LOGAN: *City of Choice*

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Understanding and Improving Outcomes for Pacific Islander People - A Logan Context

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LOGAN CITY COUNCIL

Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team Occasional Paper Series

Occasional Paper No. 1 - Understanding and Improving Outcomes for Pacific Islander People: A Logan Context

February 2016

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1. Introduction

Australia and New Zealand have a unique relationship, shaped by a number of factors including historical linkages and the ANZAC tradition, common values and institutions, bilateral trade and economic policy and close geographic proximity. This relationship has led to numerous cooperative arrangements between the two countries, including the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA). Under the TTTA, Australian and New Zealand citizens - including Pacific Islanders who have immigrated to New Zealand and have become citizens there – are free to travel, work and live between the two countries indefinitely (ABS Social Trends, 2010).

Recent decades have seen a significant number of New Zealand citizens of Pacific Islander heritage moving to Australia, reflecting the relative economic conditions and opportunities within the two countries (ABS Social Trends, 2010). Policy changes over the past several years have placed restrictions on New Zealand temporary visa holders' eligibility for many social security benefits in Australia, affecting access to practical needs such as tertiary education loans and social housing (Fynes-Clinton, 2011). The Australian Multicultural Council (2012) has described the situation as creating "a permanent second class of people without a clear pathway to either permanent residency or Australian citizenship".

This paper explores the challenges and opportunities for Pacific Islander immigrant communities in Australia, and focuses wherever possible on the City of Logan in South East Queensland. Specifically it looks at the implications of the TTTA, financial challenges, health and educational outcomes, housing needs and cultural differences experienced by Pacific Islanders living in Australia.

2. Pacific Islanders in Logan

2.1 Demographic Profile

Migrants to Australia from the island groups of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia are referred to collectively as 'Pacific Islander People'. Despite being grouped together in this way, each of these populations have their own diverse cultures, languages and religions (Queensland Health, 2011)[1].

Figure 1   Regions of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia
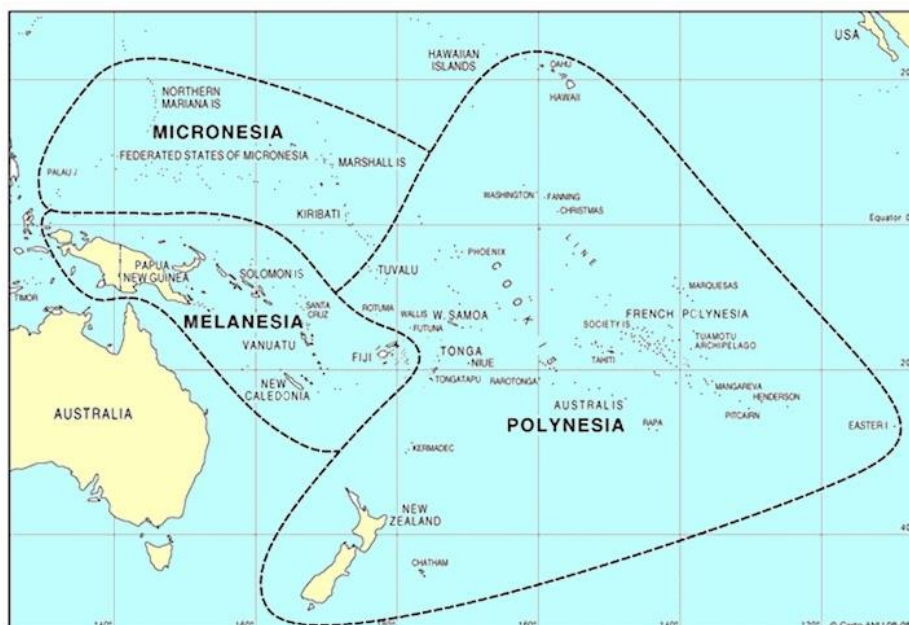
Source: ANU Cartographic Services, 2015

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[1] In preparing this paper, the limitation of the term "Pacific Islander" in conveying the nature and extent of diversity across and within groups is acknowledged.

Logan City has a large and rapidly growing Pacific Islander population (Green & Kearney, 2011). Ancestry data from the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census shows that 19,249 Logan residents identified as Pacific Islanders, with Maori (8,307) and Samoan (5,389) representing the majority of this cohort (ABS, 2011). The Pacific Islander people of Logan City represent nearly 19% of the total Queensland Pacific Islander population (102,320), and almost 7% of the Australian Pacific Islander population (279,248) (ABS, 2011).

