

## 7. 'Tonga Only Wants Our Money': The children of Tongan migrants

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We simply just want to survive. We cannot survive while trying to sustain our respective Tongan community, if we are expected to subsidize Tonga's frail economy. It is not our responsibility. That is the responsibility of Tonga's government ... We do not want to perpetuate the financial blunders of generations past and give, give, give our way to the unemployment line, the welfare line, to government housing or homelessness ... As for the issue of identity, let me ask you this: why should we sustain the economy of a country that hasn't made an effort to embrace our generation? ... Tonga only wants our money, but not us.

— Richard Wolfgramm, email posted on *Pacific Beat* online, Radio Australia, February 18, 2005

This statement, from a member of the second generation of Tongans in the USA, eloquently captures the key issues to be addressed in this chapter. Richard Wolfgramm is the publisher of a bimonthly English-language magazine for Tongans, *Ano Masima News*, based in Salt Lake City, Utah. Although he has been relatively successful, he readily admits that he does not send remittances to Tonga, partly because he has no family there whom he feels obligated to support, but also because the demands of participating in his local Tongan community are high. His statement reflects the views of many second-generation Tongans in the diaspora: he does not feel responsible for supporting Tonga's economy, he resents the burden such support placed on his parents' generation, and he believes Tonga welcomes his financial contribution yet does not accept him as truly 'Tongan'.

The reluctance of second-generation Tongans to shoulder the burden their parents have borne raises some serious questions about Tonga's future economic situation that are only just beginning to be considered. Since they began migrating in significant numbers in the 1970s, Tongan migrants have bolstered Tonga's economy, generating about half of its GDP each year. In 2002–03, for example, official remittances were about \$T150 million (DFAT 2003: 2), or about \$A114 million. This figure could be less than half of the actual total received in that year, because it does not include money and goods sent through informal channels (Brown and Foster 1995).

Tonga is among the Pacific nations that have been identified since the 1980s as MIRAB economies, based on Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy. The

acronym was developed originally by Bertram and Watters (1985) in relation to Pacific states linked to New Zealand and expanded to include other Pacific nations with similar economic situations (see also Bertram 1986; Bertram and Watters 1986). The MIRAB model posits that 'transnational corporations of kin' operate to maximise support from migrants to kin in the homeland, and that a continuing flow of new migrants contributes to the sustainability of remittance levels.

Like other MIRAB states, Tonga is a resource-poor nation unable to find sustainable alternative sources of income to remittances. While some members of the ruling elite in Tonga have managed to amass considerable wealth, the majority of the population survives on low wages, some subsistence production and the money and goods sent by family overseas. A range of factors such as transport costs, high tariffs, environmental factors and fluctuating markets have all contributed to the failure of many income-generating ventures attempted over the years. Even tourism, one of the mainstays of many small economies, has never been successful in Tonga, in part because of the close proximity of Fiji, a far cheaper and more tourist-oriented alternative. Aid is a significant income source, yet the amount received is dwarfed by the remittances sent by Tongans overseas.

The future of these remittances is the focus of this paper and of the research I am currently conducting into second-generation Tongan transnationalism. Here I argue that only a low level of economic support for Tonga is likely to be provided by the second and subsequent generations of Tongans in the diaspora, and that this has worrying implications for Tonga's future economic and social stability.

## **The sustainability of remittances**

There is now a substantial literature debating the MIRAB model (for recent discussions, see Bertram 1999; and Poirine 1998), and much of this work addresses the claim made by Bertram and Watters that aid and remittances 'appear capable of continuous reproduction at least until the turn of the century' (1985: 501). Some studies have supported this claim, citing sustained high levels of remittances while others have supported the 'remittance decay hypothesis', which posits that the longer migrants remain overseas the lower the level of their remittances (Brown and Foster 1995: 38). Thus far, the sustainability debate has centred almost entirely on first-generation migrants.

There also has been a focus on how remittances are being used, with a continuing debate about whether this is primarily for consumption or investment. This debate is concerned with whether remittances help or hinder economic development, and in recent years has included consideration of the changing nature of remittances, such as goods for resale at flea markets, for example (Brown

and Connell 1993). In some cases, remittances are being replaced by informal trade, as with Tongans overseas sending goods for Tongan businesses, and receiving in return agricultural products to sell to niche markets of Islander communities. Again, the focus of such work has been on migrants rather than their children.

