



Sydney World Pride, Pacific Caucus Report 27th February 2023,

Date: 27 February 2023

Time: 8am – 10 am

Location: Karstens, Level 1, 111, Harrington Street, SYDNEY

In attendance:

Kevin Haunui, Isikeli Vulavou, Jayleen Chun, Ruby Mountford, Valentino Wichman, Tebeio Tamton, Asso Cousins Cousins de Tahiti, Parker Hou, Taufui Naufahu, Joleen Brown Mataelem Gillio Khalezzi Baxter, Teri Haurua, Yannick Tarivuhavuha, Dean Tangata, Rainer Brown, Semi Malachi, Abdui Mufeez Shadeed, Ms June White, Noelene Nabulivou, Lagi Seru, Vanila Heather, Loata Tucika, Joseph Sikulu, Jioji Ravulo, Keyonce Lee Hang, Eroni Din, Benjamin Patel, Phy Leshanz, Ashley Ausage Ausage Auva'a Lauano, Ken Moala, Talahlehi Apa, Shane Sturhis, Matthew Bowden, John Leha, Ymania Brown, Valentino Wichman, Rainer Brown, Isikeli Vulavou, Rosie Miller, Lagi Seru, Julia Ehert, Luz Elena Aranda Arroyo, Mai Linh, Sarah Goulding, and Andrea Cole.

VIP guests:

Rev. James Bhagwan, Jessica Stein, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Lousia Wall, Roise Miller, and Cruella Tuinukuafe.

Program

- Acknowledgement of country - John Leha, a proud Birra Gubba, Wakka Wakka and Tongan man born and raised on Gadigal lands, Board member ILGA Oceania, Board Chair BLAQ Aboriginal Corporation
- Guests / Dignitaries / Visitors Response – Kevin Haunui, proud Takatapui Māori man from Te Whanganui-A-Tara
- Opening Prayer – Afioga Fia'ailetoa Kenneth Moala, Co-Chair ILGA Oceania
- Welcome - Introductions - ILGA Oceania – Co-Chairs - Fia'ailetoa Kenneth Moala, Margherita Coppolino
- Welcome from MC – Muliagatele Tuisina Ymania Brown, Equality Australia Strategic Advisor – Sydney WorldPride Human Rights Conference & Operations
- Dignitaries Speakers
 - Purpose - What you want from the session

- Pacific Speakers
 - o Pacific Speaker 1 - Melanesia - Rhonda Ratu Eroni Dina of the Republic of Fiji
 - § Regional highlights
 - § Opportunities
 - § Challenges - Threats
 - Pacific Speaker 2 – Micronesia - Tebeio Tamton of the Republic of the Kiribati
 - § Regional highlights
 - § Opportunities
 - § Challenges - Threats
 - Pacific Speaker 3 – Polynesia - Joleen Joey Mataele of the Kingdom of Tonga
 - § Regional highlights
 - § Opportunities
 - § Challenges - Threats
- MC - Open Floor - Question & Answer
- Thank You - ILGA Oceania Co-Chairs Fia'ailetoa Kenneth Moala, Margerita Coppolino
- MC Presentation of Non-Attending Countries Dossiers
- Joleen Mataele - Presentation of Taonga / Mea-alofa / Me'a'ofa / Fagai / Iloloma / Buakori Gift Baskets for Dignitaries

Speech from Rhonda Ratu Eroni Dina

REPRESENTING QUEER MELANESIA, FOUNDRRESS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Ratu Eroni Ledua Dina OPENS SUB-REGIONAL INTERVENTIONS AT THE PACIFIC CAUCUS, PRE-SYDNEY WORLD PRIDE CONFERENCE 2023.

"Au vakaturaga saka ki na vanua o Gadigal, Cammeraygal, Bidjigal, Darug, Dharawal kei ira na kena masi vakaturaga au cavu baleta tiko ena siga vinaka nikua. Au vakavinavinakataki kemuni na matua, na uabula kei ira kece na lalai ni nomuni vanua...mai vei ira era se bula tiko kei ira era sa laki tei tarawau ki na vanua e yalataki vei keda kece.

Vinaka vakalevu nomuni yalo ni veiciqomi kei na nomuni veimaroroi tiko vei kemami na isuwai ni cakacaka ni veivanua, veimatanitu kovuti ko Melanesia.

O au saka mai Viti, nai talai sa mai gusudra tiko na veimatanitu era lewena tiko na vuales vaka melanesia, au mai domo rogoilevu sara tiko ena matakalailai vinaka nikua kau kerea meu na vosoti kina.

Ni sa Bula Vinaka. Ni yadra.

Good morning.

I stand in front of you today humbly acknowledging the ancient and the very present custodians of this land. To the people of Gadigal, Cammeraygal, Bidjigal, Darug and Dharawal, we thank you for being a very gracious, loving and all-embracing elder brother/sister/non-binary Wantok.

