

Australia's Population in a Global World. 17th Biennial Conference of the Australian Population Association, Hobart, 3-5 December 2014

Population mobility in the Pacific region in the 21st century: trends and prospects

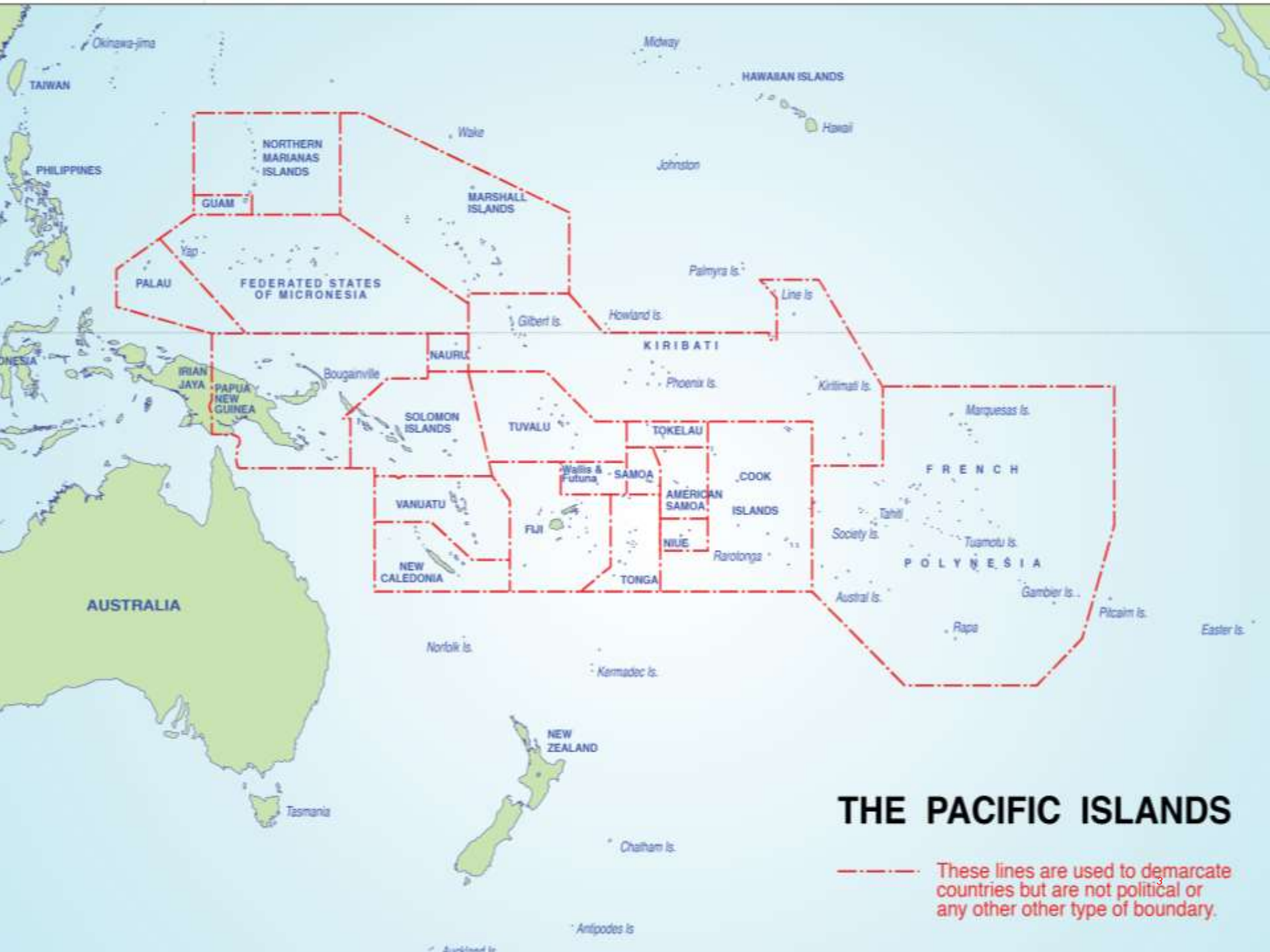
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The place of the neighbourhood

“Australia’s population in a global world”, the theme for this conference, will always need to have a special place for those living in neighbouring countries.