The number of Pacific Islander people in Logan (and Australia) is likely to be substantially higher than that captured in Census data, with anecdotal information suggesting that people may tick 'other' and do not specify their country of birth on forms such as the Census form. Anecdotal information from community representatives indicates that the number of Pacific Islanders living in Logan is closer to 25,000.

Pacific Islanders comprise more than 50% of the student population at some Logan City schools and Samoan is the most frequently spoken non-English language in the City (Chenoweth, 2014; ABS, 2011).

Figure 2   **Logan residents with Pacific Islander Ancestry**
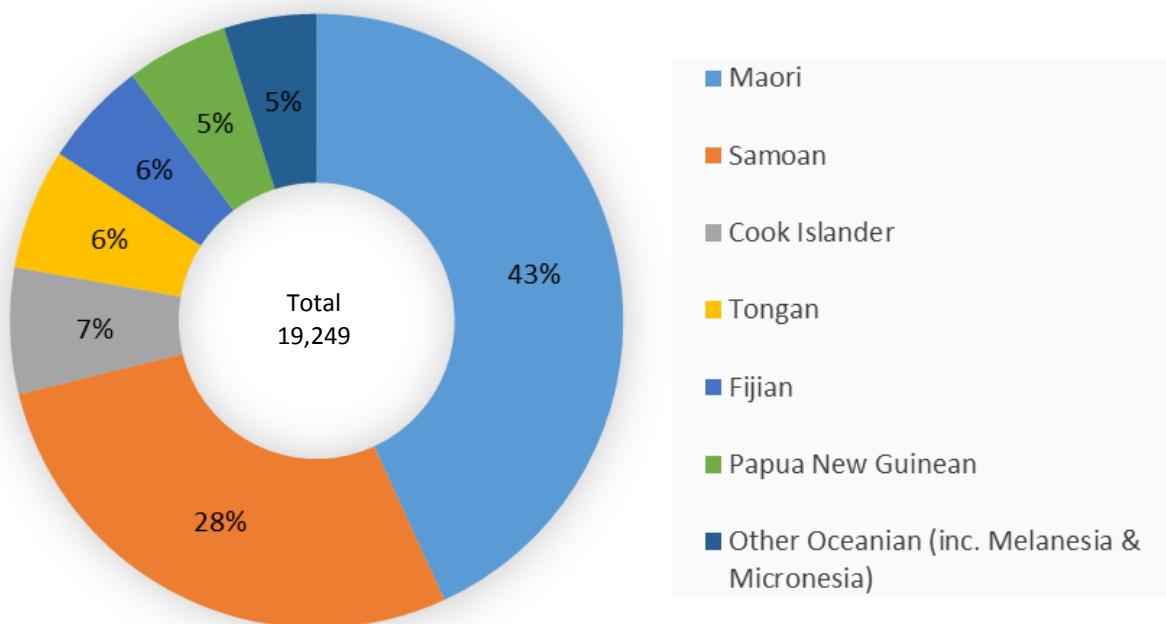
Source: ABS, 2011

A large number of Pacific Islander people residing in Logan City (and Australia) have migrated from, or through, New Zealand and are identified in Census data as New Zealanders. Country of birth data from the 2011 Census shows that 21,837 people living in Logan City were born in New Zealand, making up 7.9% of Logan's total population. The same data shows that 1,843 of Logan City residents were born in Samoa, 498 in the Cook Islands and 376 in Tonga (ABS, 2011).

Australian immigration data shows that 641,000 New Zealand citizens were living in Australia in 2013 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013). Of those, 84,700 were born elsewhere, and have come to Australia from a third country via New Zealand (Chenoweth, 2014). Queensland attracts a large proportion of Pacific Islanders, particularly to the South East region, who are drawn to the climate and work opportunities, or because they have existing family connections (Moore & Sandgren, 2011).

2.2 Overview of the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement

In 1973 the New Zealand and Australian Governments introduced the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA) that entitled New Zealand and Australian citizens to visit, live and work freely between the two countries, with permanent residence and associated entitlements. The Trans-Tasman migration flow quickly became imbalanced, with a large number of New Zealanders relocating to Australia (Kearney, 2012; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014).

The situation led to several policy changes by the Australian Government, firstly in 1981, when New Zealanders were then required to hold passports. A six month waiting period for eligibility for social security payments was introduced in 1986, which was extended to two years in 1996. By 1994, any New Zealand citizen who was not granted another visa on arrival, was required to hold a Special Category Visa (SCV) to enter Australia (Kearney, 2012; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014).

