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Before the beginning

In the late 1940s Australia found itself in a strange predicament. Although it was on the side of the victors of the Second World War, the nation had once again become acutely aware of its own geography. The Pacific Ocean and Pacific Islands had been the site of much conflict, and the neighbours to Australia's north and north-west in South and South-East Asia had begun a process of decolonisation that the Chifley Government, and many Australians, viewed as potentially dangerous. Australia had an existing race-based immigration system that effectively excluded any large-scale immigration from neighbouring countries other than New Zealand, a scheme that also made travel to Australia for study difficult for those considered non-European. These policies did not go unnoticed by regional governments and administrators. So, while the White Australia Policy 'protected' Australia, it also drew attention to it. The Chifley Government wanted to keep the wall of the White Australia Policy in place, but it was aware that it needed good relations with the newly emerging nations of South and South-East Asia.

This chapter outlines the first of Australia's international scholarship schemes. These scholarships have continued, in various iterations, for the decades since – which, as noted in the Introduction to this book, shows remarkable permanence. This story of policy and program constancy began in 1948 with a Cabinet decision to create the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme, part of a deliberate effort by the government to foster good relations with elites in Asia, particularly those showing nationalist ambitions.¹

1 Chris Waters, 'The MacMahon Ball Mission to East Asia 1948', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 40, no. 3 (1994): 351–63, doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.1994.tb00109.x.

This effort also included a mission to Asia by the diplomat and academic William MacMahon Ball, also in 1948, to promote both the scholarships and other aid and engagement efforts. As Chris Waters and Garry Woodard have explained, the MacMahon Ball mission was plagued by distrust, both within the Australian camp and between the Australians and their hosts.² However, as this chapter will explain, the very small nature of the award may have had something to do with the less than welcome reception that the MacMahon Ball mission received.

In 1948, the Chifley Cabinet decided to offer scholarships, called the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme, to nations around the region. Cabinet approved the granting of scholarships to ‘nationals of South-East Asia’ in January 1948.³ The scheme was small, with less than 10 awards offered per year, rising to 12 by the end of the 1950s.⁴ In general, offers were made to a country or territory not under Australian control⁵ – with the government or administration asked to nominate an appropriate candidate.

This small scheme was soon joined by a much larger scholarship program – the Colombo Plan. While the Colombo Plan was far more than just a scholarship program, it has become an anchor point in Australian understanding of aid, scholarships and international education. The Colombo Plan also became, in part due to its high profile and size, a template for government engagement with regions – in practice, in policy and in the imaginations of bureaucrats and politicians. The Colombo Plan played an important role in opening up the communities within Australia to the presence of overseas students in Australian universities and colleges. It continues to dominate in the foreign policy imagination of Australian politics, evidenced by the introduction of the New Colombo Plan in 2014.

Beginning in 1951, the Colombo Plan brought students from participating countries (mostly Commonwealth countries, but other participant countries included Indonesia) into Australian tertiary institutions across the country. These students, along with thousands more privately supported students, have had a lasting impact on Australia. These scholarship programs offered

2 Waters, ‘The Macmahon Ball Mission’; Garry Woodard, ‘Macmahon Ball’s Goodwill Mission to Asia 1948’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1 (May 1995): 129–34, doi.org/10.1080/10357719508445151.

3 ‘Draft Submission for Cabinet Approval – Proposals for an Australian Overseas Scholarship Scheme’, A1838, 2047/1, 1957, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

4 ‘Draft Submission for Cabinet Approval – Proposals for an Australian Overseas Scholarship Scheme’, A1838, 2047/1, 1957, NAA.