Closely tied to the issue of what uses are made of remittances is the question of *why* remittances are sent, and it is simplistic to assume that they are just altruistic gifts to kin and country. Remittances are also sent for personal investment, to maintain land rights, and to prepare for retirement, although in the latter case few elderly Tongans do in fact return to Tonga because their children and grandchildren are based overseas. If we look at these migrants' reasons for remitting, it is obvious that few members of the second generation overseas are likely to have similar motives, so *why would* they remit?

Warnings that remittances and other ties to Tonga are likely to decline have been made since the mid-1980s, although they have been paid little heed. Professor Futa Helu, a Tongan academic, argued that overseas-born Tongans would not have 'the same sentiments, the same attachment to the homefolks as their parents had', and asserted that remittances would 'dry up sooner or later' (1985: 3). He concluded that 'all in all, we can say that the Tongan economy is facing a bleak future. We cannot continue to put our faith in remittances and transfers from Tongans abroad' (1985: 6; see also Finau 1993). This bleak future was outlined in detail by Campbell (1992: 71), who suggested that

[a]ny lessening in the level of remittances will cause an abrupt fall in Tongan imports rather than a further widening of the trade deficit. A reduced import level would have a seriously adverse effect on government revenue directly and lead to further losses from the consequential contraction of other activity, especially in construction. A reverse multiplier effect would cause many bankruptcies in the retail sector, the contraction of government services, and a declining standard of living that would force many people back into the subsistence economy, with increased pressure on land and kinship relationships. Political upheaval could be a further downstream effect.

Such warnings have been ignored by the Tongan Government, and by many outside analysts; for example, the ADB's recent overview of Tonga's economy stated simply that the medium-term trend would be that 'remittances are expected to increase and to underpin private consumption as source economies grow' (2005: 227). This ignores the very real possibility that those remittances will decline in the longer term and that this could constitute a substantial threat to Tonga's economic future.

## Investigating second-generation transnationalism

The lack of attention being paid to the potential impact of a decline in remittances on Tonga's long-term economic security is of concern, and has inspired the research I am conducting, with funding from the Australian Research Council. This research involves investigating the transnational practices of second-generation Tongans, particularly those in Australia, in order to discover the form and extent of their ties to their parents' homeland. Transnational ties are taken to be all forms of connection between a homeland and its population overseas, from phone calls and emails to remittances of money and goods and informal trade links. My use of 'transnational' also takes into account the multidirectional nature of such connections: Tongans in the islands also send goods to family members in the diaspora, and Tongans in different parts of the diaspora maintain complex networks of connections that can be quite distinct from ties to Tonga itself. Indeed, one of the questions the project addresses is whether the increasing ties *across* the diaspora are having any impact on ties to the islands: do they 'dilute' the strength of connections to Tonga?

Very little research has been carried out on second-generation transnationalism worldwide, and what little there is strongly suggests that transnational ties differ markedly between the first and second generation. In a collected volume on transnational families in Europe, several authors 'stress that points of contact weaken substantially in the transition from the first to second generation of immigrant populations' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). For example, Kane's contribution looks at immigrants from three West African countries in France, who developed strong links with their countries of origin through community development work in the home villages. However, 'second generation youth do not feel obliged to take part in the village association ... the migrants' children do not feel they owe anything to the village. The strong emotional ties between the migrant and his native land ... [are] not replicated in the second generation' (Kane 2002: 261).

Similar findings are reported in Levitt and Waters (2002), the first collection of papers to focus entirely on second-generation transnationalism. Most of the authors conclude that transnationalism declines with the second generation, and Rumbaut's paper in this collection, a study of Asian, Mexican and Latin American migrants in the USA, found that overall only a tiny proportion (2.4 per cent) had visited their parents' country of origin and remitted at least once a year (2002). Although Rumbaut does not quantify their remittances, their low level of engagement with the home countries is likely to be reflected in low levels of remittances. Other studies have shown similar results: Menjivar, for example, claims that for Guatemalan immigrants in the USA, second-generation transnationalism is 'marginal at best, and sometimes seemingly forced' (2002:

14). Menjivar concludes that most are unlikely to sustain long-term ties with Guatemala.

Vertovec points out that it is not really known what kinds of links members of the second generation in any migrant group will maintain. 'Processes and patterns conditioning the intergenerational succession and reproduction of transnational ties remain largely under-researched and under-theorised' (Vertovec 2001: 577). So little is known of second-generation transnationalism that it is unclear what factors influence the likelihood of transnational practices being maintained, how these fluctuate at different stages of the life cycle and what they mean to people. As Jones-Correa (2002: 238) has observed, remittances can be a chore to one person and a political statement to another. He also points to the difficulties of predicting the future decisions and life trajectories of members of the second generation.