On 26 February 2001, a new bilateral social security agreement was introduced, resulting in two types of visa holders. Those who were residents on or before 26 February 2001 were given protected SCVs and those arriving after that date were given unprotected SCVs. Under the new agreement, holders of unprotected SCVs would be considered temporary residents, and would be required to gain an Australian permanent visa if they wished to access certain social security benefits not covered by the bilateral agreement (Kearney, 2012; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014).

As stated by Birrell & Rapson (2001) the Australian Government's intended outcome was to reduce responsibility for social security payments to New Zealanders residing in Australia and to deter the number of arrivals who were unlikely to meet criteria for skilled migration. The other intention was to restrict 'third country' movements, with a significant number of Trans-Tasman arrivals actually originating from Polynesian countries, firstly migrating to New Zealand and then to Australia after gaining New Zealand citizenship (Hugo, 2004; ABS, 2010). These 'third country' movements were perceived as a possible way to bypass Australian immigration requirements, which is made easier with New Zealand citizenship (ABS, 2010).

Since 2001 there has been a significant number of New Zealand SCV holders living and working in Australia, but who are ineligible for permanent residence and entitlements associated with Australian citizenship (Kearney, 2012). This situation has led to some complex challenges for Pacific Islanders in Logan (and Australia), as highlighted within this paper.

3 Challenges and Opportunities for Pacific Islander People

3.1 Financial

There is growing evidence that an increasing number of New Zealand citizens of Pacific Islander heritage living in Australia are finding themselves in financial hardship, due to their ineligibility and limited understanding of entitlements to government services and benefits.

Va'a (2011) argues that while most Pacific Islanders reported moving to Australia to seek opportunities, many are misinformed or unaware of their limited entitlement to government benefits and services, such as employment services and higher education loans. Anderson et al (n.d.) states that many families find it difficult to fulfill their aspirations due to the lack of knowledge surrounding permanent residency and citizenship, the barriers to visa criteria and the high costs involved in tertiary education. This becomes an issue when their circumstances change significantly and unexpectedly, such as separation or loss of income, and they find themselves facing financial hardship.

Chenoweth (2014) highlights that employment is often casual and seasonal, and income fluctuates in families that are often larger and include extended family and relatives that also need support. This means that young people are often under pressure to start working as soon as possible, even if for low wages and an insecure employment future.

John Pale, President of the Logan-based peak group Voice of Samoan People (VOSP), cited in Fynes-Clinton (2011) states that more and more families in Logan are pooling resources under the one roof. Pale adds that while Polynesian families are culturally inclined towards communal living, it is rarely under such stressful circumstances as seen in Logan.

Financial challenges are only one of the many issues experienced by immigrant Pacific Islanders in Australia, with significant flow-on effects in terms of accessing quality healthcare, education, and housing.

3.2 Health

Queensland Health undertook a Pacific Islander and Maori health needs assessment project between 2009 and 2011, which found a significant number of health inequities for Pacific Islanders in Queensland (2011). The study findings showed that Pacific Islanders have poorer health outcomes than that of the total Queensland population. Key findings show that, compared to Queensland:

- the Samoan-born population has a mortality rate 1.5 times higher for total deaths and 2 times higher for avoidable deaths;
- the Cook Islands-born population has hospitalisation rates between 9 times and 1.3 times higher depending on the medical condition;
- the Tonga-born population has hospitalisation rates between 2 times and 1.5 times higher depending on the medical condition;
- the Fiji-born population has hospitalisation rates 2 times higher for coronary heart disease and for diabetes complications; and
- the Papua New Guinea-born population has almost 1.5 times higher the ratio for diabetes[2].

According to Queensland Health (2011) poorer health outcomes among Pacific Islanders is attributed to both health system issues (such as poor health literacy, service access barriers and the need for improved culturally responsive health service delivery), as well as broader social determinants of health (such as economic and educational disadvantage, social exclusion and isolation and inadequate housing).

A key finding of the study was that health literacy is very poor among Pacific Islander communities. The low levels of knowledge about health and health services were largely attributed to the difficulty in navigating the system; disengagement from mainstream health campaigns and services; and cultural reluctance to seek help.

Another strong theme of the study was mental health, with the Queensland Mental Health Service data (2008) suggesting a higher use of mental health services for Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Fijian born populations than what would be expected based on population sizes. National health survey results analysed as part of the Queensland Health study also suggested a higher prevalence of smoking and alcohol consumption, and a significantly higher likelihood of obesity.

