

SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE  
REFERENCES COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND THE  
ISLAND STATES OF THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC  
SUBMISSION

Submission No:

2

Submittor: Australia West Papua Association-Melbourne

Inc AND Global Justice Inc

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Attachments: No

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Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Reference Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600



4 May 2002

Dear Sir

I enclose a joint submission to the inquiry into Australia's *Relationship with PNG and the islands states of Oceania* from the Australia West Papua Association-Melbourne Inc. and Global Justice Inc.

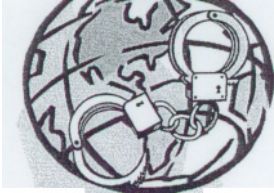
I also enclose a letter from Global Justice Inc.

Please note that I would be prepared to speak on behalf of both organizations at any public hearings that may be held as part of the inquiry process.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kel Dummett', written over a light blue background.

Kel Dummett  
AWPA-Melbourne Inc



# Global Justice Inc.

PO Box 12524, A'Beckett Street PO Melbourne, Vic 8006  
globaljustice@start.com.au

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Reference Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra

ACT 2600'; -

Dear Madam/Sir

Please find enclosed a joint submission from Global Justice Inc and the Australia West Papua Association Inc. to the Australia's Relationship with PNG and the island states of Oceania inquiry.

Yours sincerely

S,  
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Kevin P Dunlop  
Campaign Coordinator  
Asia-Pacific

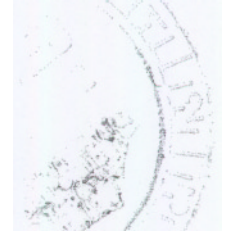
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## **Submission to**

## **Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Reference Committee**

**on**

## **Australia's Relationship with PNG and the island states of Oceania**



### **1. Organisations in this submission**

This is a joint submission from two organisations:

#### **(1) The Australia West Papua Association-Melbourne Inc.**

AWPA-Melb Inc is a solidarity organization with the people of West Papua. AWPA supports the Papuan people's right to a genuine act of self determination; raises awareness within the Australian community and NGOs of the injustices suffered by Papuans over the past 40 years of brutal Indonesian occupation; and lobbies the Australian government to apply pressure to Indonesia to cease human rights violations and seek a peaceful solution to the problems in West Papua, through mediated dialogue. AWPA-Melb Inc works closely with human rights and environment NGOs inside West Papua.

#### **(2) Global Justice Inc.**

Global Justice Inc works to raise awareness of social, economic and environmental injustices around the world. We have a specific concern for issues affecting indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **2. Introduction**

AWPA and Global Justice believe that Australia's relationship with the Melanesian states of Oceania should be a crucial concern of Government. A sound relationship involving mutual respect is vital to Australia's economic future and for security in the region.

AWPA and Global Justice also believe that any inquiry into Australia's relationship with PNG cannot ignore the gross human rights violations and lack of justice across the border in Indonesian occupied West Papua.

### **3. Scope of submission**

The AWPA and Global Justice submission will cover:

- (i) The importance of sound and respectful relations with Oceania states
- (ii) Australia's foreign policy position regarding Oceania
- (iii) Security issues
- (iv) West Papua
- (v) Environmental destruction
- (vi) Refugees and the 'Pacific solution'

(vii) Recommendations

**(i) The importance of sound and respectful relations with Oceania states**

In recent years the Australian government has been forced to open its eyes to what is happening in our immediate region, that is, in the Pacific as well as in South East Asia. In the past, foreign policy has given the impression that the Pacific did not exist, preferring to direct its attention over the top of the Pacific to Asia, or even further a field to Europe, North America and the Middle East. Now, as analysts talk of the 'arc of instability' when describing the Pacific region, with conflicts and potential conflicts in PNG, Bougainville, Fiji, The Solomons and West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya), Australian policy-makers are being forced to pay more attention to the Pacific.

That is not to say that Australia ignores the Pacific, indeed Australia has taken an active role in some Pacific nations. Unfortunately, unlike our constructive involvement in the peace negotiations between PNG and Bougainville, our role has not always been constructive. For a number of years Australia provided military support to PNG to wage its war against Bougainville. Australia also pushes the International Monetary Fund's socially and environmentally damaging Restructuring programs to Pacific nations. The Australian government has also frequently played the bully-boy role at the Pacific Islands Forum (formerly the South Pacific Forum) and Australia continues to give unconditional support to Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua.

AWPA and Global Justice believe that Australia must show respect for Melanesian culture, its people and its traditional and political structures. Melanesian countries practice customary ownership of land, which ensure that all Indigenous people have the right to access to land for a house and to grow food. Australia downplays the importance of this form of land tenure, and takes the IMF line of trying to replace customary land tenure with individual ownership - a change that would be disastrous for Melanesian people, and open the door to exploitation by capitalist enterprises.

