

SOUTH PACIFIC – ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST REGIONS IN THE WORLD

Image Source : Tao Zhyn

ARE THE PACIFIC ISLANDS SITTING ON AN ABUNDANCE OF WEALTH?

According to some recent commentators the answer is a resounding “yes!”

No, it’s not mining, fishing or tourism. It’s something even more elusive than the rare South Pacific “Flashlight Fish” but just as beautiful, something harder to track than a seam of gold but worth just as much.

It is, in fact, intellectual property (IP). More specifically, copyright, trademark and patenting of the various saleable objects and knowledge that originates in the Islands. And without a proper understanding of IP then that very wealth is like an unguarded bank vault, accessible to all and sundry.

The various areas of wealth that need protection include music, art, genetic diversity of the natural ecosystem, agricultural, fishing and sailing knowledge and much more besides.

Natural Wealth

Regions that are rich in biodiversity, and especially regions that are largely unexplored by scientists, can be particularly lucrative to pharmaceutical companies.

According to IP expert Dr David Martin over 3,000 compounds and traditional elements from the Pacific have been patented for commercial ventures in overseas countries, “from pharmaceuticals to chemicals and artistic expression - but none of the value has ever flowed back to the region.” (Matangi Tonga Online 24/10/08)

Music

There is great diversity of indigenous music present in the Pacific Islands, and there are cases where the lilting harmonies and strong rhythms of the region have been stolen for the benefit of others.

For example, Islands Business reports that a Malaitan lullaby called Rorogwela was used without permission by a French musical group in the early nineties. This song earned the French artists a Grammy Award, a Grammy Nomination and millions of dollars, whereas the Malaitan people never received any money or recognition.

Dilemma

Why is it then that, despite a growing awareness of and focus on this issue by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, IP legislation is slow to take hold in the Islands? Possibly it is due to the wonderfully inimitable and sharing nature of Island cultures themselves. What one Island man earns he shares with his people. Compare this to the individualistic nature of Western, capitalist society and what you get is a culture clash that confounds both sides.

It is imperative for the residents of the South Pacific to understand that what they have developed over the years and what they use today, be it music, local medicine, or even survival strategies, could be taken from them and used to benefit someone else.

You may ask, “what is wrong with that?” Surely the more people who benefit from, say a drug made from plants found in Micronesia, the better? Perhaps. But what if, while the rest of the world benefits, the people of the Islands are restricted from using that medicine because they are not rich enough to pay for it. Tragically ironic.

So it is time for the residents of this part of the world to look around, see not just the timber in the trees, the minerals in the land and the fish in the sea, but also the inherent value of your village’s songs and dance, your mother’s cookery, and your wise man’s medicine.

The rest of the world already knows the true value of these items, and the rest of the world will pay big money to those who have been wise enough to patent, copyright and trademark.



November - December 2008

PACIFIC OUTLOOK

Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission, Sydney
Creating Opportunities Between Australia and the Pacific



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Please send a copy of **PACIFIC OUTLOOK** to my colleague:

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MESSAGE FROM THE TRADE COMMISSIONER

2008 was a momentous year for PITIC, Sydney, as it marks 30 years of operation. This year PITIC has achieved some very positive outcomes for the Forum Island Countries.

Our Export and Enterprise Development unit serviced 266 substantive enquiries and assisted a number of those to develop export and market entry plans which ultimately resulted in our clients achieving export sales. The Special Projects Section (SPS) had great success in regional investment engagement, loan submission facilitation, and discussions with a number of key organisations on the subject of labour mobility. Tourism Promotion and Development (TPD) produced a number of highlights this year including joint tourism promotion events, and support to tourism related groups and organisations in the region. The Communication Support unit has distributed some 12,000 copies of our newsletter throughout the region and collaborated with SPS on the creation of 7 exporting guides and 14 country based “Doing Business in...” guides.

In 2009 we will embrace the utilisation of new technology and take our newsletter on-line. This significantly reduces our carbon footprint and enables us to communicate with a broader audience. We will continue to showcase a variety of wonderful and valuable prospects for those living and working in the Pacific Islands. Don’t forget to subscribe : send your name to info@pitic.org.au

Caleb Jarvis
Trade Commissioner

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OUTLOOK IMPROVES FOR ENVIRONMENT

The newsletter you are reading is about to take the leap into the modern world of internet readership. In doing so PITIC hopes to, in some small way, reduce our environmental footprint.

It isn’t just trees we’re saving by foregoing paper, we’re also alleviating the toll taken by the fuel guzzling trucks and planes that transport our newsletters throughout the world.

No one knows better than the residents of the South Pacific, just how important the environment is.

Please send your name to info@pitic.org.au so that we can continue sending you all the latest news and information about what’s important in the Pacific Islands.

You’ll never miss an edition, even if you move!

Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission, Sydney is very proud to have been producing newsletters for more than 10 years and has appreciated all the wonderful feedback our readers have sent.

We are aware that not everyone in the Pacific will have easy internet access and may not be able to subscribe by email. If this is the case for you, and you love our newsletter, please let us know by phone or letter and we will try to make sure you don’t miss out.

