He worked as an Australian Government appointee to assist with the development of Eastern Papua New Guinea (Papua) which was then part of the Australian Trust Territories. He was stationed at Port Moresby where the laboratory was located and was employed as a Cadet Officer to help provide veterinary services. Australia had previously inadvertently introduced ticks and tick-borne diseases to the area when they introduced cattle. Paul's duties were to travel throughout, visiting villages and outposts, to test the cattle for such diseases. He travelled from Port Moresby to local areas by road transport and then flew to Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands. From there he travelled with a Patrol Officer as he carried out his duties, often on foot. Whilst the Patrol Officer carried out his administrative work, Paul would collect samples from the cattle and transfer these to slides to be examined once he returned to the laboratory in Port Moresby.

At the time, Paul was a young man embarking on his career, as yet unblessed by either a wife or children. Therefore he was free to explore the area and vividly remembers setting off alone to
mass one Sunday morning. The journey would take him to the next village. It was not long before he could sense that he was no longer alone and was rather alarmed to see, when he looked over his shoulder, that he was being followed by a crowd in full battle regalia. He quickened his pace and reached the huge church at the next village sooner than intended. It turned out that his fierce looking local companions were in fact in their Sunday best and headed to the same service as he was. Needless to say, the journey home was much more leisurely.

Apart from this taste of overseas service, his time in PNG gave Paul two lifelong friends, both of whom worked for the UN and, like Paul, for FAO. Paul’s boss at the laboratory in PNG was Dr Jim Marley and his good friend Dr Ron Olds also worked there at the time. Both of these were Brisbane born and Paul was to study with Ron Olds at Cambridge University not long after their stint in PNG. Later all three were reunited at FAO headquarters in Rome, where they worked in different areas but in close proximity for many years.

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**Poms in paradise**

**by Mike Sackett**

Eileen and I went to PNG as ‘ten pound Poms’ in June 1972 and worked there until November 1978. I was recruited in London to work for the Territory of Papua & New Guinea Department of Primary Industry in Konedobu and one of the first people I met was current Brisbane AAFICS member, Phil Young, then a vet with DPI – in fact we played darts together most lunch hours.

I worked as an Ag Economist, initially focussing on the coastal crops (coconuts and cocoa), which took me around the islands and coastal areas of PNG. Sometime in 1976, there was a memorable day when with all the coffee experts met in Goroka for a Board meeting and word came that new PNG coffee industry legislation was to be presented to Cabinet. They needed someone to present the details. After a frantic few minutes brushing up on the key points, I managed to do the necessary. I recall fronting Cabinet in the regular working gear of shorts and sandals, their discussion bizarrely degenerating into a debate on pig farming, led by the then Foreign Minister, Albert Maori Kiki.

I remember Rod Sims, now Chairman of the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), as a regular interlocutor in the PNG Ministry of Finance. At that time Rod sported long flowing ginger locks. How times change!

In the 1970s, Port Moresby was a wonderful family posting – safe, with a good social life and plenty of employment opportunities for spouses. Lots of places to visit at week-ends – Sogeri
Plateau, Brown River, various beaches east and west of Port Moresby. I learned to sail on Port Moresby harbour. Our two daughters were both born in the Port Moresby General Hospital.

I recall the first UNDP office being opened soon after Independence in 1975. However, I cannot remember any significant personal involvement with the UN. The most active international agency in PNG at the time was the Asian Development Bank and, later, the World Bank.

Final thought – how did it all turn out so badly in PNG? Clearly PNG’s abundant natural resources were not matched by an adequate number of properly trained, experienced nationals. PNG went from being a Territory (functioning in a fashion not dissimilar to the Northern Territory at the time with all key decisions being taken in Canberra) to full Independence in the space of a very few short years. But the nagging feeling remains – couldn't/shouldn't we have done a better job as Public Servants in the 1970s?

My United Nations
by Tomislav (Tomi) Petr

When WWII ended in Europe, things were not exactly rosy there. Czechoslovakia, where I was born before the war, was spared the immense damage caused by the war in other European countries. But food was scarce and rationing of almost everything continued for many years. During the first 2-3 years after the war an agency called UNRRA was providing us with some food. I remember the large tins (in khaki colour) of horse meat, probably from poor American mustangs that were shot in their thousands to feed the American army. Then there was peanut butter, we never previously knew it existed. We loved it. Then there were large tins, also of non-reflecting khaki colour, containing tasteful jam. The fourth item I remember was blue powder that dissolved in water and the resulting fluid tasted like grape juice. This was also part of American army rations.

I studied biology at the Charles University in Prague, learnt several languages, and became part-time translator and formulator of scientific abstracts from many foreign journals received at that time by the Central Agricultural Library in Prague. Agriculture was an apolitical subject, perhaps with some exceptions, such as when the Czechoslovak potatoes were attacked by a ladybug, which was then called American beetle, as it apparently came from California. I am not sure if the Czechoslovak government asked FAO for assistance to deal with it. After completing
my university studies I was employed in a specialized library of the Ministry of Health to search for information about health problems caused by irradiation. I noted that a number of papers mentioned IAEA, the specialized UN agency dealing with irradiation and fallout from nuclear bomb experiments. This was in 1962-64, when every country now sitting in the Security Council was busy testing nuclear bombs. The air was full of radiation and it was not the radiation from X-rays used in hospitals only. Accumulation of radioactive isotopes in human bodies was a fact, and there was a flood of scientific publications in many languages, not only on monitoring the impact, but also on experimental approaches to the problem. This was after the Sellafield nuclear disaster, but before those at Three Mile and Chernobyl.