5 For example, awards were offered to Fiji, New Hebrides and New Caledonia – at the time all colonial territories.

a different view of Australia in the region to the one created by the White Australia Policy. And importantly, they offered Australians a different view of Asia. They were also a visible element of the policy response to the perceived threat of impending communist takeover as communist-led revolutionary movements challenged authorities in places such as Malaya, Vietnam, Philippines, China and Indonesia. The idea of influencing the hearts and minds of young people from across South-East Asia was attractive to politicians and policymakers alike. In the Pacific region, this period was a time of recovery from the war. It was also a period where the metropolitan powers that had previously carved up the Pacific region to their liking were having their status and dominance, with the exception of the USA, reduced. These metropolitan powers were not limited to the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the USA; they also included Australia and New Zealand. Through Australia's responsibilities as the trustee of New Guinea, and as co-trustee of Nauru, the government was required to address the needs of development and education in these territories. The Australian Government was also part of broader conversations about the development of Pacific Island territories with fellow metropolitan powers.⁶ These obligations challenged the Australian Government's understanding of citizenship, access to opportunities and international development.⁷ This chapter investigates the first Australian Government development scholarship, placing it in its temporal, political and geographic context. It also addresses the political and bureaucratic machinations behind the scholarship, and Australia's education policy in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

Australian Government policymakers, and the wider community, were very concerned about the spread of communism in Asia. As Alex Auletta notes, the context in which the Colombo Plan was conceived was particularly complicated for a nation only recently developing its independent approach to foreign affairs.⁸ The Cold War was pitting the United States (and its

6 Christopher Waters, "Against the Tide": Australian Government Attitudes to Decolonisation in the South Pacific, 1962–1972', *The Journal of Pacific History* 48, no. 2 (2013): 195, doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2013.794576.

7 The connections between colonial obligations and international development are discussed by a number of scholars including Nicholas Ferns ('Colonialism as Foreign Aid: Australian Developmental Policy in Papua New Guinea, 1945–75', *Australian Historical Studies* 51, no. 4 (2020): 459–76, doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2020.1808689) and Charlotte Lydia Riley ("Tropical Allsorts": The Transnational Flavor of British Development Policies in Africa', *Journal of World History* 26, no. 4 (2016): 839–64, doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2016.0065) and others.

8 Alex Auletta, 'A Retrospective View of the Colombo Plan: Government Policy, Departmental Administration and Overseas Students', *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management* 22, no. 1 (2000): 47–58, doi.org/10.1080/713678129.

allies) against the USSR (and its allies), and this was playing out in conflicts in Asia. The defence pact negotiated between Australia, New Zealand and the United States – ANZUS, signed in 1951 – was in part Australia's way of addressing this risk of conflict.⁹

The Chifley and then Menzies governments had watched India and Indonesia claim their independence, and states in Africa¹⁰ and Asia pushed rapidly towards decolonisation and independence from colonial powers. Nevertheless, the Pacific was considered differently. For the Australian Government, as Chris Waters puts it, 'the 1950s, far from being a precursor to decolonisation in the South Pacific, had seen serious consideration of the expansion of Australia's imperial responsibilities in the region'.¹¹ Australia, rather than embracing the global move towards decolonisation in the aftermath of the Second World War, worked to manipulate the system to ensure its dominance in the Pacific region. This ambition was not new, as Marilyn Lake has noted, 'the Commonwealth of Australia was founded in dreams of a Pacific empire'.¹² Australia was, by the 1950s, giving 'serious consideration of the expansion of Australia's imperial responsibilities'¹³ in the Pacific region, including Papua New Guinea (PNG). This was in contrast to the public efforts made by some European powers to decolonise their empires, or at the very least reduce the cost of those empires to the metropole. These global events put pressure on the Australian Government, which belatedly accepted that it could not avoid the global movement towards decolonisation.

Australia's general sense of unease with Asia continued to plague policymakers across the 1950s. The sense of a role in the South Pacific was better developed over the period, as can be seen in a briefing note to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in August 1957:

Australia's interest in the Pacific area is primarily strategic. Our concern is to ensure that the social and political development of the British territories Pacific islands remain linked with the West and particularly the Commonwealth.¹⁴

9 Andrew Kelly, *ANZUS and the Early Cold War* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018), doi.org/10.11647/OBR.0141.

10 Such as Ghana, which became independent in 1957.

11 Waters, "Against the Tide", 195.

12 Marilyn Lake, 'The Australian Dream of an Island Empire: Race, Reputation and Resistance', *Australian Historical Studies* 46, no. 3 (2015): 410, doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2015.1075222.