This problem of future uncertainties has struck me in my continuing research with Tongans overseas. If we look at some of the Tongan youth in cities such as Sydney, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, who are caught up in gang violence and substance abuse, how can we possibly predict their life trajectories? If they eventually 'settle down' and move into mainstream jobs and domesticity, is this any guarantee that they will suddenly establish ties to Tonga and begin sending remittances? Will other young people, struggling against the poverty their families have faced since they migrated, find a way to help support Tonga's economy? Even those who have 'made it' in their host nation might be unwilling to provide the level of financial support their parents gave to Tonga since this would mean sacrificing some of the material and other benefits of their success. There are complex issues here, including the resentment of many young people of their parents' funneling of family income to churches and Tonga, and the pressure placed on them to be evidence of the success of the migration process. Migration was not just about helping kin in Tonga, but to increase the opportunities for migrants' children, and where those children have been able to achieve some upward social mobility, they need to demonstrate this through their lifestyles. Further complicating the picture is the point made by Wolfgramm in the quotation above: that participation in the local community can also absorb considerable resources.

Second-generation Tongans do not necessarily lack any sense of moral obligation to kin, but they are likely to enact this in relation to their immediate family members, who are also overseas, rather than to more distant kin in Tonga. As the first-generation migrants age, responsibility for their care will fall increasingly on their children, whose resources will be stretched even further and will be less likely to be directed to Tonga. And, while they feel a moral obligation to kin, they are less likely to be involved in the status-building in Tonga that also has been an inherent aspect of their parents' transnational ties.

Wolfgramm has claimed that for the second generation, '[W]e bear a lot of responsibilities here in our overseas communities to ourselves and to our families and it's really a burden that's taken a lot of our time and a lot of our energies, and it's hard for us to carry that burden and at the same time be expected to subsidise — and I use the word subsidise — Tonga's economy by sending remittances back to Tonga' (*Pacific Beat* online, Radio Australia, March 10, 2005). Another Tongan involved in *Ano Masima News*, 'Anapesi Ka'ili, also spoke on the *Pacific Beat* program and argued that many young Tongans in the USA were holding onto their Tongan identity, yet were 'redefining what it means to be Tongan, and how they choose to identify that. And for many of them remittances is not one of the ways in which they're seeing it play out in their Tonganness ... remittances have been something that many of them have really shied away from and [they] don't really see it as something that they would like to continue' (online March 10, 2005). She adds that many of the younger Tongans overseas do want to keep up their connection with Tonga, but through phone calls, return visits and other ties, not through remittances. This creates intergenerational tensions, with some of the older Tongans insisting that 'the only way you can identify as being Tongan is by the remittances being sent home'; however, she notes that even some of the older generation are resisting this pressure. In a response posted on the *Pacific Beat* web site after these interviews, one contributor commented that she sends money only because her elderly father is still alive in Tonga, adding 'our children will not do what we're doing now' (online February 24, 2005). Even within Tonga younger people are beginning to look for ways to lighten the burden of kinship and other obligations and to focus more on their own immediate family (James 2002: 286).

Elsewhere (Lee 2003, 2004) I have outlined the obstacles to young diasporic Tongans' maintenance of ties to Tonga, such as their lack of language and cultural skills and therefore absence of a secure identity as 'Tongan'; the economic and social problems within the diaspora; and young people's disapproval of many of the practices of their parents' generation, such as the time and resources devoted to the churches, and the funnelling of substantial amounts of family income sent as remittances. The high rate of intermarriage in Tongan populations overseas also tends to reduce the likelihood of remitting for Tongan spouses, let alone the children of these unions. Many young Tongans overseas tend to lack any strong sense of connection to Tonga, making it unlikely that they would feel any obligation to remit. Visits to Tonga can encourage this sense of connection, and can lead to more contact between migrants' descendants and kin in the homeland, yet there is no guarantee that economic support is forthcoming, at least not to the extent needed to sustain current levels. It can also be a strategy that can backfire and for many young Tongans, visiting Tonga can be confronting and seriously challenge their identification as 'Tongan' (Lee 2003).