A fundamental finding from 150 years of migration research is that **proximity as well as **opportunity** matters.**

Ignoring changes in the neighbourhood, while pursuing a broader global development strategy, carries significant risks for Australia (and New Zealand) longer-term.

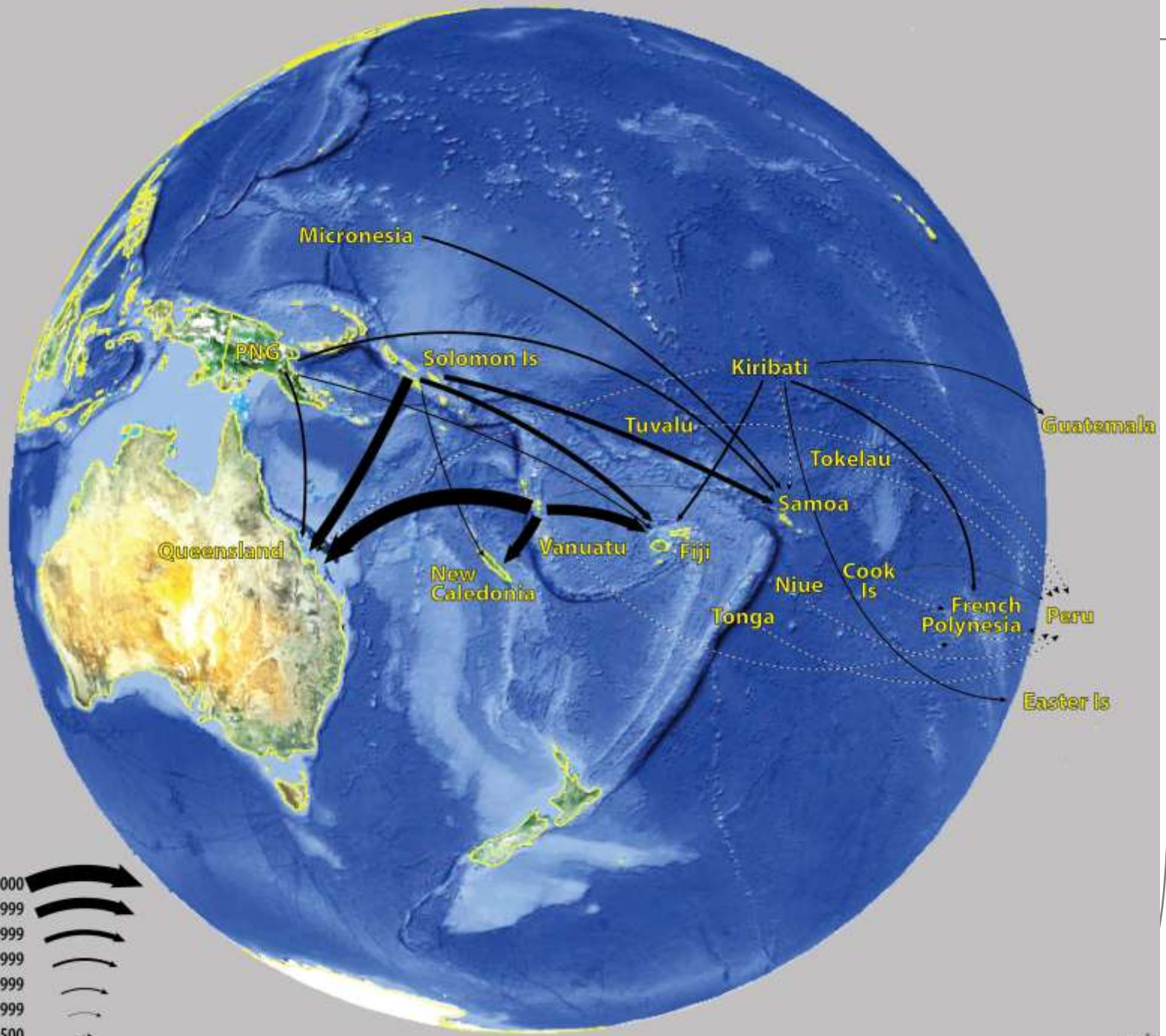


THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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Tasmania as a Pacific Island