13 Waters, "Against the Tide", 195.

14 'Australian Overseas Scholarship Scheme – Briefing Note to the Secretary (of External Affairs) – Annexe A – 23 August 1957', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

The note goes on to explain the role that education, or more specifically scholarships, could play in supporting that strategic interest: 'education ties would be a valuable means of strengthening such links and countering Communist and other disruptive influences which have already appeared, for example, in Fiji'.¹⁵ The certainty expressed in this briefing is instructive; foreign policy bureaucrats were very clear of the role that Australia could play in the Pacific.

The oceanic Pacific territories were, as mentioned earlier, the subjects of various colonial powers. By the 1950s, the USA, France and the United Kingdom¹⁶ were the dominant colonial powers of the Pacific; territories held by other imperial powers were now governed as trustee territories, under the auspices of the United Nations Trusteeship System. The trustee system required trustees to 'promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories' and support 'progressive development towards self-government or independence'.¹⁷ This was, in part, a process of structured decolonisation. Of the 11 territories under the trusteeship system, Australia was the Administering Authority for New Guinea and was jointly, with New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the Administering Authority for Nauru. Other trust territories in the Pacific were Micronesia, Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands and Palau (together administered by the USA as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands) and Western Samoa. Those nations with trustee responsibilities were able to write the rules of the process, and the process itself was voluntary, a factor that Tracy Banivanua-Mar contended ensured that 'the spirit of the Charter was effectively unenforceable'.¹⁸ However the system did mandate regular visiting missions and resulted in significant pressure on the Australian Government in relation to the development of Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG), in particular in relation to educational progression.

The problematic elements of the trusteeship system highlighted by Banivanua-Mar can be seen in the case of Australia and Nauru. Just after independence, in late 1968, historian James Davidson described the

15 'Australian Overseas Scholarship Scheme – Briefing Note to the Secretary (of External Affairs) – Annexe A – 23 August 1957', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

16 Australia and New Zealand also had territorial claims in the Pacific.

17 'Chapter XII: International Trusteeship System', in *Charter of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 1945). www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-12#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20shall%20establish,referred%20to%20as%20trust%20territories, accessed 26 September 2020.

18 Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 122.

arrangements that decided the future for Nauruans as being 'unfavourable', with Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom each coming into the process as joint trustees with their own motivations and approaches.¹⁹ As Nancy Viviani pointed out, during the interwar period 'Australia assumed its role as political administrator and became the chief beneficiary of the immense amounts of phosphate on the island'.²⁰ Phosphate, and its role in developing the agricultural sector of Australia, was significant in Australia's interactions and ambitions in the Pacific region during the 1950s. Australian investments in Nauru were limited, and Nauruans were unable to serve in the island's administration because of a lack of educational qualifications, and the opportunities that led to those qualifications.²¹ Official meetings to discuss ownership of phosphate by Nauruans were frustrated by the failure of the British Phosphate Commission representatives to explain the pricing structures. Australian officials were happy, however, to encourage Nauruans to move off the island because of the environmental degradation caused by phosphate mining.²²

Viviani noted that there was 'conflict between Australia's economic interests and her duties as an Administering Authority under the United Nations Charter',²³ and that this conflict was not only limited to relations with Nauru. Under the trusteeship system, agreements had to be made in accordance with the Trusteeship Charter, but Banivanua-Mar argues that 'administering governments, in the end, could devise their own trust agreements, effectively making their own rules subject only to approval by the General Assembly'.²⁴ Across the 1950s, Australia and other trust powers continued to utilise the trustee system to justify development spending that was intended to protect strategic and economic interests, not always in the best interests of the trust territories.²⁵

The exploitation of physical land and resources was not counteracted by significant investment in the improvement of the social, economic and educational positions of the inhabitants of the trustee territories of the

19 James W Davidson, 'The republic of Nauru', *The Journal of Pacific History* 3, issue 1 (1968): 146, doi.org/10.1080/00223346808572131.

