

Chapter 11

Papua New Guinea: Australia's Failed Dream, Some Failed States and the Widely Acknowledged Outer Fascism



If the Carmichael coal mine is a global story, and the Great Barrier Reef a global asset, then the issue should not be left to Australia alone to decide. The citizens of the world deserve a say on whether their children should have the opportunity to see the wonder that is the reef.

Tim Flannery in The Guardian (2014)

The Bismarck Sea is the jewel in Papua New Guinea's crown, with abundant natural resources including fish, reefs and mineral deposits. There are many opportunities for mining, agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

CSIRO Australia; the governmental research branch (<https://research.csiro.au/eap/adaptive-livelihoods-development/>)

Abstract As the closest and biggest neighbor of Papua New Guinea (PNG), Australia steers many details of governance and civil strife in PNG and the region. Helped by colonial powers, the United Nations and globalization, Australia actually designed most of PNG's nation state reality, including social, and environmental ones. In Australia's Arc of Instability (= several poorer and subsequently weaker nations like Solomon Islands, PNG, Fiji and Vanuatu), it is the Australian governance itself that created much conflict and terror. It was envisioned that PNG can step out of 47,000 years of human history within less than 30 years and just be 'modern' from now on; to save costs for Australia. Here it is shown how such concepts compromised sustainability, namely through the Australian self-promotion of economic growth and other neoliberal metrics with a wider dysfunc patch-worked framework.

Keywords Papua New Guinea (PNG) wilderness · Australian protectorate · Outer fascism · Racism · Foreign affairs · International politics · Globalization · Modernity

11.1 Introduction

For some, Papua New Guinea (PNG)—the megadiversity nation—lists officially as a 'failed nation' (e.g. May, 2006; Reilly, 2004; see details in Gosarevski et al., 2019). If biodiversity is to be well governed, PNG is apparently not 'it' because

the wider framework for doing so is missing and operates counterproductive. PNG could hardly unleash its own governance potential, e.g. for sustainability. As a former Australian protectorate from 1902 onward (Hawksley, 2006)—it was to turn into a happy Australian PR showcase, and Australia really had a lot of time to achieve a good outcome for PNG and the region. The biodiversity and wilderness laid bare for over a century for a good sustainable national management...and this resource could actually be used for the PNG nation and nation-building (see Bougainville and its mining projects and as an inherent part of it, with major colonial powers involved and earning also, Baraka, 2001; Golub 2014; for former colonial powers see German role here: <http://www.bougainville-copper.eu/comment-kommentar02-3.html>).



It further mattered because—as shown by Baraka (2001)—PNG got pushed into independence because Australia was not willing to further pay the costs for the UN mandated Protectorate any further, e.g. covered to c. 70% by its tax payers.

Baraka (2001) outlined that Australia viewed its responsibilities to the territory of PNG as a “civilizing” project. It’s widely communicated that way, certainly in the public Australian narrative (e.g. Nelson 1982). The primary task of colonial administration was making contact and pacifying the people, and introducing them to “Western ways” (Baraka, 2001; this attitude still can be found today; see Gosarevski et al., 2019 for Australian efforts in PNG). The first major Australian colonial patrols reached the Southern Highlands in the mid-1930s, and those efforts were ongoing directly till the 1970s (afterward it switched into a political oversight and development aid style; Baraka, 2001). Roads were built in the southern highlands of PNG by Australians 1960s onward, and it became a dominating force for infrastructure and domination. It fits well in what Hyndman (1998) described that Melanesians resisted the ecocide and genocide (Fig. 11.1).



Fig. 11.1 PNG Day, the celebration of an independent new nation that is not independent nor really new

With the early provision of an Australian education and further training to the PNG leadership (see for instance Michael Somare and specifically PNG Prime Minister Julius Chan, 2016), it was to turn it into a western role-model of success. It was to be simple, a fast process of transition, and to show the world that Australia became a global advisor and power, one that is up to the task on the global cutting edge. A power on the international stage that can be trusted and that can handle successfully complex international problems, turning wicked colonial leftovers from the stone age into modernity; all just within a few years and approved by the U.N. And PNG was just to be one showcase among others in the region, e.g. Timor-Leste that received major aid donations and help in building up its military for independence from Indonesia (a policy that now somewhat was let go or switched; The Guardian, 2019; see Thomson, 2022 for a review of the ethical failures of Australia in Timor and acting as an internationally recognized bully). Modern PNG essentially then is an Australian ‘homebrew’—the implementation of a UN mandate through Australian tools—for the international community, all achieved by foreign policy and aid investment, using public money to do so, but driven by just a few ‘leaders’; a clique. PNG is to be controlled (Saffu, 1993). That’s not modern and not a deviation from a colonial mindset driving PNG-western relations for over 300 year; decolonization was not achieved then (see also Shibuya, 2004).

