

PART 3:

1971–1983

This part of the book begins at a time of radical political change in Australia after decades of conservative rule. These radical policies were not limited to the domestic sphere, and included fundamental changes to the aid and international education sectors. For the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG), changes included a rapid progression towards independence, a step further than self-government.

The introduction of a subsidy scheme for international students, and the abolition of fees for domestic students, opened up Australian universities to a broader range of students. The equity of access for middle-class students from Australia's region, including the South Pacific, was interpreted as an acknowledgement of the obligation Australia had to the region. The concept of soft power was not in use at the time, but the outcomes of the decision to subsidise higher education for all students were a powerful symbol of Australia's soft power.

Both the subsidy program and the independence of Papua New Guinea were part of Whitlam's radical policy changes. In conjunction, however, the policies clashed and bureaucrats and departments were required to negotiate through the difficulties. This part offers a clear overview of the complex and intersecting nature of international education policy. These intersections between foreign policy, bilateral relationships and international education continue to cause difficulties for politicians and bureaucrats in the next part of this book.

William Kaputin and Jaking Marimyas

Scholarships are never free from politics, whether through selection (or non-selection), conditions, areas of study or any of the myriad other elements of a scholarship program. In pre-independence Papua New Guinea (PNG) even the perception of intervention in scholarships was enough to stir controversy. A young man, William Kaputin, had a scholarship from the Territory Administration to study at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG). In 1970 Kaputin found his scholarship cancelled by authorities. Kaputin was not, however, just any unfortunate student. His brother, John Kaputin was a well-known anticolonialist, had strong connections to Australia and had spent time in Australia in 1970.¹ Australian activist Graeme Dunstan saw the cancellation of William's scholarship as part of a broader program of intimidation of the Kaputin brothers, and wrote to *The Australian* newspaper to complain of 'the destruction of the influence of political leaders such as John Kaputin'.² The accusation that William Kaputin's scholarship had been cancelled for political reasons sparked furious responses within the Department of External Territories. Cables were sent refuting the accusation, stating that Kaputin's scholarship had been cancelled because he had failed subjects,³ and James Griffin, an Australian lecturer in history who would go on to become Professor of History at UPNG, responded to the Dunstan accusations with his own letters to the editor of *The Australian*. The second of these notes that Kaputin's scholarship had been reinstated after he passed his examinations.⁴

This event is consequential, not because a scholarship was cancelled for political reasons – a claim that is plausible but for which there is insufficient evidence – but because the accusation of such was so potentially damaging to the colonial administration. The administration was furious that such an accusation was made.

1 John Kaputin completed his Junior Certificate in Australia, and had also spent two years at the East–West Center in Hawai'i on a scholarship – the first Papua New Guinean to do so. His feelings about Australia and Australian colonial rule were well known – in an interview published in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* in February 1970 he was explicit: 'New Guinea must eventually be for the New Guineans'. John Kaputin, 'In New Guinea, as Elsewhere "Violence Is a Reality Which You Have to Face"', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 1970.

2 Graeme Dunstan, 'Letter to the Editor: Kaputins Victimised', *The Australian*, 12 June 1970.

3 'Kaputin | Cablegram | 30 June', A452, 1970/2871, 1970, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

4 JT Griffin, 'Letter to the Editor: Reinstated', *The Australian*, 1970.

Taking a less controversial path, Jaking Marimyas was a TPNG student who came to Australia in 1974 to upgrade her teaching qualification in Canberra.⁵ Marimyas was educated in a mission environment; her father was a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. In order to further her education, she had to travel to a boarding school two hours by boat from her house – and then a second school in Lae. All her teachers in this school were expatriates. Her older brother had been given a church scholarship to study in Australia when he was 12, so the idea of travel for education was clearly accepted within her family. In an interview, however, Marimyas notes that her younger sister was only able to study until Year 2 because the church had a limited number of places and these were to be rationed out between families. Marimyas did not continue past Year 9, as she did not achieve the required grades, but instead went on to Teachers College. After a few years teaching she returned to Teachers College for a ‘localisation program’. The college itself was run by the Lutheran Church, but the Australian Government and the PNG Administration funded a program to send students to Australia to upgrade their Certificate qualifications to Diplomas. Marimyas’s partner, also a teacher, was also selected to travel to Canberra.

Marimyas returned to PNG and continued to teach and was married in the same year that PNG gained its independence. She continued to teach after the birth of her children, and to teach along with her husband. In the 1990s Marimyas and her husband were both selected for another Australian Government scholarship, and studied in Brisbane. Their initial scholarships, in 1974, no doubt put them in a good position when it came to accessing further opportunities. It also provided Jaking with a level of independence and autonomy that was rare for women in PNG in the 1970s.

As Marimyas’s story and stories from previous decades have shown – the path to education from TPNG in Australia was incredibly difficult and relied on a whole series of events and decisions being made in support of the students. The story of William Kaputin highlights the contingent nature of Australian support. Despite these factors, there were few other options for the pursuit of higher education for aspiring Papua New Guineans.

These student stories also allow us to see the different roles that scholarships played, particularly in the 1970s. They also highlight the political overlay when it came to scholarship awarding, and rescinding.

5 Jaking Marimyas, interview by Jemma Purdey, 17 December 2014, in David Lowe, Jemma Purdey, and Jonathan Richie, ‘Scholarships and Connections: Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, 1960–2010’, oral history data set, Deakin University, 2015.

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