20 Nancy Viviani, *Nauru, Phosphate and Political Progress* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 2.

21 Roger C Thompson, *Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998), 141.

22 Thompson, *Australia and the Pacific Islands*, 142–43.

23 Viviani, *Nauru, Phosphate and Political Progress*, 2.

24 Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*, 123.

25 Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*, 124.

Pacific. However, as trust territories were moving towards independence, even at a slow pace, the Department of External Affairs recognised that these trust territories and other colonies in the Pacific would at some time become self-governing or independent. Thus, human resource development, and the possibilities of influence offered through scholarships, became a useful tool of seeking leverage while undertaking the work of 'development'. The tool was small – in the South-East Asia/Australian International Awards scheme there were only six to twelve scholarships available per year. The way in which those awards were to be allocated, and the decisions around the schemes, gives an insight into deeper thinking about the role of scholarships in development and diplomacy within the Menzies Government.

By the mid-1950s, conversations within the Department of External Affairs had begun about the possibility of granting scholarships to other countries and territories – especially in the Pacific and the Pacific Rim. This was in part due to the belief that the Colombo Plan was a successful program, and the 'tool' of scholarships could be utilised more broadly.²⁶ A briefing note written by David Dexter notes 'there is a gap in our training aid programs as far as Oceania, Korea and Formosa are concerned'.²⁷ Debate continued within the Department of External Affairs, with multiple briefing notes being prepared proposing Pacific Scholarship Schemes, or the extension of the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme. In 1955 it was advertised in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* that 'the Australian Government had decided to make a scholarship available to a Fiji student under the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme'.²⁸ The short extract also notes that the scholarship will be allocated by the Fiji Government and 'as far as Australia is concerned the successful applicant could be any Fiji-born person, regardless of race'.²⁹ As will be shown later, this perception of a 'race-blind' selection policy was not entirely true, and went on to cause issues for the Australian scholarship administrators. Nevertheless, the next edition of the *Pacific Islands Monthly* in February 1955 notes that the 'first award under the recently established Australian Government Scholarship for Fiji has gone to Oscar Emberson'.³⁰ Emberson was a 19-year-old from Suva who planned to study dentistry.

26 The Colombo Plan was sometimes referred to as the Marshall Plan for South-East Asia – in reference to the plan for the reconstruction of Europe after the end of the Second World War.

27 'Briefing Note – Training for Pacific Territories, Korea and Formosa, 25 May 1956 (DEA)', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

28 'Australian Scholarships for Fiji', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 1 January 1955, 59.

29 'Australian Scholarships for Fiji', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 1 January 1955, 59.

30 'Fiji's Outsanding Students Win Scholarships', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 1 February 1955, 67.

A Cabinet submission in October 1957 proposed an expansion of the scheme, with the Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education, William Weeden, seeking new awards in addition to the ongoing South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme.³¹ William (Jock) Weeden was an experienced administrator in the tertiary sector, having been involved in the development of the Commonwealth Scholarship program, the same scheme that supported Cyril Chan's study in Sydney.³² The Cabinet approved the additional funding request, despite the protestations of Treasury, which was concerned that the funding request was coming from the Office of Education, with the Assistant Secretary, Bruce Hamilton, writing:

If the purpose is the fostering of good relations with other countries then this appears to be a responsibility of the Department of External Affairs rather than the Office of Education.³³

In July 1958 the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme was officially renamed the Australian International Award Scheme. In September 1958 the number of awards under the scheme increased from six to twelve.³⁴ Records from the Fijian colonial administration showed that in 1957 there were three Fijian students studying in Australia under the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme – one Fijian male studying commerce, one Indian male studying medicine and one European male studying dentistry,³⁵ most likely the aforementioned Oscar Emberson.

Students in Australia from Pacific territories were not only sponsored by the Australian Government, but also by churches, their home governments and their families. In March 1956 there were 175 students from Pacific territories in Australia,³⁶ and some in the Department of External Affairs felt that while a government scholarship program would allow for only a small increase in that number, the political benefits would be worthwhile. There was an understanding with the department that the concept of a Pacific

31 William Weeden, 'Australian International Scholarships | Cabinet Submission | August 1957', A4926, 886, 1957, NAA.

32 William J Weeden, interview by Tony Ryan, 'Jock Weeden Interviewed by Tony Ryan in the Conversations with Australian Educators Oral History Project' [sound recording], 22 March 1995, National Library of Australia (NLA), nla.gov.au/nla.obj-217270737.