My first direct contact with the United Nations was in Rome in 1966, when attending an international conference on fish pond culture, organized by the Food and Agricultural Organization. At that time I was a researcher in Ghana, West Africa, where I studied the process of establishing lacustrine fish populations in Lake Volta, at that time the largest (by surface area) man-made lake in the world. The conference in Rome provided me with an opportunity to learn more about the work of FAO, and to make contact with specialists in the Department of Fisheries. This led to regular contact between them and me, and to exchanges of information.

The contacts strengthened when I took a position at the Makerere University in Uganda. An excellent fisheries research institute - The East African Freshwater Fisheries Research Organization - was present in Jinja on the shores of Lake Victoria. It had very active contact with FAO, and a UNDP project was trawling the lake to establish the quantity of small fish for their possible conversion into fish meal. Some of the researchers of EAFFRO later on joined FAO in Rome or became its consultants. Being in charge of the Zoology Department I closely collaborated with EAFFRO and took my students on board the UNDP research vessel where we helped to sort out the tons of trawled fish into species or groups. I kept in contact with the EAFFRO researchers for many years, even after they left Uganda due to difficulties under the rule of Idi Amin. Such researchers, including me, who spent considerable periods with research work in Africa and elsewhere in less developed countries, were a rather mobile group.

From Uganda my wife Mary and I went to Austria, and soon thereafter to Australia. After establishing an undergraduate and post-graduate unit in fisheries at Monash University in Melbourne, we left again, this time to Papua New Guinea. During the 1970’s, after many futile years of searching for oil and gas, the government of Australia and Territory of Papua New Guinea (prior to its independence) decided that they should tap the energy of some rivers.

A project was planned on the Purari River, engineering studies were initiated, and in their final phase environmental studies followed. I was called to design a programme for the
environmental studies and execute it. These studies were undertaken during the early years of PNG independence.

There was no direct involvement of the UN for the project, the financing being provided by the PNG government. My salary was paid by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC). During my three years in PNG I had many contacts with UNDP office personnel, especially with Tom Unwin, who was in charge of UNDP in PNG, and with UN experts coming and going for a variety of consultancies. I also kept contact with FAO in Rome, sending them my publications on fisheries and broader aspects of environment. Eventually over thirty experts from the university, various government departments, and overseas participated in short-term field studies. They covered almost all special fields one finds in the alphabet, from A – archaeology, to Z – zoology. Quite a number of them studied medical aspects of the local people. The work lasted three years, many reports were produced and a monograph appeared soon after. By that time, more drilling for oil and gas was in progress, and soon was successful in locating several promising fields. The rest is well known – PNG is now exporting liquid natural gas and some oil. Hydropower development is on the backburner.

In 1980 I was offered a permanent position with the FAO Department of Fisheries in Rome. When FAO requested our marriage certificate, we discovered that it was lost. At this point Tom Unwin enters the story again. He was now with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in Uganda, and we were married there in Kampala. The Registry burned down some years previously but, somehow, Unwin managed to get us some sort of copy. For the next fifteen years I was involved with many countries in Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Eastern Europe. In PNG I helped design several UN projects and for ten years supervised two of them. My last direct contact with PNG was when the last one ended in 1994, one year before my retirement. After retiring I continued as an FAO consultant for a number of years in many countries, participated in international conferences, edited their proceedings and wrote technical papers. I always enjoyed it, but the longer I was detached from direct contact with my colleagues (most of them retired by now), and from the most recent information, I realized, that it was time to stop. It reminded me of an old lady, driving her car slowly on a highway and slowing down the traffic. An officer overtakes her, stops her and gently asks why she is driving so slowly. She says: “Officer, I do not want to cause trouble. I am very careful”. When he asks her age and she says 90, he says ”Madam, there is time one needs to stop completely”.

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Guest Editor’s note: we trust that you have enjoyed these vignettes of life in Papua New Guinea and in its colonial TPNG days. For those of us who had the privilege of living in this beautiful land with its multitude of languages and cultures, it has been hugely saddening in recent times to see the country plagued by governance issues, security problems and corruption. The gentle, friendly people of Papua New Guinea deserve better. May they build anew.
UN IN THE NEWS #2

End of democracy?

Climate change is a hoax led by the United Nations so that it can end democracy and impose authoritarian rule, according to Prime Minister Tony Abbott's chief business adviser.

Maurice Newman, the chairman of the Prime Minister's business advisory council, has written in The Australian that scientific modelling showing the link between humans and climate change is wrong and the real agenda is a world takeover for the UN.

