He is the Very Model of a Pacific Historian

Robert Cribb

Read out at Brij Lal’s farewell function at The Australian National University, 7 March 2016, and sung to the tune of ‘I am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General’ (with apologies to Messrs Gilbert and Sullivan).

He is the very model of a Pacific historian
He knows each island’s governors right back to times Victorian
He’s had a hand in every kind of matter constitutional
And we’ve also seen him take a role as leader institutional.

Not everyone was terribly affectionate for CHL
But under Brij we found the School was really doing very well
With Fellowships, incentive funds, a bright new secretariat
And student numbers climbing in the gentle care of Harriette.

In CAP Exec he fought for us against the dreaded Andrew twins
A thankless fight and we all know that no one ever truly wins
He battles bull where’er it’s found just like a famous matador
But does he really have to wear those floral shirts he buys in Tulsi’s store?

His library’s enormous and he must have written half of all
The books on Fiji taking inspiration from that kava bowl
In recent years his view has widened and we’ve seen he has for a

Begun to do some work on the great Indian diaspora.
And now he’s going off to try his fortune as a Queenslander
With Padma by his side ‘twill be at last a time for him and her.
We’re going to miss him when he’s gone; we don’t know how we’ll carry on
He’s always been our shining star, he’s going to be a Brij too far.
Glossary

CHL  School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

CAP  College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University (of which CHL was a part).
This text is taken from *Bearing Witness: Essays in honour of Brij V. Lal*, edited by Doug Munro and Jack Corbett, published 2017 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.