33 'Cabinet Submission No 886 | Australian International Scholarships | Treasury', A4926, 886, 1957, NAA.

34 'Cablegram to Australian Mission at the Commonwealth Montreal Conference, 18 September 1958', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

35 These ethnic/race designations were common under the Fijian colonial administration. 'Scholarships and Bursaries – 1957', F28/451/1, 1957, Fiji National Archives (FNA).

36 'Draft Ministerial Briefing', 30 July 1956', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

scholarship program was politically and diplomatically advantageous, the minister himself noted it was 'logical enough',³⁷ but funding and support from Cabinet proved elusive. Difficulty arose from a number of sources; the Department of External Affairs wanted control over where the scholarships would be allocated (and were determined for Korea and Formosa to be included) and conversations were taking place with the Prime Minister's Department and the Commonwealth Office for Education about alternative scholarship programs. Emerging nations in Africa were also a focus for the Department of External Affairs – Ghana was identified as a newly independent, new member of the Commonwealth, that Australia would do well to support in some way.³⁸

The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia, as the Colombo Plan was more formally known, was a comprehensive aid agreement that included a capital aid program and a technical assistance program. The scholarship program that the Colombo Plan is well known for was a part of the technical assistance program, which also included sending technical experts in agriculture, engineering and other fields to regional member countries. The Colombo Plan was formalised by a meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers in 1950.³⁹ The program was significantly larger than any previous scholarship programs – by mid-1958 nearly 2,300 individuals had completed or were in the course of training.⁴⁰ In comparison, the South-East Asian Award scheme granted at most 10 scholarships per year, and by 1957 had only offered 18 awards.⁴¹

37 'Briefing Note by D Dexter – Proposed Pacific Training Scheme – 19 February 1957', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

38 'Briefing Note to Dexter – Prime Minister's Department's Proposals, 6 March 1957', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

39 There is a growing body of literature about the Colombo Plan, including: David Lowe, 'The Colombo Plan and "Soft" Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific: Australian and New Zealand Cultural Diplomacy in the 1950s and 1960s' (Alfred Deakin Research Institute Working Paper Series 1, 2010); David Lowe, 'The Colombo Plan: Modernisation, Memory and Cultural Engagement in Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Australian Studies* 28 (2015): 142–53, doi.org/10.20764/asaj.28.0_142; Daniel Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2004); Daniel Oakman, "'Young Asians in Our Homes': Colombo Plan Students and White Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. 72 (2002): 89–98, doi.org/10.1080/14443050209387741; Daniel Oakman, 'The Seed of Freedom: Regional Security and the Colombo Plan', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 46, no. 1 (2000): 67–85, doi.org/10.1111/1467-8497.00086; Auletta, 'A Retrospective View of the Colombo Plan'; Lyndon Megarrity, 'Regional Goodwill, Sensibly Priced: Commonwealth Policies Towards Colombo Plan Scholars and Private Overseas Students, 1945–72', *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 88–105, doi.org/10.1080/10314610708601233.

40 'Commonwealth Conference, Montreal – Extension of Intra-Commonwealth Training Awards | Letter from CT Moodie (DEA), 5 Sept 1958', A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

41 'Draft Submission for Cabinet Approval – Proposals for an Australian Overseas Scholarship Scheme', A1838, 2047/1, 1957, NAA.