**(ii) Australia's foreign policy position regarding Oceania**

Australia's current foreign policies regarding Pacific nations is patronizing and bullying. One only has to look at the position Australia has taken at recent Pacific Island Fora, where we have used bully-boy tactics to get our way. Most recently this has been evident in our pressure applied to prevent West Papuan delegates from obtaining observer status at the Forum and forcing changes to the wording of communique relating to injustices in West Papua.

AWPA and Global Justice believes it is impossible to look at Australia's foreign policy position regarding the Melanesian states in isolation from our policy position regarding Indonesia. Australia should take a more positive role in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly as a mediator of conflict in the region. However, to be an effective mediator, and to encourage peaceful solutions to conflicts, Australia must have foreign policies that are sustainable over the long-term; that can respond to changing circumstances; and that respect human rights. These were all sadly absent from our policy regarding East Timor. Instead, Australia locked itself into the untenable position of unconditional support of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor.

This 24-year, flawed East Timor policy, resulted not only in the deaths of thousands of Timorese, but also severely damaged our close relationship with Indonesia. Many in the Indonesian government saw Australia's sudden policy reversal, from that of total support of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor and of turning a blind eye to military (TNI) and militia atrocities, to calling for and leading an armed intervention force, as a betrayal.

Numerous writers have discussed the failings of Australia's Indonesia policy, particularly regarding East Timor. John Birmingham in *Appeasing Jakarta: Australia's complicity in the East Timor Tragedy* describes Australia's policy as "appeasement", "lacking in authentic and widespread domestic support" and "unsustainable". He also describes the culture of the Australian Foreign Service, responsible for developing these policies and advising governments, as rigid and hierarchical and "vulnerable to capture by their own mythologies". He says they exhibited the standard practices of "retreating into tunnel vision, the denial of truth [and] refusal to plan for worse case scenarios".

Australia has not learned the lessons of East Timor. In fact, many in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and in this and former governments, still refuse to admit they and Australia's policies, were wrong. Former Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, has only recently acknowledged his errors. In the article *Indonesia: My Mistake*, (published in the International Herald Tribune, July 2001) he says "I am one of those who has to acknowledge, as Australia's foreign minister at the time, that many of our earlier training efforts [of Indonesian military officers] only helped to produce more professional human rights abusers".

(iii) Security issues

Security in the region is a major concern. In recent years there have been numerous conflicts in the region: Bougainville, PNG, Fiji, The Solomons and West Papua. Australia's foreign policy often aggravates rather than moderates conflict situations.

As mentioned earlier, Australia assisted PNG to perpetrate its unjustified war against the people of Bougainville. Indeed the war on Bougainville has its origins in Australian government's policy of supporting the operation of an Australian company (CRA) at the expense of the rightful owners of the land. However Australia did act constructively in mediating and supporting the peace agreement in Bougainville.

Australia has been criticised for not taking positive action early to prevent the escalation of the conflict in the Solomons.

But the most serious conflict, with the most serious security implications for Australia is in West Papua, where a brutal military regime continues to brutalise the indigenous population of West Papuan. **It must be pointed out that this is a one sided conflict, Papuans pledged to pursue peaceful means to solve the problem back in 1988, and have continued to stand by this decision, despite horrendous human rights violations.** This conflict right on our doorstep, has been running for 40 years now, yet successive Australian governments have preferred to become involved in wars on the other side of the world, rather than become involved in trying to mediate a solution to this conflict less than 200 kms from our shores.

The security implications from this conflict are great. Over the years, thousands of West Papuans have fled to PNG. AWPFA and Global Justice believe that widespread East Timor

type bloodshed in the near future, cannot be ruled out. This will result in a flood of refugees across the border into PNG. What will Australia's position be if Indonesian troops pursue these Papuans across the border, violating PNG sovereignty? A worse case scenario for Australia arises if widespread engagement occurs between Indonesian and PNG forces. Will Australia's security arrangements with PNG draw us into a conflict with Indonesia?

#### **(iv) West Papua**

The former Dutch colony is the western half of the island of New Guinea, and has been part of Indonesia since the sham act-of-self-determination, called the Act of Free Choice in 1969. This was a vote by 1025 Indonesian-picked Papuans, who were forced at the point of an Indonesian army rifle, to vote to remain part of Indonesia. It was, according to the 1962 New York Agreement that settled the dispute between the Dutch and Indonesia over West Papua, supposed to be a vote of "all adult Papuans" in an "act of self-determination to be carried out in accordance with international practice". The United Nations and the international community, including Australia, accepted the sham vote as legitimate. Since then estimates of the number of Papuans killed or disappeared at the hands of the brutal Indonesian regime, range from 100, 000 according to Amnesty, to 400, 000 according to a Papuan church report.