But like elsewhere in the tropics of this world, and when such protectorate principles are simply applied top-down (e.g. Erler, 1985), they carry an ideology and using commercial tools (Stiglitz, 2003), the reality showed the failure of that effort, how

nation-building abroad and how Australian Aid projects and their education inside and outside of Australia have not achieved (see Kolova, 2015 for Bougainville aid by Australia, as an essential problem for the PNG nation; see Fowke, 2006 for more details). PNG is actually not to be controlled much (Saffu, 1993), and it can easily fail as a nation (Gosarevski et al., 2019; May, 1998, Mietzner and Farelly 2013). And the current performance metrics and the legacy are clear on this, e.g. wilderness loss, forest loss, cultural loss and decay, civil strife issues and corruption (Gosarevski et al. 2019; Transparency International, 2005; see The Guardian, 2020, 2022b for real-world examples). It just exemplifies what 'outer fascism' is (Henton & Flower, 2007, p. 290 Solomon Islands; Lasslett, 2012), how it is thought of (example shown here: Woodbury, 2014), how it looks like in 'modern times,' that forests and their biodiversity processes suffer from that, and that it can actually be found in PNG with an Australian footprint.

Australia is not really a world power, it's 'just' a middle power (Abbondanza, 2021), if even that (Ludlam, 2021) and it fully struggles with itself, with its environment and the surrounding neighbors—all of them in deep conflict also but supposed to follow an Australian lead. The struggles can easily be seen in the environmental issues there because those are all deeply linked and connected with economic and social ones. Already on the climate change aspect of it, Australia's neighbors are far from happy with the Australian performance, or seen well cared for (e.g. The Guardian, 2022c). While Australia essentially does not accept human causes of climate change, and does not much to change it, the neighbors are starting to drown due to sea level rise, while there is a refugee crisis with an Australian footprint also.

This raises some relevant questions, for instance, how does the PNG lead and vision, Australia, actually fare itself with its own domestic policies (see also other chapters of this book)? Already Table 11.1 exposes Australia as a widely imperfect nation itself, certainly for the environment; so how on earth should it lead others then, and why? It is here where the UN mandate misleads, but this is also not so surprising when knowing the UN struggles and failures itself (see for instance Mace et al., 2010; Ziegler, 2013 for missed biodiversity targets; Crowley, 2007 for failures on man-made climate change; many more can be named, e.g. Ruanda or Irian Jaya).

Simply looking at some socio-economic and environmental metrics, it becomes quickly clear that Australia does not really have a great success story to report on, or to export to others, e.g. Abbondanza (2021). Australia's legacy is not a shining example on environmental aspects and wilderness biodiversity conservation. Already from the ecological side, Paul Ehrlich from the U.S. has frequently exposed this issue clearly (Fraenkel, 2016; see also <https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/science-tech/pioneering-ecologist-paul-ehrich-present-unsw-sydney-sixth-mass-extinction>). And according to the Australian Conservation Foundation (2022) mining accounted for app. 72% of the total habitat destruction approved under the national environment law; this trend is increasing.