- ❖ **An island (including many off-shore islands) bordered in part by the Pacific Ocean**
- ❖ **A maritime as well as land-based economy, similar to all Pacific island economies**
- ❖ **A population (around 520,000) a bit smaller than the Solomon Islands (580,000)**
- ❖ **A main city of around 210,000 people, similar in size to Suva in Fiji**
- ❖ **A history of net migration losses to a neighbouring continental island, similar to most island countries in Polynesia and Micronesia as well as Fiji**



Pacific-born populations, ANZ, 1901-1947

Year	Australia	New Zealand	ANZ
1901	10,363	403	10,766
1911	3,410	204	3,614
1921	3,519	1,272	4,791
1933/36	3,510	1,737	5,247
1945/47	4,417	3,030	7,447

Pacific-born populations, ANZ, 1966-2006

Year	Australia	New Zealand	ANZ
1966	11,853	22,520	34,373
1976	26,038	49,652	75,690
1986	50,608	72,738	123,346
1996	86,718	99,264	185,982
2006	106,407	138,432	244,839

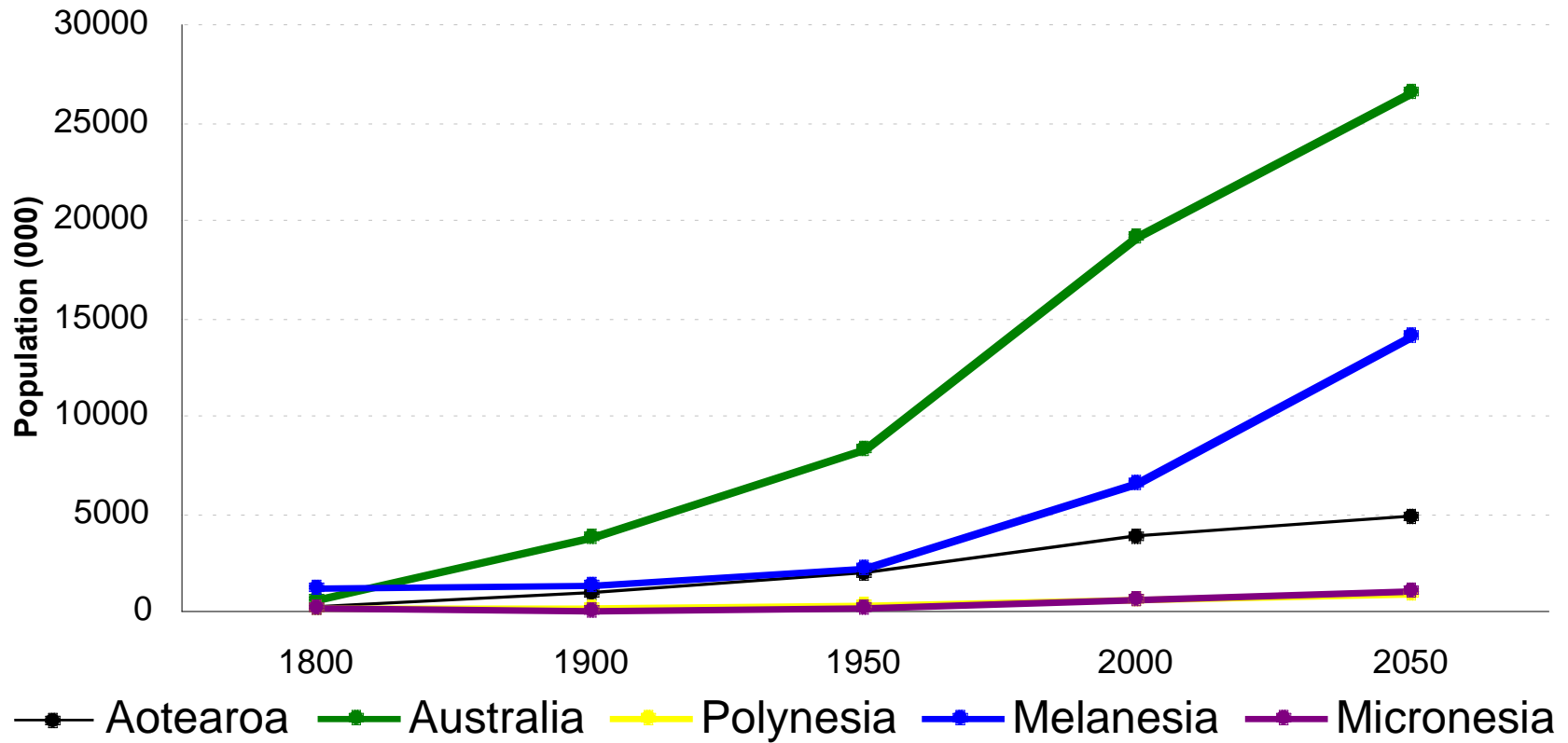
Pacific-born populations, ANZ, 2011/13

Sub-region	Australia	New Zealand	ANZ
Melanesia	87,852	55,552	143,404
Micronesia	1,213	1,845	3,058
Polynesia	36,339	94,176	130,575
Total	125,464	151,573	277,037
% Melanesia	70.0	36.7	51.8
% Mel - Fiji	24.6	1.8	12.2

Fiji as a Pacific Island “hub”

- ❖ **The Pacific country that has had strong links with Australia and New Zealand, and been a transport and trading hub in the south Pacific since the 1940s**
- ❖ **A Pacific government that is deeply aggrieved at the treatment it has had from Australia, New Zealand, and some island neighbours since 2009**
- ❖ **A Pacific state that wants to diminish the role that Australia and New Zealand play in the premier regional political organisation – the Pacific Forum**
- ❖ **A Pacific state which wants greater international recognition as a leader in a region of small island states and one large state, PNG**

Population change 1800-2050



Pacific populations (millions)

Area	2010	2030	2050