Australia's foreign policy position regarding West Papua, is just as rigid as the 24-year East Timor policy. A Parliamentary Briefing Paper entitled *Is West Papua Another Timor?* states: "Australia made a pragmatic decision a long time ago that it has no choice but to support Indonesia's sovereignty in West New Guinea [West Papua], and this **will not change**" (my emphasis).

Indeed the same comments that were being made by our leaders in the lead up to the devastation of East Timor, are being repeated now regarding West Papua. What our leaders and foreign affairs bureaucrats fail to realize is that history shows us that independence movements don't go away. Regardless of what Australian or Indonesian politicians say, West Papua will become independent - it's not a question of 'if' but of 'when and how'. In a recent visit to Australia, the US State Department's policy director, Mr Richard Haas acknowledged this when he said "Jakarta will ultimately have to accommodate at least some provincial ambitions for self-government".

Australia should be pro-actively seeking a peaceful solution to the West Papua issue, and thus avoiding loss of life and an inflamed security situation.

Australia's Indonesia policy needs to respect Indonesian sovereignty, but also recognize Papuan's right to a genuine act of self-determination. AWPA and Global Justice like many in the Australian NGO community, believe that there is a middle way for our Indonesia foreign policy, in which Australia quietly holds its ground over issues that matter, but handles mutual differences sensitively.

#### **(v) Environmental destruction**

The issue of environmental protection must be a serious focus for Australia's policy with Pacific nations. Issues such as climate change, logging, over-fishing and mining are a serious

concern. These activities pose grave environmental threats to Pacific nations, and even threaten the existence of some Pacific nations.

Australia has the responsibility to assist and encourage Pacific nations to protect their environment.

Australia should work pro-actively to ensure that Pacific nations make development decisions that are sustainable by providing expertise and financial assistance to help develop environmental legislation and encourage sustainable thinking.

Climate change and resulting sea-level rise is a serious concern for most Pacific nations, yet Australia has consistently ignored the plight and pleas of Pacific nations. Australia must ratify the Kyoto agreement and promote solutions to the climate change problem. Australia should also encourage the development of sustainable, renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and tidal, across the Pacific.

#### **(vi) Australian Aid**

AWPA and Global Justice believe that Australia's Development Aid must be targeted and specifically directed, through local grassroots organizations. Currently Australia's Foreign Aid policy is **shamefully** dominated by business concerns, ie promoting Australia's business opportunities overseas. This means the Aid policy is aimed at large engineering developments such as bridges, at the expense of vital health, education and community development projects.

Regarding education, AWPA and Global Justice believe that too much emphasis and funding is placed on providing scholarships for overseas students to study in Australia - once again this is determined by business priorities and not the needs of developing countries in the region. Therefore we call for more Aid resources to go to countries to develop local education especially at elementary and primary levels -identified by many studies as the most vital area of education development for developing countries..

In relation to West Papua, AWPA has been informed that Indonesia is abusing AusAid's excellent policy of targeting a certain proportion of scholarships to study in Australia, to Papuans. We understand that the Indonesian government is putting forward Papuan names to access the scholarships, and at the last minute substituting Indonesian students. We ask that this abuse of the scheme be investigated.

#### **(vii) Refugees and the 'Pacific solution'**

The so-called 'Pacific solution' is demoralizing to Pacific nations. It forces countries, with the promise of aid, to accept desperate people whom Australia does not want to accommodate on our shores. It shamefully exploits the power imbalance in our relationship with Pacific nations, to force them to take the refugees. There is also a serious potential for conflict created in the countries taking the refugees. AWPA and Global Justice demands that Government abandoned the unjust 'Pacific solution'.



### **(viii) Recommendations**

1. Australia must show respect for Melanesian culture, its people and its traditional and political structures
2. Australia must cease its support of policies to replace customary land tenure with the Western system of individual ownership.
3. Australia should take a more positive role in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly as a mediator of conflict in the region.
4. Australia must amend its foreign policies to ensure that they are sustainable over the long-term; that can respond to changing circumstances; and that they respect human rights.
5. Australia should avoid further loss of life in West Papua and avoid a serious security issue, by acting as a mediator and bringing Indonesia and West Papua to the negotiating table to plan a path to self-determination for Papuans.
6. Australia should use its position in the United Nations to bring about a review of the Act of Free Choice.
7. Australia should provide expertise and financial assistance to Pacific nations to develop environmental legislation and encourage sustainable thinking.
8. Australia must ratify the Kyoto agreement and promote solutions to the climate change problem.
9. Australia should encourage (fund and promote) the development of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and tidal, across the Pacific.
10. Australia's Development Aid must be targeted and specifically directed, through local grassroots organizations, especially in the area of primary education.
11. There must be an investigation into the reported abuse by Indonesia of Australia's education scholarships targeted to West Papua.
12. Australia must abandon the 'Pacific solution' to the refugee crisis.