The Colombo Plan had a much firmer rationale to build on than the less obvious South-East Asia Scholarships Scheme. The plan was largely designed by ministers at the Commonwealth Conference, including Ceylon's Junius Richard Jayewardene and Australia's new Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender,⁴² as an attempt to stem the perceived flow of communism from Russia and China through South-East Asia. At the time, the Department of External Affairs believed that the scheme would promote development and encourage students to adopt Western liberal-democratic ideals and values.⁴³ Historians have, over subsequent years, debated the true motivations of Australia's participation and championing of the scheme. Historian Daniel Oakman contends that the Colombo was a 'major vehicle for extending Western influence'.⁴⁴ On the other hand, while accepting that some of the motivations for the Colombo Plan and other aid were strategically aligned, Nicholas Ferns argues that Australian policymaking in the postwar period was significantly influenced by theoretical debates about development and humanitarianism.⁴⁵ The Colombo Plan also served as an encouragement for the United States to become more closely involved as a foreign aid donor in Asia. David Lowe argues that Spender was using the Colombo Plan 'very much as a vehicle for his pursuit of sweeping measures, including an American alliance'.⁴⁶ While the USA did participate in both the technical assistance and capital aid components of the Colombo Plan, its involvement in the region was more focused on the Korean War.

In addition to the strong and 'urgent' rationale for the scheme, the Colombo Plan had significant political support. Minister for External Affairs Percy Spender led the Australian delegation to the meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers in Ceylon, which included representatives from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Southern Rhodesia, India, Pakistan and Ceylon.⁴⁷ The Australian delegation was large and included representatives from across divisions within the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Defence and Treasury, and a number of high

42 Oakman, *Facing Asia*.

43 Oakman, "'Young Asians in Our Homes'", 90.

44 Daniel Oakman, 'The Politics of Foreign Aid: Counter-Subversion and the Colombo Plan, 1950–1970', *Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change* 13, no. 3 (2001): 257, doi.org/10.1080/13239100120082710.

45 Nicholas Ferns, 'Beyond Colombo: Australian Colonial and Foreign Policy in the Age of International Development, 1945–1975', PhD thesis, Monash University, 2017.

46 David Lowe, 'Percy Spender and the Colombo Plan 1950', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 40, no. 2 (1994): 162, doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.1994.tb00098.x.

47 Auletta, 'A Retrospective View of the Colombo Plan'.

commissioners.⁴⁸ This afforded a level of bureaucratic interest not seen in the scholarship schemes coming solely through the Department of External Affairs. Spender's successor, Richard Casey, also 'championed the scheme throughout his career, extolling the virtues of cultural exchange facilitated by the scholarship program'.⁴⁹

As will be seen in further chapters, the Colombo Plan offered politicians a useful framing for aid, but also a concrete program to argue against. In the mid-1950s, the Labor Opposition Leader, Arthur Calwell, advocated for funding to be allocated to PNG instead of the Colombo Plan – stating 'The benefits for ourselves and those we are helping will be far greater than we will ever get from our Colombo Plan pay-outs'.⁵⁰ He was not alone in this feeling, with Treasurer Arthur Fadden expressing a similar view.⁵¹

The scheme was also, by the very limited metrics of number of students, a success. The profile of Australia's educational institutions in Asia was boosted by the Colombo Plan. Opportunities for scholarships were promoted, and while demand outstripped supply, those who were unable to gain a scholarship were in some cases able to study in Australia by other means. Australia's diplomats also reported that the positive reports of returning students were essential to the successful outcomes of the scheme. Universities, social and service organisations (such as Rotary and Apex) and Coordinating Committees for the Welfare of Overseas Students were convened across the country in the 1950s to support these overseas students while they were in Australia. These organisations were focused on supporting Colombo Plan students, but their activities and actions, such as the construction of International Houses across various universities, also benefited non-Colombo Plan students.

The size of the Colombo Plan program, the prominence of its sponsors, and the ability for Australia to stake its claim as a generous nation within the Commonwealth, all served to reinforce its status as the most influential scholarship program Australia has been party to. But as officials from the

48 Auletta, 'A Retrospective View of the Colombo Plan'.

49 Oakman, "Young Asians in Our Homes", 89.

50 Arthur Calwell, 'Statement for ABC and Radio Australia by Deputy Leader of the Opposition | 30 July', Papers of Sir Donald Cleland, circa 1960–circa 1990, General letters 1951–57, 1956, MS9600/11/1, NLA.