Melanesia	8.75	12.67	16.59
Micronesia	0.54	0.66	0.73
Polynesia	0.67	0.78	0.86
New Zealand	4.40	5.21	5.68
Australia	22.27	27.77	31.38

Challenging migration futures

- ❖ **A “youth bulge” and a “demographic dividend”? Futures for islands experiencing significant social and structural change in their populations.**
- ❖ **Urbanization without industrialization? Futures for families in towns without much formal sector employment growth.**
- ❖ **Education for what sorts of work? Futures for educated islanders in local and overseas towns.**
- ❖ **Accommodating climate change? Futures for small states experiencing higher sea levels and more frequent & intensive rainfall, drought and cyclones.**

A demographic challenge

A review of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2004 recommended that Forum Leaders

“Listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognise the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, healthcare and job opportunities”

Youth populations, 2011 (%)

Area	0-14	15-24	0-24
Melanesia	36.7	19.6	56.3
Micronesia	31.1	19.1	50.2
Polynesia	31.4	19.5	50.9
New Zealand	24.5	16.3	40.8
Australia	26.6	17.8	44.4

Youth populations, 2050 (%)

Area	0-14	15-24	0-24
Melanesia	26.0	16.6	42.4
Micronesia	19.8	13.8	33.6
Polynesia	21.9	14.9	36.8
New Zealand	18.2	11.9	30.1
Australia	15.1	9.7	24.8

Numbers aged 15-24 (000' s)

Area	2010	2050	change
Melanesia	1,658	2,757	1,099
Micronesia	96	100	4
Polynesia	126	129	3
New Zealand	638	679	41
Australia	3,147	3,671	524

A skilled workforce

With regard to unlocking the unrealised potential of the Pacific, NZ's PM, John Key observed at the Forum in 2011:

“We need to work harder to get kids into school in the Pacific region, and teach them skills they need to succeed and contribute to the economy. We also need to help adults learn new skills.

It is vital that we have a skilled workforce to help us grow our economies.”

Skills to succeed where?