For Tongans and other Pacific Islanders, there is a growing literature focusing on identity issues for members of the second generation, and their experiences in the host countries, but little on their remittance practices, and very little on their other ties to the islands. Where their parents' homelands are discussed, it tends to be in terms of emotional ties rather than actual connections and economic involvement. My own previous work on the Tongan diaspora shared these concerns, and the ties of the second-generation Tongans to Tonga were addressed primarily in terms of their impact on young people's negotiations of identity (Lee 2003).

Other work on the Tongan diaspora, even that which deals specifically with transnationalism, tends to avoid the question of second-generation transnationalism. In the only monograph to focus on Tongan transnationalism, Evans states in his conclusion simply that he has relatively little to add to the question of whether transnational ties are sustainable, and adds: 'At some level the long term continuity of both ideology and practice is an empirical question which must await answers' (2001: 160). While disappointing, his lack of consideration of second-generation transnationalism is understandable, given that his book focuses on the transnational practices of Tongans in Tonga, rather than the overseas population. Small's study (1997), which does focus on Tongan migrants' transnationalism, does not address the question of second-generation transnationalism in any detail; however, she argues that remittances will inevitably decline as the number of overseas-born Tongans outnumber the Tongan-born.

### **Piloting the 'Tongan ties' project**

My own research into second-generation Tongan transnationalism began in 2005 and entails the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, primarily from second-generation Tongans in Australia aged between 18 and 30. This includes in-depth interviews, which will be conducted with participants from six different locations in Australia, and email surveys repeated weekly for a total of four months to track participants' transnational connections practices. In addition, an email discussion list has been established to encourage a continuing dialogue among participants about the issues associated with transnationalism. The project will also entail several short periods of fieldwork in Tonga, to interview 18- to 30-year-olds who remain in the islands.

A pilot of the interviews and email surveys has recently been completed with a sample of 10 participants from Melbourne, aged between 20 and 29, with six females and four males. The sample is varied in terms of religious affiliation, occupation, assets and financial obligations, and household configurations, yet some clear patterns can be seen in the transnational practices and attitudes of this small but diverse group.

Overall, the participants have a low level of involvement with Tonga, maintaining contact with just a few family members, and three have no contact with anyone in Tonga. There is a slightly higher level of involvement with other Tongans in the diaspora, beyond Melbourne. This limited contact with family and friends in Tonga and elsewhere is mostly by phone and email and varies in frequency from daily to yearly. For some, their contact with relatives elsewhere in the diaspora also involves sending gifts occasionally, but none sends money and in one case a young man was the recipient of money from family overseas. Most of the participants attend churches with predominantly Tongan congregations but have no involvement in other Tongan organisations in Melbourne. The churches held fundraising events every two or three months, which most attended, and while most of the participants said they donated amounts between \$205 and \$100 on these occasions, not all events were to raise funds to send to Tonga.

The participants' direct ties to Tonga are limited, although most have visited the islands either for holidays or for church events. They have a low level of interest in Tongan politics, but keep up with current events in Tonga through Tongan newspapers, Internet sites and radio programs, and by word of mouth. Most say they have little or no sense of obligation or responsibility to the Church in Tonga, to the royal family, or to the country itself; where they do feel any obligation it is only to family. However, only three of the 10 send money to family directly and the remainder send either clothing or gifts occasionally, or give money to their parents when asked, to be forwarded to family in Tonga, or they contribute nothing at all. The pattern of remitting found in this group supports the argument made by James (1993: 360) that the 'transnational corporations of kin' central to the MIRAB model no longer operate for Tongans, with people tending to remit on an individual basis or as a nuclear family.

An interesting pattern that emerged in the pilot interviews was that some young women from the diaspora were developing relationships with men in Tonga while on holidays or church-related visits. Two of the six women interviewed had previously had a boyfriend in Tonga and two were currently in such a relationship; in all cases, their main connection to Tonga during the relationship was with their boyfriends rather than family. They reported sending these men gifts of clothing, DVDs and CDs, rather than money, with their main expenditure being on phone calls to Tonga. Although the males interviewed did not mention similar relationships, one woman claimed as many males as females were involved with partners in Tonga. Another woman suggested that for men this was more likely to be 'a fling or whatever and [they] come back and [do] not feel any connection to the person in Tonga', while another said the young men 'mainly go there to sow their wild oats' whereas women 'are looking more for the whole marriage thing'.