Today I was tasked to speak on behalf of all queer-identifying Melanesians. Not an easy task if I may be very honest. Being that this is one of those very rare opportunities I need not explain my queerness to anybody but I will though take this opportunity to allude to the

Mela-ness in a Mela-queer-nesian. Very often this family is misrepresented, misunderstood, our lives mismanaged and if you look around the room today...we're often under-represented. The dominant image of a Pacific Islander includes light skin and straight or wavy hair — but that's not how everyone from the region looks. Some of us are everything but mainstream and forever oddities in our own world. One would think that when we're called to spaces like this that champion all diversities and the human rights of all people that we would see some of the most marginalized communities in Oceania represented in droves because they'll be supported by those who hold power and along with it...money.

When we talk about Blackness, we usually refer to people of recent African descent. We rarely consider what it means to be "Black" outside of that context, especially in parts of the Western world populated by descendants of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Blackness apart from African-ness, on the other hand, is a reality for some Melanesian Pacific Islanders, and it affects us in ways similar to those of the African diaspora.

So, to be Queer in a world where the gender standard is binary, and then be from scattered islands of Oceania in a world where the standard is determined by big world nations, and then be Mela/Black too in a world where the western standard has effectively reduced our existence by othering us to oblivion, I say that the few Mela-queer-nesians here in the room have conquered, survived, still alive long enough to keep occupying space to remind us all that all lives MUST matter.

Jada Jackson effectively opined in her Allure article that "in many Western cultures, media visibility of Pacific Islanders like Melanesian people is minimal and Melaqueernesian representation is near zero. When it does happen, they're usually portrayed as Polynesians, people native to Pacific countries like Hawaii, New Zealand, Samoa, and Tonga. These folks tend to have lighter skin and looser-textured hair. While some Melanesians look "Indigenous," with light brown or beige skin and straighter hair, many are more likely to read as "Afro" (dark skin, coily hair, wide-set noses) to Western eyes. You can see this erasure at work today: Moana, the first Disney movie to center Pacific Islanders, is only focused on Polynesian people and mythology. Netflix, one of the world's largest global streaming platforms, ran a campaign last year to promote "Pacific Islander Voices." Of the interviewees, not one, at least by Jada's research, is of Melanesian or Micronesian descent.

We fail to capture the beauty of Oceania's diverse people and cultures when only one group is allowed to break through into majority white-centric spaces. Like many dark-skinned people around the world, Melaqueernesian experiences are frequently influenced by how others perceive them. Make no mistake about it: Aside from Homo/Trans/Bi phobia, Colorism, and anti-Blackness, which all arose under the influence of the European colonizers who first conceived and imported them, most certainly exist within the Pacific Islander community."

Today, our lone focal from the Solomon Islands was unable to make it to Sydney due to fear of job loss, lack of support from management because of queerphobia, sex and gender biases that would only be exacerbated if they were to find out the nature of this event. The Solomon Islands like all of Melanesia except Fiji, still criminalize same sex relations and homosexuality in general. Despite these challenges, queer-led or for-queer organizations are still pushing and lobbying for change and recognition. From 2022 to date PNG's Key Populations Consortium & Kapul Champions, Vanuatu's V-Pride, Fiji's Rainbow Pride Foundation and DIVA for Equality are some of the many exemplary organizations who have

created ripples from, and have successfully navigated the ebbs and flows of the tide we call donor support. Feel free to go over to them in your spare time and see how much they've done considering the plethora of challenges they face on the ground.

They and many others can do more but need to be supported, by those I mentioned way early on in my speech – those who hold power and along with it...money. If that's you, consider yourself challenged, consider our lives in your hands. Stop Melaqueernesian Erasure and bring us back to the fore, with everyone else, in this global conversation about movement building. Queer Movements in Melanesia are on the verge of collapse due to unrealistic expectations and demands from funders. Not enough support exists for the core operations of these organizations and funders/donors must consider looking at ways to not only finance projects and activities but in that same light also support the acquisition of warm bodies to bring these activities to life and manage them accordingly. Too often we turn a blind eye to the mining of intellectual property and exploit volunteerism to achieve outcomes and objectives. Help us end that cycle.

Being here and providing us that access is an opportunity the few of us who are here from Melanesian nations will hope to take advantage of on behalf of the many more from our family who did not make it. We hope that when we return, we go back with glad tidings of a new horizon for Melanesia and all of Oceania.

We thank you for your camaraderie, and we are forever appreciative of your allyship.

We know together.... we can!

Remember there's no us, without me.....no Oceania without Melanesia.

Vinaka."

Key themes in discussion from the caucus floor:

- climate justice, LGBTIQ+ disaster inclusion and culturally safe response
- climate emergency LGBTIQ+ displacement
- missionisation in the pacific and role of churches and faith leaders in LGBTIQ+ rights and justice
- ongoing impacts of colonisation and bearing on Pacific lore and law
- decriminalisation of same sex relationships and trans and gender diverse identities
- LGBTQ+ conversion practices