Such crisis state is also true for many domestic problems but reaches out wider from there, e.g. use of PNG's Manus Island, for refugees and migrants to

Table 11.1 A selection of Australian performance metrics on the environment affecting the wider region also

Item	Impact	Citation	Comment
Great Barrier Reef (GBR) decay	Coral reef bleaching, physical decay, ocean acidification	Veron (2008)	Most coral reefs in the world might be affected. Papua New Guinea has equal or higher diversity than GBR, the GBR being a global asset
Tasmania old-growth forest decline	Unsustainable cutting of old-growth forest	Ludlam (2021)	PNG has one of the largest intact tracts of tropical old-growth forests in the world left
Foreigner integration and handling	Integration issues with outsiders	Miller (2000), Aquino (2017), The Boston Review (2022)	While now a global problem, the Australian approach has been critiqued for many years
Aboriginee handling	Integration, nation-building, indigenous people	see citations in the book	A global example of western failure
Aboriginal history and legacy	Integration and self-understanding of the Australian nation	e.g. The Guardian (2022a)	Still unsatisfactory efforts critiqued by the world's indigenous communities
Climate change denial	Global warming	Ludlam (2021)	A major impact unresolved and denied spilling across borders
Darling river drying	Water management	Garcia (2019), Kerr (2019)	A wider and generic problem of water treatment
Heatwaves and bushfires	Climate change	Ludlam (2021)	This handling of an environmental tragedy reached a global attention
Overfishing	Orange roughly		Part of a global scheme
Forest loss and modification	Landscape change	Lines (1999)	Part of the colonial legacy
Endangered species loss	Conservation	Australian Conservation Foundation (2022), Kearney et al. (2022)	Consequence of a neoliberal policy applied internationally affecting the world's (endemic) biodiversity and wilderness
Journalism	A free society, inquisitive journalism	Ludlam (2021), Tanter (2020)	As seen with Wikileaks, Australia does not support well its own journalists and citizens abroad etc.

Australia (Fraenkel, 2016, Australia uses PNG islands and hotels for unwanted international immigrants¹), for the Arc of Terror and for Australian areas abroad, including its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and remote islands (Macquarie Island, Antarctic territory; contaminated with invasive species, etc.; Bergstrom et al., 2009). And so the problems are certainly true for Australian Aid (Heinecke et al., 2008), and Australian handlings and involvement in climate change, handling of indigenous people, warfare such as Iraq and Afghanistan, many Australian mining operations, and for much of the environment (see Ludlam, 2021). It was New Zealand's media—not Australia—that exposed the 18 missing PNG fisheries observers (Radio New Zealand, 2018; presumably that points toward something serious on that topic). On those essential instances—the environment and beyond—the great Australian nation is not really a showcase to be exposed, and rolled out, to others, certainly not for PNG nor internationally. Other than the vast space and the 'down-under' mystique, Australia and its governance construct leaves much to be desired for the world's sustainability (e.g. Hamilton, 1998; Whiley et al., 2019; see Ludlam, 2021 for generic review; Lien, 1999; Flannery, 2002 for track record examples). Heim (2017) provides a wider Pacific-wide perspective on this showing island dynamics and reasonings.

Arguably, Australia is not alone in this poor performance on relevant issues including the environment and sustainability, but those issues come embedded in its chosen and wider Western Governance model; it's the source of its very origin. One will agree that capitalism plays a role in it, and so does neoliberalism and economic growth policies (Daly & Farley, 2010) pursued and viciously defended by Australia and its foreign interventions all over the world (including Africa). Considering the large western society crisis ongoing (Buell, 2004; Czech, 2002; see Cockburn, 2013 for U.S.), Australia cannot, and unlikely will, fix those problems all by itself (Flannery, 2002; The Guardian, 2022c). One may easily conclude then that such a strong Australian engagement abroad is not recommended much, likely outright dangerous to many people. It certainly is to PNG (see Busilacchi et al., 2018 as an example for Torres Island). Just throwing industrial money and governance at problems, and bound by a return of investment, is not helping, it's not aiding. Metrics speak here for themselves for decades.

Textbox: Use of PNG's Island of Manus to resolve Australia's immigration problem

While accepted practice now, Australia started early to detain immigrants to Australia on non-Australian ground (Fraenkel, 2016). It's meant to be a Processing Center (public information provided here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manus_Regional_Processing_Centre). This would make the entire proceedings much easier as people can simply not be allowed to enter Australian legislation, and thus, it avoids elongated court cases and return procedures. It was meant to be cheaper and run smooth when all done abroad. Anyways, it did not run smooth and Australia, as a continent of immigrants itself, got a black eye (see a

¹ “The roots of this outrage stretch back through twenty years of cruel and increasingly preposterous anti-immigrant policy in Australia” (<https://bostonreview.net/articles/the-humanitarian-disgrace-of-australias-immigration-regime/>).

public news headline; <https://bostonreview.net/articles/the-humanitarian-disgrace-of-australias-immigration-regime/>). Eventually, after several court cases, Australia had to abandon the entire procedure and its camp. Refugees went into cheap chain hotels instead or get 'processed' elsewhere.

