**Pacific News Today – Monday 20 May, 2019**

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AUST – ELECTION: ABC NEWS Mon 201 May 2019

**Scott Morrison's frontbench a new challenge following success at federal election 2019**

CANBERRA, 20 MAY 2019 (ABC NEWS) --- Scott Morrison is preparing a new-look frontbench as Labor grapples with who will lead the party after its shock election loss.

The final outcome of the election remains unclear but the ABC election computer is currently projecting the Coalition winning 75 seats, Labor winning 65, six shared among independents and five to be decided (as at 4:00am).

The Prime Minister faces a difficult balancing act, thanks in part to the exodus of senior ministers from his Cabinet who retired at the election.

Those that stuck with the Coalition are already jostling for promotions, with Queensland and Tasmania hoping to gain a boost in Cabinet as a reward for the electoral gains in their states.

Labor, meanwhile, has started looking for a new leader after Bill Shorten announced he would step down from the position.

Former deputy prime minister, Anthony Albanese who failed his bid to lead Labor in 2013, has declared his candidacy and deputy leader, Tanya Plibersek said she is considering her options.

As the Labor leadership discussion begins, there's another discussion taking place about why the party lost what has been dubbed the unlosable election.

Labor frontbencher Joel Fitzgibbon has urged a change in direction, saying the party has tracked "a bit to the left".

He suffered a 10 per cent swing against him in the New South Wales seat of Hunter, which has a large mining community.

"The Labor Party must reconnect with its blue-collar base and get back to the centre and be less ambitious in its pace of change," he said.

"People are inherently conservative in Australia and any change has to be orderly and steady and needs to be explained to people."

He said Labor was punished because Australians did not understand their policies and instead took what they considered the safe option and voted for other parties.

The Coalition needs 76 seats but has to appoint a speaker. Falling below 76 would mean he would need crossbench support to pass Coalition legislation.

TUVALU – UNSG VISIT Mon 20 May 2019

**UN Secretary General says climate change has impacted Tuvalu in a dramatic way, more than any other country in the world**

SUVA, 20 MAY 2019 (PACNEWS) --- United Nations Secretary, Antonio Guterres is convinced that climate change is striking Tuvalu in a dramatic way, more than anywhere else in the world, after his day trip to the island nation last Friday.

And, he’s expressed his support and solidarity with Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga and the more than 11,000 people of Tuvalu.

“I have enormous admiration for how you have decided to resist and you are implementing a programme of adaptation and resilience that is something that the whole world should admire and support.”

He said it’s necessary that governments that are still causing the problems that affect Tuvalu understand that they need to change.

“They need to change their energy policies, their transportation policies, the way they manage their cities, the way they are using fossil fuels so that the impact of climate change on Tuvalu can be stopped. Climate change cannot be stopped in Tuvalu, it has to be stopped in the rest of the world, said secretary General Guterres, who was transported in an Australian defence force plane to the Pacific nation.

Before landing, Guterres requested to view the low lying atoll nation from the back of the airforce plane that was opened. A tweet from the Office of the UN Spokesperson, said, “*He does his own stunts! Secretary-General* [*~~@~~****antonioguterres***](https://twitter.com/antonioguterres) *looks out from the plane as he arrives in Tuvalu to witness the impacts of climate change firsthand”* with a photo of the UN top diplomat looking down to one of the low lying atolls in Tuvalu.

He’s assured the people of Tuvalu that he will be fighting during the Climate Action Summit in New York to make sure all countries accept the commitment to be globally carbon neutral by 2050 and limit the increase in temperature to 1.5 degrees.

“At the same time, I want to express my deep solidarity and the total support from the United Nations to the government and to the people of Tuvalu in your determined efforts to preserve your country – physically, culturally, in the economic and social dimensions, as a rich component of the Pacific and the international community, said Guterres.

In response Prime Minister Sopoaga said Tuvalu was touched by the UN Secretary General message of support and solidarity.

The Tuvalu PM said Guterres is the second only Portuguese to set foot on Tuvalu, the first one a Portuguese Captain who sighted Nukufetau hundreds of years ago.

After their statements, both leaders planted a coconut tree at the Queen Elizabeth II Park before they took part in a canoe paddling activity at Vaiaku before Guterres were taken visited a Tuvaluan family at Lofeagai, residing close to the lagoon that is exposed to the impacts of climate change….

PNG – POLITICS: THE NATIONAL Mon 20 May 2019

**Order crucial: Manase**

PORT MORESBY, 20 MAY 2019 (THE NATIONAL) --- The State has requested the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea for an urgent hearing of an application filed on Wednesday to stay the processing of the Opposition’s no-confidence motion in Parliament.