51 'Notes Taken by 9PA Reporter at Interview with Sir Arthur Fadden', Papers of Sir Donald Cleland, circa 1960–circa 1990, General letters 1951–57, 1957, MS9600/11/1, NLA.

Department of External Affairs noted at the time, the program excluded the territories of the Pacific, an area where Australia wished to expand its influence.⁵²

There were other scholarships offered to students from the Pacific during the 1950s. Many of these scholarships allowed for students to study in Australia should they choose. These included scholarships offered by the United Kingdom – the Colonial Development and Welfare Scholarships (CD&W) and the Fiji Scholarships offered by the colonial administration in Fiji. The CD&W scheme was in place from the mid-1940s, and offered scholarships to many British colonial territories across the world. It was, according to a Fijian colonial administration report, in place to ‘encourage Colonial people to qualify for the staffing of the Government Service as the necessary corollary of the wider objective of self-Government in Colonial territories’.⁵³ In its communications with the Secretary of State of the Colonial Office in the United Kingdom, the colonial administration in Suva estimated that between 30 and 33 scholarships would be necessary over a 10-year period to fill roles such as engineers, veterinary officers and dietitians for the administration. These scholarships were to be divided between the three ethnic groups that made up the population of Fiji – European, Fijian and Indian. By 1957, 58 students were studying overseas with scholarships and bursaries. The largest groups were sponsored by what are termed ‘Government Bursaries’ (19 students) and Government of India Scholarships (15 students).⁵⁴

Aside from scholarships provided by other nation states and donors, 1950 also saw the establishment of the United Nations Technical Advice Administration (TAA), which as part of its remit provided scholarships. The TAA offered 800 fellowships in 1951 to individuals from over 60 nations⁵⁵ including Pacific territories.

The archival documentation across countries and scholarship programs indicates that scholarship recipients were largely selected by the recipient administration or nation. For example, a scholarship was offered by the Australian Government to the Fijian Administration under the South-East

52 More members joined the Colombo Plan across the 1950s.

53 ‘Final Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to Consider the Award of Scholarships, 4th October’, 25/296/7, 1947, FNA.

54 ‘Scholarships and Bursaries – 1957’, F28/451/1, 1957, FNA.

55 Hugh L. Keenleyside, ‘U. N. Technical Assistance Programme’, *Pakistan Horizon* 5, no. 1 (1952): 33–38.

Asian Scholarship (Australian International Award). The awarding of this scholarship was made under the process established by the Fijian colonial administration to allocate the variety of scholarships offered to (and by) the colony, which did not have a university at the time. These decisions involved an Education Advisory Council that assessed applications and awarded scholarships for Suva Grammar School, the Fiji Scholarships and others. For many Fijian students the only option was to find a scholarship for post-secondary studies, so the decisions of the Education Advisory Council were consequential. From the minutes of a number of meetings of the council, it is clear that students were sometimes interviewed, but the reports of nominees, teachers and workmates were very influential on the decisions made. In 1957 when deciding on the allocation of the Fiji Scholarship, the council agreed the scholarship should be allocated to Bramah Nand Singh, with three alternative candidates.⁵⁶ The second of these students was Mark Johnson, who was soon after offered the Australian International Award scholarship, demonstrating the rigour of the process of awarding scholarships by the Fijian colonial administration.⁵⁷

What these minutes demonstrate is the manner in which the Fijian Administration was addressing the issues of race, or more precisely attempting to balance the needs of three main racial groupings in the colony. The Australian Government was also making decisions based on assumptions and policies centred around race – both its role in the territories and immigration policy. For example, the White Australia Policy may have influenced colonial administrators in Fiji who decided, when offered a scholarship by the Department of External Affairs, to send a ‘European’ for study, a man referenced in the Australian archives as Mr Johnson, who was the Mark Johnson who had been runner-up for the Fiji Scholarship.⁵⁸ Department of External Affairs officials reacted to this decision with derision, but it is clear that Fijian administrators were genuinely confused about the ‘type’ of student the Australian Government was looking to attract, given their careful processes to allocate scholarships to each of the three racial groupings. And as was reported in the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, the scholarship was to be awarded regardless of race. Documents from

56 ‘Minutes of the Meeting of the Education Advisory Council Held on Friday 1st March 1957 18/57 – Award of Fiji Scholarship’, F28/451/1, FNA.