The initial idea that it is to be an elegant way of handling the global refugee crisis, looking good and professional about it in the public eye, and contract it all out abroad, went bust once more.

11.2 Australia's Environmental Problem Export

But while some people perceive Australia as the beacon of civilization in the region—if not even in the world (Greasley et al., 2017)—many might perceive Australia rather as a brute but failed governance scheme from terror-like colonial times, now widely overruled by Asia, sidelining the UN + its values, and intervened and fine-tuned by the U.K. and U.S. for their purposes with the EU watching and somewhat engaging from the remote in times of globalization (but having no relevant power to truly engage). Australia handles an accused genocide at home (The Guardian, 2022a). Australia has obviously a very hard time with climate change, and with its virgin forest maintenance, wilderness management, fire regimes, ocean resources, sustainable mining and a good water management (Table 11.1; Ludlam, 2021). So what comes recommended abroad?

Of course, much of Australia itself does not see it that way (Ludlam, 2021). And so, with large environmental and policy decay ongoing, climate change in wide denial, Australia continues in this race to the bottom, toying with refugees, but along this path tries in parallel to gain influence and get more power in wider and international circles and to impress there, also making money. The recent APEC summit in Port Moresby, PNG but actually run and organized out of Australia (<https://www.apec.org/groups/committee-on-trade-and-investment/market-access-group/ntm/papua-new-guinea>) is a good example. Or the immediate and strong support of virtually any international warfare by the western world, including the war on terror, speaks to that argument. Australia is always available for tasks of international security as needed, usually in full support of the UK and its royal court, as well as in line with the U.S. But see the outcome!

Modernity in Australia looks great in the heavily designed PR image and online governmental webportals perhaps, but is not achieved much on the ground or in the 'arc,' certainly not for PNG and its wilderness and 'bush' people. Limits are set by the environment, geography, natural resources and its social problems. Australia is finite and remote, and it is widely indeed used up. What good can come from it then, e.g. for PNG? (Fig. 11.2).

Part of a global question - water management - remains key in hot but dry nations like Australia and it shows all what is wrong with the underlying business plan and governance (see Garcia, 2019 for overuse, corruption, theft, etc.). While PNG

has one of the highest rainfalls in the world, the water administration problem in Australia shows us no other, e.g. Darling River (Garcia, 2019; Kerr, 2019), as linked with personal favoritism, urbanization, farming, mining and overfishing and climate change. As remote as Australia is it can only be part of the western power clique when it connects via money and the WWW, and physically, by airplanes, cargo and ships (the Australian fleet of long distance planes helped significantly to shape modern Australia and its politics). These items by themselves are an inherent part of global contamination, invasive species and climate change affecting 'the arc' as most travel to PNG is through air and from Australia (steered and designed that way).

All of those mentioned Australian issues touch on internal domestic Australia problems embedded in the wider global fabric and geography. It gets more serious though when those ones get exported, e.g. as a culture and action items to neighbors like PNG (Gosarevski et al., 2019). Australia already exports economic growth schemes all over the southern Pacific and has done so proudly without deeper reflection for over a century (public record seen here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Australia). Australia is also very quite on exposing its own economic growth problems but blames other factors (see shorebird example in Studds et al., 2017 for promoted outside factors).

In the wider Australian region, the promotion of economic growth (= the over-consumption of goods and habitats, e.g. from abroad) is usually done through advisors, policing and aid (Gosarevski et al., 2019; Table 11.2). The nation of Australia



Fig. 11.2 Care Center for Manam Islanders on mainland Papua New Guinea; note the German colonial name; also co-funded by the EU and Australia. Manam island is a coastal site affected by volcanoe outbreaks and with some subsequent local disputes!

