

## **South Pacific Association of Mission Studies**

In order to provide a background to the establishment and functioning of the South Pacific Association of the Mission Studies, I need to give some personal bio-data.

I am from New Zealand, a member of the Missionary Society of St Columban. In 1963, I was shifted from the Teaching Staff of our Seminary in Sydney to that of our Seminary in Ireland.

In 1966, I was asked to establish the Asia Pacific Desk at Pro Mundi Vita, a socio-religious research and information centre located in Brussels.

The newly named Third World Aid not include what in Europe was called (actually by the Vatican) Oceania – Australia, New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia were all subject to the sacred of Peoples Congregation for Evangelisation, i.e., mission territories. It was a bit of a culture shock.

In 1972, I was brought back to Australia as Executive Secretary of the New National Catholic Missionary Council to co-ordinate Catholic Missionary activity originating in Australia. (In 1972 IAMS itself also started).

I discovered that there were no facilities for people with Mission appointments to receive a missiological orientation. To meet that need, a Pacific Mission Institute was combined with the Columban Seminary. The staff organised meetings of missiologists from other mission institutes and mission boards.

In 1984, the NCMC felt the necessity for a missiological Journal for the micro peoples, cultures and languages of “Oceania” isolated in the huge Pacific Ocean. It was where most Catholic Missionaries were sent.

A circular asked for opinions as to whether a regional ecumenical, multi-disciplinary missiological review was abolished by the Episcopal Conference for financial reasons.

The Sydney missiology group decided in 1988 the Journal should go ahead. The constituted themselves a South Pacific Association of Mission Studies. They and the Journal were launched in Macquarie University, July 1989.

Hence the South Pacific Association has essentially functioned to publish regional missiological journal.

On the positive side, with no further financial subsidies, it has survived as an occasional Journal, generally bi-annually. It seeks articles from a range of persons from University academics, mission board staff members, lecturers in missiology particularly from the Baptist, Uniting and Catholic churches.

The circulation is a modest 130 with an emphasis on libraries, mission boards, mission institutes and formation centres. There is also cooperation from religious studies and history university academics.

On the negative side we have failed to attract a sufficient number of Pacific Islander contributors.

A national mission conference is planned for September 2005. The tyranny of distance, modern means of communication notwithstanding, applies not only to the South Pacific but also to the Australian continent.

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