

PART 2: 1958–1970

The periodisation for this part of the book is again driven by the beginnings of a scholarship. This scheme, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Scheme (CSFP), differs from others investigated in detail throughout this book in that it was offered across the Commonwealth of Nations. The scholarship was designed by a collection of nations that made up the new Commonwealth of Nations, a body made up of former (and current) British colonies. The scheme was confirmed and agreed to at a Commonwealth education conference held in Oxford in 1958.

The second chapter of Part 2 is largely focused on the 1960s, a period of rapid change in attitudes to development and higher education in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG). External and internal pressures forced the hand of the Australian Government, and the University of Papua New Guinea was established in 1965. Preparations for self-government continued, with a recognition in Canberra that access to secondary and tertiary education for a larger proportion of the TPNG population was required.

The end of this part marks the beginning of a new and more radical approach to policies in TPNG and foreign affairs from the new government of Gough Whitlam, to be discussed in Part 3.

Judy Annemarie Wong and other 'Commonwealth' scholars

As with the 1950s, there was not a huge number of students coming to Australia from the Pacific in the 1960s. One of the small number of students was Judy Annemarie Wong, who was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship in the early 1960s to study a Master of Arts in Urban Planning at the University of Sydney.¹ Wong was born in China and had moved to Fiji with her parents as a child. Like all her contemporaries in Fiji, Wong had to leave Fiji in order to study past secondary school, and completed her undergraduate degree in New Zealand. She returned to Fiji to work at the National Archives for a year before leaving for Australia.

Wong's story does not follow the normal or ideal trajectory of a development scholarship recipient, but in many ways highlights the power of the connections that the Commonwealth offered. Following her graduation in 1964, Wong married Wayne Lo, and lived for two years in the British colony of Hong Kong before moving to Canada. Judy Lo (as she was then known) made a significant contribution to civic society in Canada, with positions in human rights and immigration organisations including the Calgary Canadian Citizenship Council. In 1994 she received the Haider Dhanani award for her contribution to the rights of immigrants in Canada.²

The story of Judy Lo (Wong) provides a counter-narrative to the rigid expectations of scholarship students, that they should return to their 'home' country and contribute to development there and only there. There is no questioning that Judy Lo contributed to society and development in the broader Commonwealth, it was just that that contribution was not made in Fiji.

Other Commonwealth scholars travelling to Australia included Uttaman Gopal, a Fisheries Assistant with the Fijian Agriculture Department, who was awarded a scholarship to study a Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology in Queensland in 1966.³ Gopal was one of a number of students nominated by their government department for the scholarships, which were allocated by the colonial administration. Despite the intimate

1 'Letter from Weeden to the Director of Education (Fiji) – Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan', A1361, 53/20/2 PART 1, 1960, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

2 'Judy Lo Fonds', Glenbow Museum Archive, Calgary, Canada.

3 'Fisheries Assistant's Scholarship', *Fiji Times*, 6 January 1966, 5.

involvement of departments in the selection of students, disquiet remained about the training of students overseas, and the issues they faced when they returned. Newspaper reports in 1966 noted that students who had been sent away for study ‘came back to work in the Colony, but many complained they were not given good jobs’.⁴

Even those alumni who had studied teaching were not guaranteed an easy time. A Fijian Indian student who had completed her teaching qualification in Australia tried to travel to New Guinea to teach, in order ‘to overcome the reputed teacher shortage there and to pass on to the natives some of her knowledge’.⁵ The woman was a British subject, but was denied permission because she was not eligible for Australian citizenship (due to her ethnicity). This made the front page of the *Fiji Times* in 1966, perhaps undoing much of the positive work that scholarships were intended to perform in countering the negative impacts of the White Australia Policy.

In 1967 a young Papua New Guinean man returned to Port Moresby as the territory’s first ever indigenous Queen’s Counsel. Joseph Stanislaus Aoae completed his law degree at the University of Queensland, under an ‘Administration Scholarship’. Aoae had undertaken his secondary schooling in Australia, also with a scholarship, waiting for a year after his return to Papua New Guinea to get a scholarship for his tertiary studies. In an article in the *Fiji Times*, Aoae said, ‘Now I will be able to help my people in a way I think they have needed for a long time’.⁶ Aoae’s patience, like Cyril Chan’s persistence, allowed him to navigate a system not designed to send ‘native’ students to Australia for tertiary study. These students were always the exception rather than the rule, ensuring that their experiences were often difficult and success far from guaranteed. In this way, the administration in Fiji was far more organised and had put systems in place to manage the needs of sending students away for higher education, with Education Advisory groups meeting to allocate the numerous scholarships available to students from Fiji from the UK, New Zealand, Australia, India, Pakistan and the USA.

4 ‘Long-Range Planning Urged in Development’, *Fiji Times*, 26 July 1966.

5 ‘Fiji Teacher Refused Permission to Enter New Guinea’, *Fiji Times*, 17 January 1966, 1.

6 ‘Dream Has Come True for Papuan’, *Fiji Times*, 1 August 1967, 2.

This text is taken from *Mandates and Missteps: Australian Government Scholarships to the Pacific – 1948 to 2018*, by Anna Kent, published 2024 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.