Table 11.2 Selection of Australian spill-overs into PNG

Project topic	Category	Citation	Comment
Policing	Military	Gosarevski et al. (2019)	Highly strategic, long-term efforts failed
Education of leaders	Political	Gosarevski et al. (2019)	Highly political
Education	Humanitarian	Gosarevski et al. (2019)	Biased due to western views
Court support	Civil	Gosarevski et al. (2019)	Not a long-term solution

and its money is PNG's largest source of Official Development Assistance (<https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/papua-new-guinea>). But what is less recognized is that those mind sets and efforts come with a certain self-interest and a certain ignorance of others, long-term. International aid tends to benefit the aid-donor nation the most (e.g. app. 130% return in German and EU-based aid projects; compare also with Erler, 1985). Arguably, the world will not turn due to Australian efforts any time soon; nor will PNG then. And there sits the long-term dilemma.

Australia operates in self-interest indeed and that has aspects of racism in its very policy and daily actions (e.g. The Guardian, 2022c; see also Forrest & Dunn, 2007; Forrest et al., 2016; <https://time.com/6176970/australia-election-china/>); it is founded upon it (Twomey, 2006), cannot control it well internally (Jennett, 2011) and relays it to the region with a certain wider approval in the 'Pacific Theater' (Adamson et al., 2018). It so has indeed featured an outer racism (Henton & Flower, 2007, p. 292 Solomon Islands; Lasslett, 2012). Australia actively puts other nations and people into misery. Those details exist and are factual, certainly for Australia's arc (May, 2006). A 'ring of terror' shows us no other (Henton & Flower, 2007).

11.3 How Does that Link Directly to Papua New Guinea?

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the closest real neighbor of Australia. The large Australian culture does spill over and is fully institutionalized (Gosarevski et al., 2019). Other efforts from Australia can easily be found in PNG e.g. media (AusAID, 2004) or direct impact of certain municipalities like Brisbane, Darwin or Sydney (see also Lutton, 1981 for the PNG national university library—a cultural strife, deep source and pride item in any nation—moved from Port Moresby to Perth). According to the Australian Embassy online, at any time, there are over 10,000 citizens from PNG in Australia and Australians in PNG. Modern society in PNG and the wider south Pacific region is affected by Australia and how it runs 'business'; the culture spills over (see, for instance, Blair, 2013 for drug smuggling) and is virtually unavoidable. This has been critiqued for long time already, e.g. former long-term presidents Michael Somare (for the famous 'shoe incident' caused by Australia see here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia%E2%80%93Papua_New_Guinea_relations) and by prime minister Julius Chan (2016).

Already from a forestry perspective—a natural resource of global importance—one can easily see the *laissez-faire* attitude by Australia; it comes as a wider template:

- (a) For over 50 years Australia has no relevant policy in place for betterment of the forestry sector in PNG. It's clearly a by-stander and sees the decay.
- (b) In PNG over 400 tree species can be used for market (out of 600 up to 3000 species or so). The timber market is rife with mis-identification and mis-labeled species products though, knowingly. In the meantime, Australia oversees, studies, documents and knows most of it—e.g. through the Sydney Museum and James Cook University—but does virtually nothing effective on the matter. That's then Bandura (2007)'s paradigm of selective moral dis-engagement in pure form. It's certainly not a pro-active or an effective management, or a good showcase.

And Australia—the western management of it—is far from being a considerate, multi-national and multi-perspective nation that sees and treats PNG as an acclaimed equal partner, “family” or who wants to learn and apply PNG values back home (see statement below). Such Australian approaches tend to be very destructive for PNG and the region instead. PNG values are frowned upon, and only western values and approaches seem to count. Despite the international trend, we see very little indigenization and decolonization of the Australian PNG-Agenda (see here for details https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Australia#Oceania; compare with Demeulenaere et al., 2021; Narokobi, 1983 for generic Melanesian tree and associated land management values) or for the ongoing Australian Arc of Influence (May, 2006; Wight and Wainwright 2004).

Based on those realities, or official selective PR messages like below, who has a good faith and trust in Australian efforts abroad, and with PNG?

The Australia-PNG partnership is special: we are neighbours, friends and family. Australia is committed to working with the PNG government to continue to deepen our comprehensive bilateral relationship and tackle shared regional challenges.

Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese, tweet to congratulate Papua New Guinea to the new elections 2022.

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