The study identifies a number of responses to the findings in order to improve the health outcomes of Pacific Islanders in Queensland. These responses include: developing culturally tailored programs and resources; providing culturally-specific health workers and cultural competency training for staff; the development of strategic partnerships between key stakeholders; and improved methods of engagement and promotion.

3.3 Education

Current Arrangements
New Zealand citizens currently have access to Commonwealth supported places in higher education and government subsidized places in vocational education and training in some States and

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[2] Health data on the Maori population cannot be obtained from Queensland Health collections, as this population is embedded in the 'New Zealand' born category. However, New Zealand data indicates that this population is likely to have a similar disadvantaged health status to the other Pacific Islander populations.

Territories, but have not been able to access Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) loans. Children born in Australia to SCV parents may become citizens at age ten if they have been residents in Australia since their birth, however young SCV holders brought to Australia as dependent minors have not been able to access HELP loans (Australian Government, 2015). Recent legislation changes in this area are outlined below.

Education participation rates are lower for young New Zealand born people compared to young Australians generally (ABS, 2010). An ABS Education and Work Survey (2009) showed that among those aged 18-24 years who were not still at school, the New Zealand born population were half as likely to be enrolled in study (22% compared to 44% for the overall population). Approximately one in ten (12%) young New Zealand born people were studying full-time compared to one in three for young people generally (32%) (ABS, 2010).

In a recent essay (2014), Professor Lesley Chenoweth, Head of Griffith University's Logan Campus, stated:

> "For Pacific Islander students the need to pay HECS upfront is a major obstacle for families who are already struggling to meet daily needs. Many Pacific Islander families have skills and experience that limit employment opportunities to the lower paid sectors... Young people are under real pressure to start earning as soon as possible, even for low wages and an insecure employment future".

Researchers from Griffith University, Dr. Judith Kearney and Dr. Matthew Glen, recently completed a research project investigating the post-secondary pathways of Polynesian young people aged 17 - 24 years in South East Queensland. The research project titled "Post-Secondary Pathways within Polynesian immigrant communities in South East Queensland" (2014) addressed three key questions:

1. Where do Polynesian young people go after secondary school?
2. What differences emerge for young people based on:
   a) ethnicity (Pacific Islander compared with Caucasian);
   b) citizenship (New Zealand compared with Australian); and
   c) socio-economic status.
3. What are the main factors contributing to post-secondary pathways for these young people?

The study found that young Pacific Islanders with Australian citizenship are three time less likely to have university qualifications compared to young Australian Caucasians. It also found that young Pacific Islanders with New Zealand citizenship are five times less likely to have university qualifications than Australian Caucasians.

The researchers found that family pressures, cultural challenges and a focus on sport rather than education were some of the factors inhibiting the path to tertiary education. For those that identified as New Zealand citizens, financial constraints were identified as the most significant inhibiting factor for accessing tertiary education.

Recent changes to Higher Education Support Act legislation
Until 2016, New Zealand SCV holders had not been able to access the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). However, in November 2015, the Australian Government amended the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to allow eligible New Zealand SCV holders to access HELP loans from 1 January 2016. Under the legislation, New Zealand SCV holders are able to access HELP loans, provided they meet the following eligibility criteria:

- They first entered Australia as a dependent minor under 18 years of age;
- They have been ordinarily resident in Australia for the previous 10 years (that is, having been physically present for at least 8 out of the last 10 years and for 18 months out of the last 2 years at the time of applying for the loan); and
- Are otherwise eligible for the loan (Australian Government, 2015).

Access to HELP loans will assist some students with the upfront costs of study, which in most cases has been prohibitive, enabling them to reap the many benefits of higher education. Vinson's (2007)

report on the distribution of disadvantage in Australia links major indicators of social disadvantage such as crime, homelessness and unemployment, with limited educational attainment. However, it must be noted that this amendment will not apply to all students, and some Pacific Islander students will still be unable to access higher education loans.

3.4 Housing

Access to adequate and stable housing has a significant impact on the overall health and wellbeing of families (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010). For Pacific Islander populations living in Logan, access to suitable housing is often made difficult as a result of a combination of social, economic and cultural factors.