Subscribe today - send your name to info@pitic.org.au



This newsletter is printed on recycled paper

Pacific Opportunities

study scholarships employment

Scholarships

Since 2001 the Suva based Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) has been running an annual scholarship scheme. Thirteen scholarships were awarded to students from all throughout the Pacific Islands in March 2008. These students then went on to study certificate, diploma and undergraduate courses in law, education, resource management, engineering, medicine, hospitality & tourism and marine studies in Taiwan.

For more information, please contact Ms Vuki Buadromo, the Forum Secretariat's Scholarship Assistant on phone 679 331 2600 or email: vukib@forumsec.org.fj

Study

Recent news to hand suggests that tourism courses will be available at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) next year in 2009.

According to the Solomon Star, (Dec.9, 2008), the Tourism Minister, Seth Gukuna, has stated that land for a new school of tourism and hospitality has been allocated and cleared and that construction is "only a matter of time."

Employment

There are a number of online sites to check if you are currently searching for employment opportunities in the Pacific Islands. Try these:

www.dev-zone.org/jobs
www.southpacificemployment.com
www.pacificislandjobs.com
www.forumsec.org.fj/ (click on "vacancies")

Before applying it is always advisable to ensure you have an up to date resume and that you write a short cover letter that specifically answers, or addresses all the points raised in the job advertisement.

Do some research about the company or organisation before writing. Find out about their services, history and goals so that you can reflect a willingness to contribute positively.

Tailor each and every resume and cover letter to each job you apply for. Make sure you remove any information that does not relate to the position as sometimes a great number of people apply for one job so you should make it as easy as possible for the person reading the applications to absorb your resume.

ENTERPRISE CHALLENGE FUND (ECF)

The ECF is an Australian Government initiative which is similar to PITIC Sydney in two ways. Firstly it is funded by AusAID, and secondly it holds the same long term goal of reducing poverty to develop a strong private sector in our region.

Early in 2008 ECF announced details of its first two successful grantees.

One of those grantees was a Fijian fruit quarantine facility. They were awarded FJ\$350,000, a great contribution that will enable expansion of fruit exports, directly improving the livelihoods of approximately 1,200 rural people in Western Viti Levu.

The anticipated benefits for this Fijian Cooperative include:

- ~ Increase in export value from FJ\$200,000 to FJ\$3.5million in 2012.
- ~ Increased direct employment from 420 in 2006 to 1,200 in 2011.
- ~ Farmer incomes projected to increase 7.4% by 2012.

~ Increased opportunities to develop local and international markets based on environmentally sustainable practices and the growing interest in organic produce.

Future rounds are open to potential bidders. Some of the criteria required for eligibility are:

BUSINESSES MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT:

1. They are a for-profit private sector business (NGOs and other groups may be partners in a consortium led by a for-profit business);
2. They are able to contribute a minimum of 50% of the project funds required;
3. They are in a sound financial position and are up-to-date with tax submissions; and
4. The funding provided by ECF will be utilised within three years.

A BUSINESS PROJECT MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT:

1. It will be commercially sustainable after the grant period ends;
2. It contributes to improving the livelihoods and opportunities for men and women affected by poverty;
3. It could not obtain commercial funding; and
4. It avoids social damage, is environmentally responsible and does not involve tobacco, alcohol or gaming

The latest news from ECF is that 35 bidders were recently invited to submit a full application as part of round two. Assessment Panels will now evaluate these applications and the best will be awarded an ECF grant. The results will be published online and on our newsletter as soon as they are available.

For more information on the ECF and registering to bid, visit the ECF website at www.enterprisefund.gov.au

Information Sources :

www.ausaid.gov.au

www.enterprisefund.gov.au

What's On In 2009

trade investment tourism

Below is a list of 2009 events that are important to anyone interested in developing their prospects, be they involved in trade, investment or tourism.

This list is a selection and not comprehensive. Please contact us for more information at info@pitic.org.au

Trade

Seafood Access Forum

DATE: 24 March 2009

PLACE: Melbourne

Fine Food Australia, Sydney - Trade Promotion

DATE: 7-10 September 2009

PLACE: Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre

Reed Gift Fairs

DATE: Various dates throughout the year

PLACE: Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane

INFO: www.reedgiftfairs.com.au

Investment

25th Australia Papua New Guinea Business Forum

DATE: 17 May - 19 May

PLACE: Madang, PNG

1st Australia Solomon Islands Business Forum

DATE: 10 July

PLACE: Brisbane, Australia

Australia Vanuatu Business Luncheon

DATE: 24 July

PLACE: Brisbane, Australia

Tourism

Sydney Backpackers Expo

DATE: 7-8 November 2009

PLACE: Convention and Exhibition Centre in Darling Harbour

Brisbane Backpackers Expo

DATE: 14-15 November 2009

PLACE: Convention and Exhibition Centre

Melbourne Backpackers Expo

DATE: 21-22 February 2009

PLACE: Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton

17th AIME - Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo

DATE: 17-18 February 2009

PLACE: Melbourne Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Australia

New Zealand Pasifika Festival

DATE: 13 - 14 March 2008

PLACE: Western Springs Park, Auckland, NZ

FAST, FREE ACCESS TO PACIFIC BUSINESS INFORMATION



Pacificbizonline is an online database developed specifically to provide an 'information gateway' to businesses and commercial contacts in the Pacific Islands.