The application was filed by Twivey Lawyers on behalf of the State at the Supreme Court registry.

Justice Minister and Attorney-General Alfred Manase, said the motion filed by the Opposition, if allowed to go through the parliamentary process, could be in contempt of court because there was a reference relating to the issue pending in the Supreme Court.

“I took this course of action after receiving a letter from the Speaker Job Pomat advising that he is in receipt of the notice of motion for the vote of no confidence,” he said.

“I have sought legal advice and formed the view that I should apply for a stay on a vote on the no-confidence motion by Parliament.

“In my view the notice of motion would be contemptuous of the Supreme Court which is yet to answer critical constitutional questions concerning the notice of a motion of no confidence which are pending before it.”

He said it arose from Supreme Court’s application of Section 145 of the Constitution and Parliament’s Standing Orders relating to the vote of no confidence against the prime minister.

“I know that many people may disagree with this court of action that I have taken,” Manase said.

“However, I would like our people to understand that it is my duty to ensure that the rule of law is respected and observed at all times, even by parliament,” he said.

He said the court was yet to give a date on when it could be heard.

Parliament resumes its sitting on May 28.

The Opposition motion was going to be vetted by Parliament’s private members committee on May 29, and put on the notice paper if approved the day after. It then has to go through a seven-day period before it can tabled and moved.

Manase said the Supreme Court reference, filed by his predecessor Davis Steven last year, was to clearly demarcate the roles and functions of the three arms of government, and more particularly how far the courts could go in interpreting the constitution to preserve the principal of the separation of powers between the three arms.

“Once we obtain the answers from the Supreme Court, the Parliament is free to conduct its affairs without the fear of interference by the third arm (judiciary) of the government,” he said.

“Parliament is also able to proceed with the motion of no confidence with certainty and confidence.

He called on MPs and the people to respect the court process and allow the Supreme Court to conduct its business without fear or favour.

“This is not about numbers and the vote of no confidence. It’s about preserving the integrity of the different institutions which is critical, said Manase…

PNG – POLITICS: THE NATIONAL Mon 20 May 2019

**Three MPs apologise to O’Neill for leaving govt camp**

PORT MORESBY, 20 MAY 2019 (THE NATIONAL) --- Three MPs in Papua New Guinea have apologised to Prime Minister Peter O’Neill for leaving the Government camp with others to join the Opposition in preparation for a planned vote of no confidence against him.

Kiriwina-Goodenough MP Douglas Tomuriesa, Talasea MP Francis Maneke and Sohe MP Henry Amuli said they realised that their electorates had benefited greatly from the O’Neill-led Government and so they decided to return.

The traditional reconciliation ceremony was organised by Tomuriesa, the Forestry Minister, at the Forestry Office in Hohola. Six pigs and garden produce were presented to O’Neill.

Tomuriesa said his electorate was now witnessing development never seen in the past 40 years.

“I have my roads from the Lousia station up to the airport to be sealed soon,” he said.

“The airstrip will also be sealed. Market is now open. The high school will be upgraded to secondary status in 2020.

“I have lot of projects that are still incomplete. So it is important that I stay in the Government.”

Maneke said staying with the Government was necessary for the delivery of services to his people.

“For newcomers like me to parliament, it is important to support the Government to make sure that we deliver to our people,” he said.

Amuli said so much had been said about him rejoining the Government.

“My electorate is bigger than me and my people are important. I have to stay with the Government to deliver to my people. Sohe is a remote electorate. I made the decision (to return to the Government side) because of the Sohe people, said Amuli…

SOL – PARLIAMENT: SOLOMON STAR Mon 20 May 2019

**Oti eyes reforms**

HONIARA, 10 MAY 2019 (SOLOMON STAR) --- Newlyelected Speaker to the Solomon Islands Parliament Patterson Oti says one of his immediate tasks is to relook at the timing for the Parliament to sit after the Members were elected.

Speaking for the first time to local journalists, the new speaker told the media that its more than six weeks now before the first meeting of Parliament was convened.

“These are some of the issues I’m looking at and how can we improve it so that our people can have confidence in the Parliament and members that they are elected,” he added.

He emphasised that the timing of elections and the first meeting of Parliament is so critical.

“I just don’t understand why we just have to drag the whole thing up until now.

“When we continue to drag things people will no longer have value in what it is that they put Member in Parliament for if they are not engage in the process and proceedings for which they elected in the first place,” Oti emphasised.

He said the first meeting of the Parliament should be as soon as possible not more than two weeks in his view.

“I understand the different logistics of getting the different Member to the main capital but that’s the priority that parliament must meet immediately after the election,” he added.