The column has been written to coincide with an Australian visit by the head of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figueres.

It follows a piece Mr Newman wrote last year in which he said governments had been hijacked by "green gesture politics" and the world was not prepared for the problem of 'global cooling'.

"It's a well-kept secret, but 95 per cent of the climate models we are told prove the link between human CO2 emissions and catastrophic global warming have been found, after nearly two decades of temperature stasis, to be in error. It's not surprising," Mr Newman wrote on Friday.

"Why then, with such little evidence, does the UN insist the world spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year on futile climate change policies? Perhaps Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the UN's Framework on Climate Change has the answer?"

Mr Newman continued that global warming was a "hook" to install a new world order.

"Figueres is on record saying democracy is a poor political system for fighting global warming. Communist China, she says, is the best model," he said.

"This is not about facts or logic. It's about a new world order under the control of the UN."

He then urges the Abbott government to oppose a regime that was against "capitalism and freedom" by resisting the next global climate treaty in Paris, which countries hope to reach in December.

Mr Newman adds that, like Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Abbott should resist the UN's calls for coal to stay in the ground.

The vast majority of the world's scientists, including most of the world's scientific academies, agree humans are causing climate change.

Among them, the Academy of Science, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change say greenhouse gas emissions from human activity are affecting the climate.

Ms Figueres said during her visit this week that Australia would ultimately have to move away from coal for both environmental and economic reasons.

Mr Newman is a former chairman of the ABC and the Australian Securities Exchange.

(Courtesy of The Australian on-line)
CHANGE IN AFTER SERVICE HEALTH INSURANCE PROVIDER

by Mike Sackett

According to a small survey of Queensland AAFICS members which was conducted in 2014, just over one-third of our members retained their after-service health insurance (ASHI). This article may be of interest to those of you whose health insurance was formerly provided by Van Breda International, based in Antwerp, Belgium. From 1 January 2015 you will have had a new insurer. For ex-employees of the Rome-based UN agencies that new insurer is Allianz Worldwide Care Services, with head office in Belgium and claims office in Ireland. For ex-employees of other UN agencies formerly covered by Van Breda, the insurer is Cigna, a US-based insurer which appears to have taken over Van Breda.

A few weeks ago, Queensland AAFICS members formerly covered by Van Breda were invited to comment on their initial experience with the new health insurance provider. Of the 10 replies received, six related to Cigna as the new provider. In general the change-over to Cigna has gone well. People regard their performance as ‘positive’ and the change-over as ‘seamless’, although one member noted that her surgeon was still waiting for payment by Cigna two months after performing an operation.

There were four responses from people now covered by Allianz, including the writer. Unlike Van Breda, which accepted claims online, claims must be e-mailed to Allianz, or of course sent by snail mail. To date Allianz’s settlement time is definitely worse than Van Breda’s. Two claims from different people were settled by Allianz in 21 and 22 days (that is from time of e-mailing the claim to receiving settlement in the bank). Another member commented that it had taken “a long time” to process his first claim. By comparison, the last four Van Breda claims submitted by the writer were settled in an average of seven days, which seems remarkably fast. To give Allianz the benefit of the doubt perhaps an initial claim does take longer to process? Let’s see.

Another member commented that Allianz were more demanding than Van Breda in respect of diagnoses and other documentation. He was also concerned that the issue of a portion of our bills being covered by Medicare seemed to be less well understood by Allianz.

On a lighter note, Allianz responded quickly when the writer objected to his nationality being recorded as Italian. Have any other ex-Rome based folk had this problem?

In conclusion, it is probably too early to give a verdict on the performance of the two new insurers. However, we’ll keep this under review and invite AAFICS members to inform us of their experiences – good and less good.

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AND FINALLY...FREE MONEY FROM THE UN?

Your Guest Editor was excited to recently receive this e-mail (below). He is very happy about the $3.5m which will, no doubt, soon be on the way to his bank account from UN coffers. He especially thanks Mr. Ban for personally thinking of him in such a generous and gracious way.

My name is Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. Secretary to (UNITED NATIONS) I would advise you to contact Mr. Peter Amangbo, the GMD/CEO of Zenith Bank Plc Of Nigeria on this E-mail (info_zenithbankplc@qq.com). Please send him your full name, address, age and telephone numbers or call him on TEL:+234-70357566-42, for your COMPENSATION valued ($3.5 Million) offered in your name. as UNITED NATIONS COMPENSATION.

Yours truly.

Mr. Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary General (UNITED NATIONS)

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URGENT: STOP PRESS

News has just been received from our World Bank colleagues (via Mary Johnson) concerning the Andrew Macoun case.

The key points are:

- the case will go to the High Court on 9 October (not August as earlier advised);
- the ATO has changed its mind and agreed to meet the majority of the costs of both sides as it is considered to be a "test case";
- those of us who made contributions are likely to receive back a proportion.

However, this will take time as all costs will have to be settled first.

Mike Sackett

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This July, 2015 AAFICS Newsletter was prepared by the members of the AAFICS Queensland Branch. The comments expressed by individual writers are their own and should not be seen as those of AAFICS.

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