The database offers contact and information details of registered businesses, private sector and public sector organisations and others that work within the commercial arenas in their respective Pacific countries.

The site covers the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

So, whether it's a product or business service you are sourcing, or a contact within a Chamber of Commerce or Ministry of Trade & Commerce just log on, fill in the search engine fields and click for a list of results.

"Pacificbizonline" is a joint project between the Pacific Cooperation Foundation and the Pacific Islands Trade & Investment Commission.

Want to get your business listed for FREE?

Businesses based in any of the above named countries can register their business free of charge at www.pacificbizonline.com

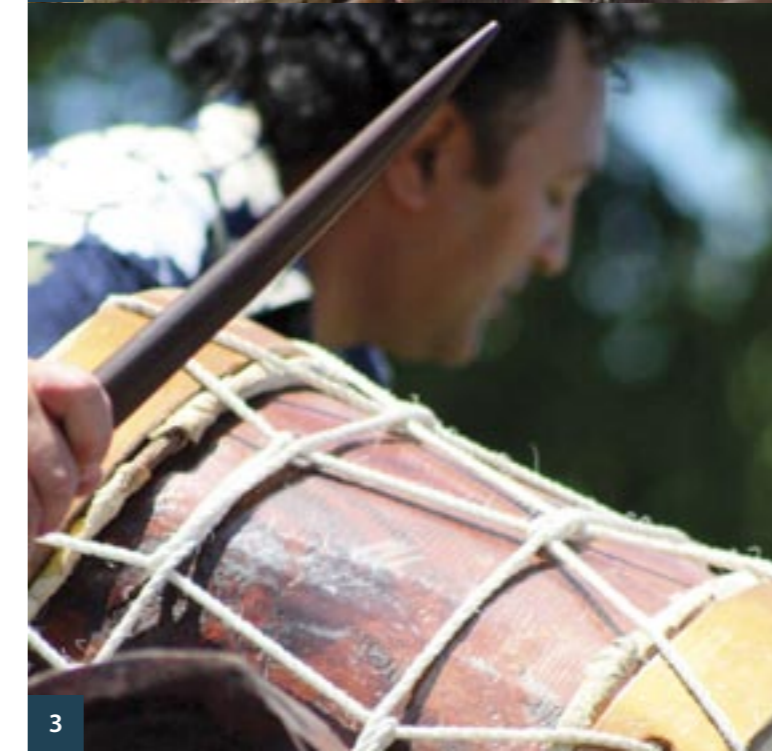
The site is attracting international attention with hits from countries such as Hong Kong, USA, Australia as well as those from the European Union, the Middle East, China and Sweden.

REFERENCE GUIDES TO 14 PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES - FREE!



For current and useful information, download a copy of our country business guides, visit www.pitic.org.au

Or, for a paper copy, email info@pitic.org.au



IN PICTURES

Intellectual Property

The pictures on this page relate to three important sources of intellectual property, especially for the Pacific Islands, survival knowledge, arts & crafts, and music.:

1. Shark Callers of New Ireland, PNG: A survival skill passed down through the generations. Shark calling has different meanings in different parts of the Pacific. In the Solomon Islands it's a playful tradition, with sharks called into the shallows of a lagoon so that a boy can ride the largest one. In Tonga, however, shark calling is anything but playful. It's practised in the depths of the ocean, where sharks are killed by hand for food.

Information source : www.abc.net.au/ / Image source : Robyn Ekstrom.

2. Hand Woven Baskets: On sale at the Ela Beach Markets in Port Moresby, PNG. Arts and crafts are a valuable form of knowledge and skill that must be protected.

Image source : Robyn Ekstrom.

3. Mai Polynesia: Percussion, stringed and wind instruments being played by Cook Islands performance group, Mai Polynesia at the Brisbane Pasifika festival in 2008.

Cover: Pacific Flags: Taken by our Tourism Promotion and Development Co-ordinator, Ruth Choulai, at the 10th Pacific Festival of the Arts in Pago Pago, American Samoa in July. Also during this event PITIC part funded the hosting of the first ever Pacific Artist's Forum organised by the Pacific Arts Alliance. The image on this newsletter only shows four of the many flags that were flying during the festival.

The four shown here, from left to right, are Vanuatu; Tonga; Solomon Islands; Samoa.

TRADE LEAD

PITIC would like to hear from Australian importers of frozen dalo and cassava.

For more information please contact us at info@pitic.org.au

To submit a trade enquiry of your own, use the form on our website www.pitic.org.au

CONTRIBUTE TO PACIFIC OUTLOOK

Do you have a story you would like to tell? An event to promote? Why not contribute to our newsletter! If you have a lead or a story you would like us to publish*, please contact us at info@pitic.org.au

* Please note that we cannot guarantee that your story will be used, or used as submitted.

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