



# Ocean governance in the South Pacific region: Progress and plans for action



Joanna Vince<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Elizabeth Brierley<sup>c</sup>, Simone Stevenson<sup>d</sup>, Piers Dunstan<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Politics and International Relations Program, School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania, Locked Bag 1340, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia*

<sup>b</sup> *Centre for Marine Socio-ecology, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia*

<sup>c</sup> *Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia*

<sup>d</sup> *School of Life and Environmental Sciences Centre for Integrative Ecology Deakin University, Burwood Campus, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC 3125, Australia*

<sup>e</sup> *CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere, GPO Box 1538, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia*

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Ocean governance  
The Pacific Island Countries and Territories  
Integrated ocean management  
Regional ocean policy

## ABSTRACT

The Pacific Island Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP), which was released in 2002, provided the framework for ocean governance in the Pacific region. Since then there have been a myriad of policy documents and institutional arrangements that have been developed to address ocean governance issues, however, little progress has occurred with regard to the actual implementation of PIROP. This paper examines the region's progress in establishing integrated oceans management, and how this fits with the use of marine spatial planning and area based management tools, such as marine protected areas. It argues that policy making in this region encounters the usual difficulties with integrated policy approaches experienced elsewhere but that these difficulties are further accentuated when applied to developing nations that are highly dependent on external support. It suggests a way forward for the future with development of action plans, implementation and the practical application of those plans including a regional contextualisation/analysis of progress against regional objectives.

## 1. Introduction

The Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)<sup>1</sup> are dependent on their ocean resources for cultural identity, subsistence and income that drives their economies. The region's land mass is less than 0.6 million km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of 200 high islands and 2500 low islands, while the maritime jurisdiction is around 40 million km<sup>2</sup>, 98 per cent of the region's total area [1–3]. Further to these vast exclusive economic zones (EEZs), the Pacific Islands' region also contains four areas of high seas which are fully enclosed by surrounding EEZs, often referred to as the high seas pockets [4]. Outside of this are Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) that are also included in region. The PICTs have developed a number of institutions, policies and programs as a governance framework to manage ocean resources in their EEZs and collectively as a region.

Pacific Island countries have adopted a framework to facilitate marine management moving towards an integrated approach to promote cooperation and collaboration in order to maximise benefit from limited human and financial resources; and to resolve the

conflicts apparent in the management of ocean resources of the region. The regional architecture in the Pacific is important because it embraces the interconnectedness of the South Pacific while acknowledging the existence of regional agencies that support the activities of individual countries. This governance framework for managing the oceans on a regional scale is complex. The main institutions include the national governments of the 26 Pacific Island and metropolitan countries that make up the Pacific Community (SPC) (including the PICTs); the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) (which also houses the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner [OPOC]); the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); the University of the South Pacific (USP); the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA); and to a lesser extent, the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO). All of these institutions are members of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) and work together through the Marine Sector Working Group of CROP. The Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA), regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), international organisations, civil society groups and international non-government organisations (NGOs) also play important roles with these

\* Corresponding author at: Politics and International Relations Program, School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania, Locked Bag 1340, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia.  
E-mail addresses: [Joanna.vince@utas.edu.au](mailto:Joanna.vince@utas.edu.au) (J. Vince), [foster\\_liz@hotmail.com](mailto:foster_liz@hotmail.com) (E. Brierley), [simonestevenson@gmail.com](mailto:simonestevenson@gmail.com) (S. Stevenson), [Piers.Dunstan@csiro.au](mailto:Piers.Dunstan@csiro.au) (P. Dunstan).

<sup>1</sup> These include the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, American Samoa, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Northern Marianas, Pitcairn Islands, Tokelau, Wallis & Futuna.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2017.02.007>

Received 14 December 2016; Received in revised form 10 February 2017; Accepted 12 February 2017  
Available online 16 February 2017

0308-597X/© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

organisations and in the decision-making processes regarding the management of the Pacific region's ocean and marine resources.

The region's current ocean policy framework is grounded in the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP), which was endorsed by Pacific Island Forum Leaders in 2002 [5]. PIROP focuses on sustainable use and was envisaged as a template for the PICTs "to adopt and adapt in the development of national policy, reflecting the range of interests, priorities and capacity within the region" [6]. This resulted in a unique regional approach to ocean governance, with PIROP being one of the first comprehensive integrated ocean policies to be applied on a regional scale [7,8]. In 2005, the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum's Framework for Integrated Strategic Action (PIROF-ISA) was released, however, ocean institutions and policies continued to focus on sectoral and 'fragmented' management arrangements [8]. The difficulties with implementing an ocean policy on a regional scale were highlighted early in the process [2,3,7].