These are constitutional issues he would like to propose to the government and also to the wider public for broad discussions.

“I hope this can be driven through parliamentary services and to ensure that we engage different stakeholders in some of these reforms,” Oti said.

He went on further and said that we need to empower the Clerk of the Parliament to preside over swearing in and the election of the Speaker.

“I feel very sad to see the Speaker of the Parliament to preside over his own fate this is inhumane and you don’t do that.

“How can you preside over the election where you don’t know if these people vote for you or the other person,” Oti added.

He said the process has to be independent and not the Speaker presiding over his own fate.

He added that on the dissolution of the parliament the Speaker of the Parliament should vacate the position.

“This are some the reforms I as the Speaker of the Parliament will try and work with my staff to address before my term lapse,” Oti told the media…

VAN – USP: WANSOLWARA Mon 20 May 2019

[**USP Council to investigate claims of abuse of office**](http://www.wansolwaranews.com/2019/05/17/usp-council-to-investigate-claims-of-abuse-of-office/)

PPRT VILA, 20 MAY 2019 (WANSOLWARA) --- A separate independent investigation will be conducted into allegations of abuse of office at The University of the South Pacific after the issue was discussed by the institution’s highest decision-making body at its 88th meeting in Port Vila last week.

In a statement, the USP Council said the recent allegations levelled against some senior management and former vice-chancellor Professor Rajesh Chandra had been the subject of media and public speculation.

“The Council expressed support for the investigation currently being undertaken by the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC),” the Council said.

“Reflecting the regional nature of the University, the Council unanimously resolved that a separate independent investigation will also be conducted on its behalf.”

It is understood further updates will be provided by the Council to the University community in due course.

“The University remains committed to its vision of achieving excellence and innovation for the sustainable development of Pacific Island countries and its people,” the Council said, indicating in the statement that the contact person on the issue would be USP’s deputy pro-chancellor and deputy chair of council, Aloma Johansson.

USP academic Professor Vijay Naidu said the 88th Council meeting’s decisions reflected the collective wisdom of the representatives of the 12-member states, professorial and staff representatives, and representatives of Australia and New Zealand.

“These decisions in a large part meet the expectations of staff gathered on the rara in front of the Laucala Campus Library,” he told Wansolwara.

“Their call for an independent commission of inquiry regarding the issues raised in the leaked Executive Committee report has been answered.

“The other resolutions can be considered by the commission and/or taken up by Vice-Chancellor and President. This, for instance, applies to the reinstatement and filling of the Registrar’s position as a matter of urgency.”

Prof Naidu said staff were looking forward to the appointment of the commission, its terms of reference, its investigations and findings as well as very importantly embedding good governance procedures and processes.

During the staff rally and talanoa on good governance at Laucala campus on Thursday last week, senior staff members including Prof Naidu, Elizabeth Reade-Fong, Dr Morgan Tuimaleali’ifano and Dr Eberhard Weber voiced strong concerns about the allegations of mismanagement and questionable decisions made by the former vice-chancellor and elements of the senior management team (SMT) that appeared to breach university policy, rules and procedures.

“According to the allegations, contracts had been speedily extended, emoluments significantly increased, additional allowances allocated, back dated back pay fast tracked, and staff development leave approval contrary to the university’s processes and procedures. In total large sums of money were paid out,” they said on behalf of members of the Association of The University of the South Pacific Staff and the USP Staff Union.

Early this week, USP’s pro-chancellor and chairman of the Council, Winston Thompson, issued a strong statement condemning the publication of the “unsubstantiated allegations” against many individuals including himself.

“Quite clearly, a gross injustice has been done to the named individuals who have worked assiduously and who do not deserve to be treated in this way,” he had said.

More than 140 staff from all sections of the university, including the three USP unions representing hourly paid staff, support staff, professional and academic staff gathered at the rally.

Students also attended and a representative of the student body also spoke on their behalf about the serious allegations….

PNG – TELECOMMUNICATIONS: THE NATIONAL Mon 20 May 2019

**PNG Govt, Australia commit to improving telecommunication**

PORT MORESBY, 20 MAY 2019 (THE NATIONAL) --- Australia is working with the PNG Government to improve access to high quality, reliable and effective telecommunications services.

Australian High Commissioner Bruce Davis said Australia was delighted to partner with Papua New Guinea in delivering key nation building projects, such as the Coral Sea Cable.

“This work has the potential to be truly transformative and I am excited to be able to see the impact our investments are having across the Papua New Guinea,” he said.

Earlier this year, a survey of 100 chief executive officers in PNG identified unreliable telecommunications as the top impediment to business.