When asked about their sense of responsibility to family in Tonga, the participants' responses were mixed. One woman (27, single) replied: 'I've never felt that. You know, my parents, if there has been any responsibilities or obligations to family, it has usually been my parents and my uncles and my aunties, but it's normally stopped there too, it's never really come down to the kids.' Nevertheless, she estimated that she had sent about \$1,000 to Tonga in the past year, as well as clothing and gifts. Two other women said their parents had not encouraged them to have any connection to Tonga, and while one (single, 26) felt no responsibility to anyone there and sent no remittances, the other (single, 28) explained that she did feel a sense of obligation, 'because they don't have what we have here'. She estimated that she had sent about \$600 in the past year, as well as some gifts, to the three relatives in Tonga with whom she maintained contact. Two men who at present have no direct contact with family in Tonga had different reasons for this: one (single, 20) had previously sent money but felt it was more than he wanted to give, and said: 'I see sometimes ... them using that as an excuse or as a gate to open any time they need anything.' The other (married, 29) explained: 'I guess one day we're going to end up like our parents, supporting family back in Tonga. I won't do it yet, but I know one day I'm going to and I guess my kids will take over that role one day.' For now, he gives money only through his parents, when they ask him.

All of the participants readily acknowledged that without remittances Tongans in the islands would suffer. All predicted that the standard of living would decline, and some made comments such as 'They would probably starve', or 'I think they might kill themselves!', or asked 'How are they going to live if their family from overseas aren't going to lend a hand?' Most felt, however, that even now, with high levels of remittances, Tonga was struggling. One woman (single, 27) commented: 'I don't like going back to Tonga and seeing people suffer and then it makes me feel worse when I come back to Australia ... Whenever I'm there visiting I feel that the poor are getting poorer and the rich are just getting richer and it just builds my anger and makes me feel frustrated for the people that live there ... the whole political system, I think, is corrupt and I just feel sorry for the people that live in Tonga.'

Almost all participants commented on Tonga's political problems, with one woman (single, 25) saying, 'Oh, Tonga! Everybody's got problems there! There's [sic] money problems, there's politics, there's parliament, there's [sic] quite a few.' Another woman (single, 26) said, 'All I hear about Tonga: everything's corrupt.' These problems appear to be putting them off being more involved with Tonga, or taking more interest in Tongan news. As one young woman (single, 28) observed about Tongan politics, 'Stuff I found out kind of put me off wanting to know.'

The six-week Tongan Public Service strike that ended in September 2005 put a tremendous strain on the resources of strikers and their families. Tongans overseas rallied to provide support through donations of money and food. They also voiced their concerns about the situation in Tonga, and in Auckland a street march and protest meeting were held in support of the strikers. This support was not surprising, as Tongan migrants have not only provided remittances but have exerted political influence in Tonga for decades. In the 1980s, for example, they brought their influence to bear during a strike by nurses and when legislation relating to land owned by Tongans overseas was being considered (see Helu 1985). They have also been vocal in their support of the pro-democracy movement that emerged in Tonga in the 1980s, and expressed their concerns about the many political scandals that have erupted in Tonga in the intervening years. As Hau'ofa noted in 1994, '[F]rom their bases abroad they are exerting significant influences on their homeland' (p. 423).

The extent to which members of the second generation were involved in supporting the recent strike is unclear, but the attitudes of those interviewed towards Tongan politics suggests they would be less likely than their parents to actively engage in political struggle from the diaspora. During the strike, Sefita Ha'ouli, news director at an Auckland radio station, commented that in New Zealand, there was 'a little group of young Tongans growing up ... [whose] understanding of the issue in Tonga is such that they're turned off by it. They're saying we don't want a bar of it. They are supportive of what is being done, but they don't want to be engaged. And I think this may be a trend that we'll see as things progress' (*Pacific Beat* online, Radio Australia, August 2, 2005).

In another interview during the strike, Dr Malakai Koloamatangi, a Tongan political scientist at Canterbury University in New Zealand, said the Tongan Government needed to realise 'that a lot of what is going on depends to a great extent on how Tongans overseas provide support for Tonga. I mean, in just the simple matter of government expenditure, if Tongans overseas were to cut their remittances drastically, it would affect the government's ability ... to stay above water, so it's that simple' (*Pacific Beat* online, Radio Australia, August 26, 2005).

The issue of remittances cannot be separated from the broader connections between Tonga and its population in the diaspora, particularly the emotional ties and sense of belonging to the island nation that are shared by many Tongan migrants. Clearly, if this sense of belonging and other feelings of connection to Tonga are not as strong for their children, the likelihood is that they will be less willing to send remittances. If this is so, it raises the question of Tonga's future as a viable state: what alternatives are there to redress this likely drop in remittance income?