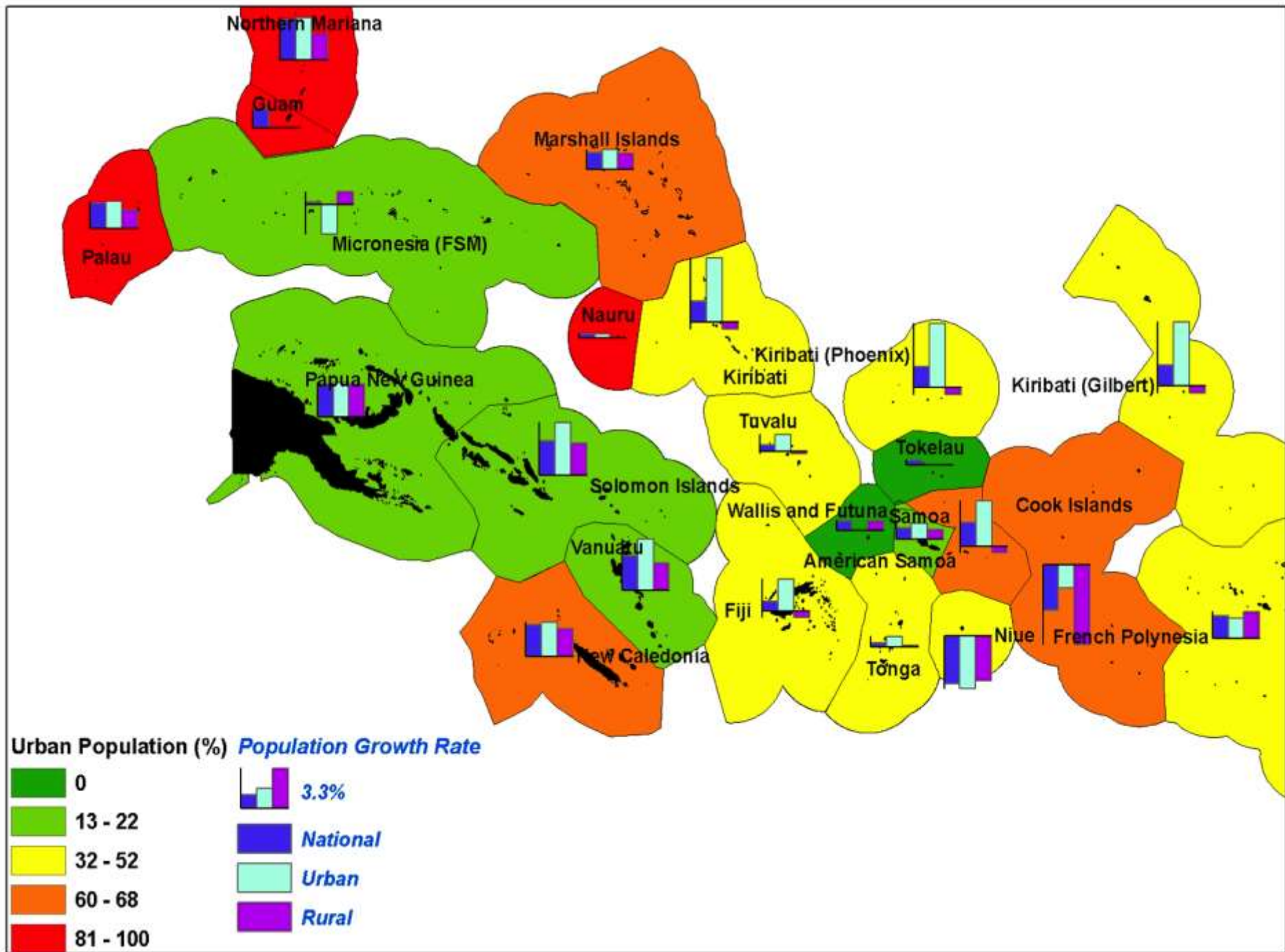
- ❖ **Skills and aspirations for work in villages? In Pacific towns? Overseas?**
- ❖ **A long history of aspirations for education – Samoans in NZ in the 1960s; seasonal workers – remittances for education?**
- ❖ **New futures for agriculture? Issues of overseas markets and networks.**
- ❖ **Employment opportunities in small towns?**

Urban futures?

John Connell, an eminent Pacific geographer based in Australia, has argued for many years that “unmistakably the Pacific faces an urban future”.

In every Pacific country urban population growth is exceeding the national growth rate.

Yet, with few exceptions, urbanization has tended to be viewed as a negative process to be discouraged as governments focus on rural development.



Urban populations (millions)

Area	2010	2030	2050
Melanesia	1.61	2.96	5.45
Micronesia	0.39	0.52	0.64
Polynesia	0.30	0.38	0.50
New Zealand	3.71	4.38	4.86
Australia	19.17	23.57	26.95

Percentage urban

Area	2010	2030	2050
Melanesia	18.4	23.8	34.9
Micronesia	68.1	73.3	80.0
Polynesia	42.4	48.8	59.9
New Zealand	86.2	88.1	90.9
Australia	89.1	91.9	93.8

Millionaire cities in the Pacific

What will the 21st century Pacific city with a population of over 1 million people look like?