Political will and support, institutional capacity (through expertise and resources) and integrated decision making have been endorsed by decision makers as key components required for the policy's implementation [3]. In the South Pacific Ocean, the geographical region that is the focus of this paper, an integrated approach is seen as integral to achieving sustainable development, balancing the needs of the environment, society and economic interests. Integration is globally acknowledged as one of the more suitable measures used to achieve sustainable development and conservation [9–12], but actual pathways to implement integrated policies have been difficult to identify, and even developed countries struggle to achieve these goals (see for example [13]). Consequently, the implementation of the regional ocean policy has been slow and this has been recognised by the Pacific Leaders. During their annual meeting in 2010, the Pacific Leaders endorsed the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO). The intent of the FPO was to act as a companion document to the PIROP, effectively replacing the PIROF-ISA, designed to catalyse action and political will to ensure the sustainable development, management and conservation of the diverse ocean and island ecosystems within the region.

While the region has successfully developed and agreed on frameworks to deepen regionalism and strengthen sustainable ocean development, management and conservation, implementation of the ocean policy is still in its infancy. The purpose of this paper is twofold: first is to examine the intricate web of policies and institutions that are essential to ocean governance in the region; and second to analyse the progress in achieving integrated ocean management as a means to ensure a secure future for Pacific people. This paper begins with an examination of the policy history of the region – from the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and its associated PIROF-ISA, the Pacific Plan, the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and the latest Framework for Pacific Regionalism. It focusses on how the region is progressing a common understanding of integrated ocean management and related tools for implementation, including marine spatial planning and area-based management tools, such as marine protected areas. It further discusses how harmonised national uptake of these tools can contribute towards meeting regional objectives.

This paper argues that policy making in this region encounters the usual difficulties with integrated policy approaches experienced elsewhere but that these difficulties are further accentuated when applied to developing nations that are highly dependent on external support. It suggests a way forward for the future with development of action plans, implementation and the practical application of those plans including a regional contextualisation/analysis of progress against regional objectives. These include the following suggestions: an assessment of links between sectors and impacts, clarification of the roles and responsibilities of governments, clarification of the rights and responsibilities of communities, and improved coordination between knowledge holders and decision makers.

## 2. Institutions – regional architecture

Regional cooperation is vital for ocean governance in the Pacific, and the PICTs have demonstrated leadership towards achieving this goal, however the relevant governance structures for ocean management are complicated. The Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) is one of the key elements of this governance framework, comprised of the CEOs of nine regional organisations, including the six mentioned above which have mandates that cover marine-related activities (FFA, PIFS, SPC, SPREP, SPTO and USP). The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is the permanent chair of the CROP. The organisations that have a marine-related mandate also have varying numbers and mixes of state and territory membership and funding models with different breadth of scope. This presents difficulties particularly as differences in policy priorities such as climate change, fishing rights and trade between the Island members and metropolitan members become increasingly apparent [14]. A crucial element in achieving cooperation is through the "Pacific Way" of dialogue and decision making by consensus" being applied [8].

The CROP is supported by a number of working groups, the most relevant of which is the Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG), made up of CROP representatives who provide advice to CROP executives on cross-cutting marine issues which are relevant to more than two CROP mandates or marine sectors. The South Pacific Tourism Organisation is the only relevant CROP organisation which does not regularly participate in the MSWG. In 1999, the Pacific Islands Forum leaders requested the development of a regional ocean policy (which was to become the PIROP) and the MSWG was designated with this task.

In addition to national governments and the CROP, other key stakeholders in the region include RFMOs, subregional groupings, traditional development partners in the form of metropolitan countries, newer development partners in the form of foundations and private sector investors, international non-government organisations, civil society organisations, international organisations, and distant water fishing nations.

The MSWG, in consultation with the other relevant stakeholders mentioned above, coordinated the development of the PIROP, and two years later, the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders to develop the PIROF-ISA. One of the key obstacles to the implementation of the PIROP and PIROF-ISA was that no single institution was mandated or resourced to oversee coordination and implementation [3]. Several years later, the MSWG was responsible for facilitating the development of the FPO and hired consultants to undertake analysis of the current policy environment and develop the draft framework. While the FPO does not specify responsible agencies, it does include specific objectives and actions dedicated to improving regional ocean governance and coordination, and suggestions on the type and level of implementing organisations [3].

In 2011, Forum Leaders designated the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, an action called for under the FPO. Allocation of this role to the Secretary General of PIFS was confirmed by the CROP in 2015, following the appointment of a new Secretary General, Dame Meg Taylor. It is the responsibility of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner to provide high level advocacy for Pacific Ocean priorities identified by signatories to the FPO and PIROP. The scope of the FPO covers 23 PICTs, giving the Pacific Ocean Commissioner a broader remit than that of the Secretary General of PIFS, whose responsibility is only for the core 16 PIF member States, plus two French territories from 2016.

It is also important to note that in 2014, the Leaders of the original 16 PIF member States endorsed a new Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR) [15] in response to a review of its predecessor, the Pacific Plan [16]. The review found the Pacific Plan had become largely an officials' led process of listing priorities over time rather than

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5118337>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5118337>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)