

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ON MARCH 8, 2004, the Consultative Council that advises the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) on the direction of its work met in Parliament House, Canberra. There were some new faces around the table recently appointed by Cabinet. Among them were four senior officials from Australia's major political parties: Brian Loughnane, Federal Director of the Liberal Party of Australia; Andrew Hall, Federal Director of the National Party of Australia; Geoff Walsh, Federal Director of the Australian Labor Party; and Gary Gray, his predecessor. They made their view clear — CDI needed to focus on strengthening political parties in our region of the world. The Australian parliamentarians on the council, the Hon. Chris Gallus, chair of the council, Dr Andrew Southcott and Kevin Rudd, agreed, as did Sir Ninian Stephen, former Governor-General of Australia, Andy Becker, the Australian Electoral Commissioner, and Professor Ian McAllister of The Australian National University (ANU). A consensus had formed and the ball was now in my court.

CDI is Australia's democracy promotion institute funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). As part of the Research School of Social Sciences of the ANU, CDI assists the countries in Australia's immediate region to strengthen their key democratic bodies. In its first six years, CDI focused mainly on parliaments and judiciaries. Now a difficult new subject had been placed on our agenda. It seemed to me the first step we needed to take was to gain a better understanding of political parties in the Pacific Islands.

One of the great advantages of being located in the Coombs Building at the ANU is that CDI sits at the crossroads of the leading researchers in the fields of Asia-Pacific studies and political science. So the task boiled down to identifying the leading thinkers in the field, getting them excited about participation in a new research venture, commissioning their chapters and finally putting the book together. Sounds simple ...

My first vote of gratitude must go to the authors: Alaine Chanter of the University of Canberra, Asofou So'o of the National University of Samoa, Jon Fraenkel and Steven Ratuva of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Tarcisius Kabutaulaka of the East-West Center in Hawai'i, Joao Saldanha of the Timor-Leste Study Group in Dili, and Alumita Durutalo, Ron May and Michael Morgan of the ANU. They stuck to their task diligently, kept to their word limits graciously and eventually met their deadlines grudgingly. I hope they will forgive any intrusiveness on my part.

Several other people played key roles in seeing this publication come to light. Francesca Beddie was of enormous assistance in the editing process. She passed the baton to my colleagues at CDI, Luke Hambly and Michael Morgan, who then ran it to the finish line. As always, our other colleague at CDI, Sally Thompson, provided essential support.

All books must leave their authors' hands and begin a peripatetic new life. But this book will nevertheless remain close to CDI as it will now inform the work we do to strengthen the political parties we have researched and help them play the critical role required of them in the operation of their nations' democracies.

Roland Rich
Canberra
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