## More migration as a solution?

Tonga's economic future is precarious, and heavily reliant on the expectation of continued high levels of remittances. If the second generation does not maintain these remittances at these high levels, and alternative sources of income are unlikely to be found, the obvious solution would appear to be an increased flow of new migrants. This solution is impossible without changes to the immigration policies of the main host nations — the USA, New Zealand and Australia — which have tightened in recent years and made it more difficult for Tongans to migrate.

In Australia, there has been an overall downward trend in migration from Tonga in the past two decades; numbers have fluctuated annually from a high of 287 in 1997 to 83 in 2001, and have not reached more than 200 since 1998 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). The most recent figures available are from 2002-3, during which period 92 Tongan-born migrants arrived in Australia from Tonga, and a further 116 who were Tongan-born citizens of New Zealand (DIMIA, online 2003a). Only three of the 92 were in the skilled migrant category; the remainder were family migrants and thus could include migrants of any age, such as elderly relatives of previous migrants or young children. Of course, as more family members join those already living overseas, migrants' networks of relatives in Tonga shrink and remittances are likely to decline as a consequence. During that same period, 103 Tongans left Australia permanently; 47 had been in Australia for more than 10 years (DIMIA, online 2003b). Net migration for that period was thus 105. Of the new migrants, any adults arriving from New Zealand are likely to have already established any remitting practices they intended to maintain, so only those from Tonga can be considered potential 'new remitters', so in effect it could be argued that there was a net drop in potential new remitters in Australia for that year.

Whether or not this pattern is also found in New Zealand and the USA needs further research, however, compiling accurate migration statistics is extremely difficult. Tonga does not maintain adequate statistical records of migrant departures, each host nation has its own methods of data collection and classification, and there are a number of 'overstayers' in each host nation who are not recorded. If it can be shown that migration is in fact declining, it can be predicted that the MIRAB model will begin to unravel for countries such as Tonga, where the migration-remittance nexus has been so crucial for sustaining their economies.

There is some faint hope that Australia will review its migration policies for Pacific Islanders, in the wake of the Australian Senate report, *A Pacific Engaged* (Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee 2003). Much of the evidence to the committee concerned special migration access for Pacific Islanders, to 'learn new skills and earn money that could be remitted back to the home

country to support family networks and contribute to their economies' (p. 69). Labour migration schemes have been considered since the early 1980s, and in 1997 the report of the Committee of Review of Australia's aid policy stated that special migration programs for Islanders 'may prove to be more cost-effective than continuing high levels of aid in perpetuity. Limited access to Australia, either on a temporary or a permanent basis, has been argued for as an effective way to assist the very small states whose only export is labour services' (cited p. 70). The Senate Committee concluded that a guest worker scheme would support 'Australia's national interest in so far as it would contribute to the sustainable economic and social development of the region, contributing to stability' (p. 75).

Australian governments have, however, long resisted the introduction of such schemes, arguing that there is a high rate of unemployment for 'low-skill[ed] people in Australia' and that there is a risk of workers being exploited, or overstaying their visas (pp. 73–4). This resistance was again evident at the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in October 2005, when the Australian Government rejected recommendations in the forum's Pacific Plan to initiate temporary labour mobility programs. Nevertheless, the issue continues to be debated and is likely to be revisited as Pacific nations' economic woes continue to worsen.

## Conclusion

The possibility of Australia opening its doors to guest workers is one of the few rays of hope Tonga has for counteracting the serious threat posed by the potential loss of remittances as many members of the second generation overseas reject the burden of responsibility for Tonga's economic wellbeing shouldered for so long by their parents. In the past few years, Tonga has faced increasing internal unrest as its citizens express their discontent with the many effects of poor governance. The expectations of the population have risen more rapidly than their standard of living, culminating in the 2005 Public Service strike in which wage rises of up to 80 per cent were demanded. While the strikers were victorious and massive wage rises have been promised, the Tongan Government has claimed that 73 per cent of all government expenditure now will be on wages (*Pacific Beat* online, Radio Australia, September 7, 2005). In January 2006, Tonga's Minister of Labour, Commerce and Industries, Feleti Sevele, admitted that Tonga was facing financial disaster (*Pacific Magazine* 2006). More than ever before, Tonga needs the income generated by remittances, and the very real possibility that they will decline before too long needs to be addressed urgently not only within Tonga but by the governments of host nations, in whose immigration policies a possible solution could be found.

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