A study conducted by MultiLink Community Services and The University of Queensland investigated the impacts of changes to the TTTA post-2001 on Pacific Islander immigrants in Queensland in terms of accessing housing. Study participants indicated that changes to the TTTA meant that they were ineligible to access government housing and were restricted to the private rental market, which is often financially prohibitive and a system that can be difficult to navigate without assistance. Additional barriers include the need to provide points of identification, rental history and other documentation that can be practically difficult and culturally foreign to Pacific Islanders (Taylor et al, n.d.).

The ability to secure larger housing can be a major challenge for Pacific Islander populations, who are more likely to live in multi-family households and typically have larger household sizes (Auckland Regional Council, 2006). Overcrowding can have a significant impact on the families in terms of mental, physical and financial pressures on the hosting families, disruptions to schooling, lack of privacy, and increased personal safety concerns (Taylor et al, n.d.).

As documented in Zappia and Cheshire (2014), studies conducted in Logan show a clear mismatch between the housing stock and the needs of the local population. ABS data from 2011 shows that 77% of dwellings in Logan City are three or four bedrooms, with limited suitable accommodation for smaller and larger household sizes.

3.5 Cultural Differences

Culturally, there a many points of difference between Pacific Islander and Anglo-Saxon practices and ways of thinking.

Like many other First Peoples around the world, the basic social unit in Pacific Islander societies is the extended family. Extended families offer certainty and comfort, and Pacific Islander families often function by sharing responsibilities for childcare and caring for the elderly or sick family members. With emphasis on the extended family, Pacific Islander communities also have a collectivist orientation, where the interests of the group dominate those of individuals. This is in contrast to Anglo-Australian culture, often described as individualistic (Manley et al., 2013; Kearney et al., 2015).

Pacific Islander culture is also typically hierarchical, maintained by rights to speak and to be obeyed possessed by those at the higher levels, and obligations to listen and conform among those at lower levels (Schoeffel & Meleisea, n.d.). Elders are accorded authority and children are expected to show respect and obedience to their parents and elders, and to accept without question their elders' decisions (Mavoa et al, 2004). These attitudes differ to those in a typical Australian school context where students are encouraged to question, analyse and discuss issues (Kearney et al., 2015).

These cultural differences can make parenting difficult for Pacific Islander families in Australia as the socio-cultural context requires them to adopt roles and responsibilities very different from what they are familiar with. As documented in Schoeffel and Meleisea, some children of first-generation parents are able to resolve competing cultural demands, however others who are unable to resolve these demands are vulnerable, with many underachieving at school and in other aspects of life.

4. Successes and Opportunities in Logan

In the City of Logan, local momentum to remove barriers and improve opportunities for Pacific Islanders is growing. This has been a long standing advocacy campaign from various segments of the community and the Logan: City of Choice initiative has supported these efforts. Over the past two years the Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team, along with several other local organisations and networks, have been working to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing Pacific Islanders residing in Australia. This section highlights some successful responses from the Logan City community and future opportunities to improve the lives of Pacific Islander immigrants in Australia.

4.1 Higher Education

Front and centre on the agenda for many community leaders in Logan has been the need to reduce the financial barriers to higher education for New Zealand SCV holders by allowing access to HELP loans. As highlighted earlier in this paper, financial constraints are the most significant factor inhibiting access to tertiary education for Pacific Islanders. With so many young Pacific Islanders in Logan unable to participate in higher education, this can have substantial flow on effects that impact upon an entire generation.

The Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team (and other community partners in Logan) have successfully lobbied the Australia Government on this matter, recognising that access to quality education by New Zealand SCV holders will result in significant long-term benefits for the community - enabling people to gain employment, build a sense of self efficacy and independence, and be active and productive members of society. It is a significant achievement that the legislation has been amended to allow access to the HELP scheme.

4.2 Partnerships and Engagement

For several years, Griffith University's Logan Campus has also been working alongside Logan's Pacific Islander community to build aspirations and widen participation in tertiary education. One key initiative is the establishment of the Griffith Pasifika Association - a student body promoting and enhancing the university experience of Pacific Islander students at Griffith University. A key activity of the Griffith Pasifika Association is the Pasifika Cultural Graduation, a community-wide celebration of graduating students involving their families and the broader community (Griffith University, 2015).

Another example is the LEAD (Legacy-Education-Achievement-Dream) outreach engagement project, providing support and leadership opportunities for Pacific Islander students. The project involves developing Griffith's Pacific Islander students as mentors and positive role models to deliver a suite of school-based outreach activities to Years 10-12 students in high schools with large numbers of Pacific Islander students. The LEAD project has been the recipient of several awards locally and nationally (Griffith University, 2015).

