Scientific collaboration between France and Australia in the social sciences and humanities has come a long way since the joint signing of the Cultural, Scientific and Technical Agreement in 1977. Today there exist collaborative agreements between French and Australian higher education and research institutions that cover a wide variety of disciplines.

Not the least of these was the International Program of Scientific Collaboration (PICS) 2001–2004, between the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France’s national scientific research body, and The Australian National University (ANU). This program, entitled ‘Early Encounters in the Pacific’, was conducted by the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l’Océanie (CREDO), a research centre of the Maison de l’Asie-Pacifique, housed at the University of Provence, Marseilles and the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS), at The Australian National University. This multi-disciplinary research program has now entered a second phase, looking at modern political, economic and cultural encounters in Pacific societies, as seen through the prism of earlier traditional Oceanic values and social institutions. The results of the first phase of the CNRS-ANU collaboration are currently in press.

The publication of The Changing South Pacific: Identities and Transformations by Pandanus Books and the Centre for the Contemporary Pacific at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies is a further step in the collaboration between our sister institutions. First published under the leadership of Serge Tcherkézoff and Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon, this translation of Le Pacifique-Sud aujourd’hui makes accessible to an English-speaking readership the fruits of the research of a leading group of French social scientists on a subject which has been at the heart of much of the social science research carried out in the Pacific region over the past decade, namely the cultural and political transformations taking place in Oceanic societies and the concomitant emergence of new regional and national identities.

Collaboration between the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at The Australian National University is now well established in a number of disciplines. However, in many areas, this collaboration and sharing of research results is in need of further enhancement. Indeed, one of the principal findings from the French Assises de la Recherche Française dans le Pacifique — a French government review of French research in the Pacific over the last twenty years, held in Noumea in August 2004 — was that a major effort should be mounted to make francophone research more accessible to the English-speaking world. The publication of The Changing South Pacific: Identities and Transformations is an important step in this direction.

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August 2005