By 2050 there will be at least two of these in Melanesia, probably both in Papua New Guinea, if that region is to have 5.5 million people living in urban places.

These will not be cities like those in Australia and New Zealand – already the bulk of the populations in urban places in the Pacific live in ‘informal settlements’ of one kind or another.

Urbanization and international migration

The urbanization of Europe was accompanied by very significant international migration.

The urbanization of Polynesia and Micronesia has been accompanied by significant international migration to the Pacific rim.

It seems inevitable that increased levels of education and the broadening skill base for Pacific populations generally and Melanesian populations in particular will generate increasing international mobility.

Pacific “arrival” cities on the rim

Major” arrival” cities for Polynesians and Melanesian Fijians on the Pacific rim have been Auckland, Honolulu, Los Angeles and Sydney for several decades already.

Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Sydney and Auckland will be important arrival cities for Melanesians from PNG, Solomons and Vanuatu over the coming decades.

Initially it will be increases in short-term visitors, students and seasonal workers. Longer-term it will be skilled migrants and their families coming to live.

A watershed in the migration system?

The re-emergence of Melanesia

- ❖ **The emergence of PNG as a destination for Melanesian migrants?**
- ❖ **Queensland as the premier overseas destination for Melanesians?**
- ❖ **A Melanesian majority in New Zealand's Pacific population by 2050?**
- ❖ **Overseas migration rates in western Melanesia by 2050 that are similar to Fiji's in 2010?**

Some new clusters

- ❖ **Melanesian Spearhead Group and the MSG Skilled Mobility Initiative – intra-regional migration.**
- ❖ **The Pacific Labour Sending (PAILS) Countries Forum – an initiative by the World Bank and labour sending countries to co-ordinate policies and practices relating to overseas labour mobility.**
- ❖ **Australia's Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) and NZ's Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme – managed circular migration programs for selected Pacific states**

The RSE and SWP, 2012-14

Year/area	RSE	SWP	Total
2012-13			
Pacific	6,187	1,452	7,339
Asia	1,269	21	1,290
Total	7,456	1,473	8,929
2013-14			
Pacific	6,524	1,944	8,468
Asia	1,331	74	1,405
Total	7,855	2,018	9,873

Pacific workers, 2013-14

Country	RSE	SWP	Total
Vanuatu	3,070	212	3,282
Tonga	1,538	1,497	3,035
Samoa	1,169	162	1,331
Solomon Islands	491	13	504
Kiribati	127	14	141
Tuvalu	71	20	91
PNG	58	26	84
Nauru	0	0	0

Climate change and Pacific atolls

In a press release on 6 June 2011 in the *New Zealand Herald*, Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, stated that:

“his country may already be doomed by global warming ... under “worst case” scenarios it will be flooded by the Pacific this century and its 100,000 people will have to be re-settled in other countries ... To plan for the day when you no longer have a country is indeed painful but I think we have to do that”.

Tradition of overseas migration

- ❖ **Labour migration, phosphate islands -- Banaba (Ocean Is) and Nauru**
- ❖ **Resettlement, Fiji, Solomons**
- ❖ **Plantation labour, Vanuatu and other Pacific**
- ❖ **Seafarers**
- ❖ **Temporary work and settlement, NZ**

Looking ahead ...

Amongst several contentious demographic issues confronting NZ and Australia in the Pacific during the next 30 years will be how to deal with the issue of resettlement of I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans in the face of global warming.

There are cases of overstayers in NZ from both countries claiming refugee status because of progressive destruction of their land and livelihood in the islands. None of these cases have been successful to date on the grounds of refugee protection.

Creative use of existing immigration policy plus a commitment to longer-term resettlement as an option is something both NZ and Australia have to consider for two atoll countries in crisis.

Our real challenge ...

Arguably the most contentious demographic issue confronting Australia and NZ in the Pacific during the next half century will be how to cope with pressure for an emigration outlet from Melanesia -- not dealing with the issue of resettlement of I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans in the face of global warming.

Sustainable development in Melanesia will depend heavily on opportunities for young people to travel overseas for training and employment, just as development in Australia and New Zealand has depended heavily on the opportunities for their young people to travel and and gain skills, experience, qualifications and work overseas.