



**Project title:** *APFRN/CAPSTRANS The Big Island:  
Promoting Contemporary Pacific Art and Craft in Australia:  
A Development Workshop*

Although many of New Zealand's most successful artists are of Pacific Island origin, Australia (the Big Island) is far behind this neighbouring country in terms of acknowledging, researching and promoting contemporary Pacific art produced within its shores. Pacific Island immigrants in Australia (PI) number 300,000-500,000 (1.5%-2.3% of the population), many of whom hold New Zealand passports. Australian South Sea Islanders (ASSI), descendants of *Kanak* indentured labourers, number around 30,000. Torres Strait Islanders (TSI) have a shared heritage with Indigenous Australians and Pacific peoples. In recent years TSI artists and writers (Denis Nona, Alik Tipoti, Jenuarri, Faith Bandler and Brian Robinson) have achieved international renown. PI and ASSI, however, have not enjoyed the same degree of support or recognition.

The workshop will be held at the University of Wollongong and bring together around 16 participants from around the country. These will include invited panel leaders; professional researchers, established Pacific artists and writers, and a cultural economist. Together with this national pool of expertise, invited postgraduate students and emerging researchers will present papers on the diverse nature of Pacific art practised throughout Australia and the inter-disciplinary and inter-regional issues that arise. New Zealand Pacific art researcher, Dr Karen Stevenson, who recently published *The Frangipani is Dead*, will present a keynote address. The workshop will focus on strategies for developing research on and promotion of Australian Pacific artists.

The specific aims of the workshop are to:

- provide a forum where cross-disciplinary art discourses on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Pacific Australian art are formally addressed, presented and compiled in written form;
- assist doctoral students to enhance their expertise in contemporary issues relating to Australian Pacific art;
- support Indigenous and non-Indigenous postgraduate students to publish their research through feedback on writing and expert advice on publication;
- encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian Pacific artists and writers to undertake postgraduate research in visual Pacific Studies.
- provide the opportunity for regionally dispersed pockets of Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, artists, curators and private sector participants to create a cohesive and networked 'community' to discuss possibilities for promoting Pacific Australian artists through mutually beneficial research partnerships, publications, exhibitions and exchanges;
- create a higher public and industry level of awareness of Pacific artists and writers as an integral but currently overlooked field within Academia and the visual arts and crafts sector.

The workshop is supported by a grant from the Asia Pacific Futures Research Network funded by the Australian Research Council and by the Centre for Asia Pacific Transformation Studies. It is coordinated by Dr Pam Zeplin (Creative Arts, University of South Australia) and A/Prof Paul Sharrad (Arts, University of Wollongong).

This is a closed workshop but for further information please contact A/Prof Paul Sharrad ([psharrad@uow.edu.au](mailto:psharrad@uow.edu.au))