57 ‘Australian International Scholarship Awards 1958/59, DEA Note, 28 May 1958’, A1838, 2047/1, 1958, NAA.

58 ‘Australian International Scholarship Awards 1958/59, DEA Note, 28 May 1958’, A1838, 2047/1, 1958, NAA.

the time indicate, however, that Department of External Affairs officials were keen to counteract the impact of the White Australia Policy, and the reputation it was garnering for Australia around Asia and the Pacific. Thus, the attempts by the Australian Government to support the development of Fiji were made without consideration of the policies or processes of the Fijian Administration.

Other Pacific Island territories were also offered awards under the Australian International Awards Scheme – with allocations made in the 1958/59 round to New Hebrides and New Caledonia (with one scholarship each).⁵⁹ The allocation to the New Hebrides offers another insight into the forces and institutions that controlled access to scholarships in Australia. The Resident British Commissioner in Port Vila noted that he sought the input of both the Presbyterian Mission and the Melanesian Mission for suggestions as to potential candidates.⁶⁰ The Commonwealth Office of Education in Sydney attempted to place a framework around the selection of students, which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, finding qualified candidates who were deemed capable of undertaking tertiary study in Australia was difficult. The Resident British Commissioner in Port Vila wrote that his preferred candidate as awardee from New Hebrides may not ‘be able to cope with the academic work straight away’.⁶¹

The story of Australian Government scholarships started in 1948, with the South-East Asian Scholarship Scheme. This was a scheme being used as both a tool for developing a footprint of influence in its geographic region and attempting to spread Australian political and social ideals. The multifaceted purposes of this first scheme lived on through those that followed over the decades, which following chapters will illuminate.

In 1950s, through the Colombo Plan, this development and influence was focused on nations and regions considered ‘at-risk’ from communism, and the Australian International Award Scheme covered other areas of the world that the Australian Government considered worthy of ‘development’ or wished to seek influence in. The Department of External Affairs worked to influence the nations and territories to which scholarships were provided, but in relation to the Australian International Award Scheme they were

59 A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

60 ‘Letter from DEA to Commonwealth Office of Education, Australian International Awards Scheme, 18 September 1958’, A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

61 ‘Letter from DEA to Commonwealth Office of Education, Australian International Awards Scheme, 18 September 1958’, A1838, 2047/1, NAA.

often competing with the Commonwealth Office for Education and the Department of Prime Minister for allocations, and arguing with Treasury for the provision of funding and resources.

Rivalries between departments and the influence they could wield with scholarships would only increase during the 1960s. And while Australian officials from various departments fought for scholarship allocations to be provided to specific nations, officials had little to no say about the students who were awarded the scholarships. Offers were made to nations, or more specifically administrations, who then allocated the scholarships according to their own practices or customs. Race and class played a significant role in the selection and awarding of scholarships, often because race and class played a role in access to secondary schooling. But these factors were not deeply considered by the Australian Government when they communicated with recipient governments and administrations. In the Pacific, these missteps highlighted how little the Australian Government understood about the administration of territories such as Fiji.

The context in which scholarships were implemented was one of change at the international level. It was apparent that the Department of External Affairs well understood from its effort to allocate scholarships to Ghana that the British Empire was in terminal decline. But such actions did not mean that the Australian Government was universally supportive of independence for former colonies, as its moves to stymie such momentum in the Pacific show. These internal conflicts continued to play out over the next decades, as the rationale for scholarships became more complex and multifaceted.

In 1958, the Australian International Award Scheme and Colombo Plan award numbers were increased. These moves were made, and promoted, in order to demonstrate Australia's position as a substantial contributor to scholarships in the context of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in Montreal in 1958. The conference in Montreal led to what is known as the Oxford Conference, a gathering of Commonwealth nations focused on education. This conference led to the formalisation of the Commonwealth Scholarships Scheme, which is discussed in later in this book.

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