Professor Lesley Chenoweth, Head of Griffith University's Logan Campus, states that projects such as these have been pivotal to advancing engagement and participation by Pacific Islanders (2014).

4.3 Data and Reporting

As mentioned earlier in this paper, population data from the ABS appears to undercount the size of the Pacific Islander population in Logan, with anecdotal information suggesting that many people may tick 'other' rather than specifying their country of birth. Other important statistics in relation to the health status and educational performance of Pacific Islanders is also limited, mainly because Pacific Islanders are not disaggregated from the broader population during data collection (Queensland Health, 2001; Green & Kearney, 2011).

A study conducted by Queensland Health acknowledges the lack of available health related data for Pacific Islander people in Queensland. For example, quantitative data on vaccination, mental health, alcohol and tobacco, and communicable diseases is not available, preventing a complete health analysis of this segment of the population (Queensland Health, 2011).

Reporting on academic performance is also limited, with many Pacific Islander students falling within the broader category of 'children for whom English is a second language'. Pacific languages are not disaggregated from this broader group, making it difficult to gain an accurate picture of how these children are, or could be, supported with literacy programs (Chenoweth, 2014). Similarly, National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, which assess literacy and numeracy levels of all Australian students, does not disaggregate according to ethnicity (Green & Kearney, 2011).

When it comes to addressing the complex challenges facing Pacific Islander communities in Australia, a lack of accurate data makes it difficult to respond. Not only does it exacerbate the limited understanding of the issues facing Pacific Islander communities in Australia, it also has the potential to affect the quality and efficiency of the delivery of appropriate services needed for that segment of the population.

Recommendations from a recent Pacific Youth Research Symposium held in Logan called for more detailed and accurate data and reporting on Pacific Islander populations by Federal and State Governments (Aufai, 2014). The Australian and Queensland Governments are well positioned to improve the way data is collected and reported, through their agencies and departments, in order to better inform socio-economic planning and policymaking.

4.4 Advocacy

In the City of Logan, local momentum to remove barriers and improve opportunities for Pacific Islanders is growing, with several organisations and peak-bodies strongly advocating to government for changes to policy and legislation. The Pacific Islands Reference Group Inc (PIRG) was established in 2008 and has become a strong voice for representing the views of Queensland-based Pacific Island Nation organisations, communities and individuals (PIRG, 2012). Griffith University Logan Campus and Access Community Services (also based in Logan City) are involved in advocacy efforts, along with the Logan: City of Choice Leadership Team, who also recently advocated to the Federal Government to extend HELP loans to New Zealand SCV holders.

With several Logan-based organisations and networks advocating for improved outcomes for Pacific Islanders, significant opportunities for collaborative advocacy exist. The advantages of collaborative advocacy include: a broader reach, increased information sharing, and greater opportunities for joint research and grant applications, which all assist in strengthening the overall advocacy agenda.

Government is well positioned to play a positive and crucial role in improving the lives of Pacific Islander populations in Australia, through its knowledge of community at a local level, the delivery of targeted programs and initiatives at a state level, and through legislative changes at the national level. Advocacy is crucial for building public awareness and support for removing barriers and harnessing opportunities for Pacific Islanders in Australia.

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight some of the challenges impacting upon Pacific Islander immigrant communities in Logan, and in Australia. What is clear is that many of these challenges are interdependent and that by addressing implications in education for example, positive on flow affects are likely to be seen in other areas such as health and employment outcomes. By better understanding the challenges Pacific Islander people face through ongoing research, data collection and reporting and engagement activities, government and communities are better positioned to deliver services and programs that meet the needs of this growing segment of the Logan and Australian population.

This paper also highlights some successes and opportunities for Pacific Islander immigrant communities in Australia, using examples from Logan City. Strong partnership and engagement strategies are having a positive impact on Pacific Islander participation at university, with the potential to deliver long-term benefits to the Logan community. Through the work of local organisations, networks and individuals, community momentum to remove barriers and improve opportunities for Pacific Islanders is growing, presenting significant opportunities for collaborative advocacy.

Now that a significant financial barrier to higher education has been removed for many Pacific Islanders, a future focus for the City of Choice initiative may include overcoming other barriers to education participation, particularly in early childhood, and on improving health outcomes for Pacific Islander people.

The Pacific Islander community is a significant and growing part of Logan City's socio-cultural and economic fabric. Responding to challenges and harnessing opportunities for improving the lives of Pacific Islanders in Logan (and Australia), is critical in order to avoid the socio-economic costs of inequality over the long term.

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