A statement said: “Australia is committed to working with Papua New Guinea to improve telecommunications reliability and connectivity.

“This includes supporting the new high speed Coral Sea Cable, which will connect Port Moresby and Sydney.

“Due to be completed in December 2019, the cable will be laid from next month, starting in Port Moresby and heading south through the Coral Sea.

“The Coral Sea Cable will significantly improve Papua New Guinea’s internet connectivity, allowing businesses to access new markets, students to harness new learning opportunities and communities to connect with each other.

“It is a very tangible symbol of Australia and Papua New Guinea’s enduring partnership as well as both nations’ strong commitment to growth and prosperity in the region.

“The investment in the cable follows delivery of the new O3b earth station at Gerehu in November 2018, which provides high speed internet connectivity for the Port Moresby region.
Australia continues to partner with Kumul Telikom Holdings, Nicta and Department of Communications and Information to support new infrastructure projects as well as to promote improved institutional and regulatory settings in the telecommunications sector….

AM SAMOA – STARKIST; SAMOA NEWS Mon 20 May 2019

**Starkist faces new civil lawsuit concerning “dolphin-safe” canned tuna products**

PAGO PAGO, 20 MAY 2019 (SAMOA NEWS) --- StarKist Co., is facing a new civil lawsuit, and this time, a “class action complaint” filed at the federal court in San Francisco, alleging — among other things — that the company violated the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act (RICO) and misled consumers that its canned tuna products are “dolphin-safe”.

“RICO co-conspirator StarKist Samoa and its employees — among other third party importers and employees unknown to Plaintiffs — imported defendant’s tuna products for sale, knowing that defendant would market and sell its tuna products to plaintiffs and the Class [Action] as dolphin-safe, sustainably sourced, and compliant with federal laws and regulations,” the 87-page complaint alleges.

Filed early this week by 16 U.S consumers, on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated, the complaint outlined in detail eleven specific alleged violations of federal and state laws (in the U.S) by StarKist, which is based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with facilities in American Samoa and Ecuador.

Since 1990, StarKist, which is today the #1 seller of prepackaged tuna brand in the U.S, had promised consumers that its tuna is “Dolphin- Safe”, the complaint states.

However, according to the complaint, StarKist’s tuna has not been “Dolphin-Safe” since the introduction of the dolphin-safe policy in 1990, including the last 4 years — the “Class Period”, and StarKist processes much of the tuna it sold during the Class Period in Pago Pago, American Samoa, for shipment to the U.S.

The complaint alleges that during the time period relevant to plaintiffs’ claims, StarKist produced and sold canned tuna and tuna pouches throughout the United States and its territories, sold canned tuna and tuna pouches to plaintiffs and others in the U.S, “and engaged in false, misleading, and deceptive advertising.”

“The scheme continues to this day, as consumers, retailers, and federal regulators remain in the dark about the truth of defendant’s so-called Dolphin Safe tuna products,” allege the plaintiffs.

Responding to Samoa News request for comments, StarKist says it does not comment on pending legal matters. However, a StarKist statement provided to Samoa News through a company spokesperson, says the company “is committed to protecting the dolphins and was the first company to adopt a dolphin-safe policy in April 1990.”

“We are proud to share with you our worldwide policy to save dolphin lives,” said the statement. The policy states:

•     StarKist will not purchase any tuna caught in association with dolphins. StarKist continues its practice of refusing to purchase tuna caught with gill or drift nets, which are known to be dangerous to many forms of marine life. StarKist condemns the use of these indiscriminate fishing methods that trap dolphins, whales, and other marine life along with the intended catch of fish.

•     StarKist was the first major American tuna canning company to make this commitment to the public. We remain committed to this policy and require certification that all tuna we purchase is dolphin-safe. Our dolphin-safe policy includes StarKist tuna, as well as all of our branded and private label products. StarKist tuna is labeled with a special "Dolphin-Safe" logo….

PNG – LNG GAS: AUSTRALIA MINING Mon 20 May 2019

**Santos scoops share in PNG gas with $271m acquisition**

PORT MORESBY, 20 MAY 2019 (AUSTRALIA MINING) --- Santos is set to boost its presence in Papua New Guinea by acquiring the P’nyang natural gas field from the existing licence participants for $US187 million ($271 million).

The acquisition comes on the back off Santos’ binding letter of intent to secure a 14.3 per cent interest in petroleum retention licence 3 (PRL 3).

Included in the licence is the P’nyang gas field, which has a certified gross 2C contingent resource of around 4.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Santos, meanwhile, owns a 13.5 per cent interest in the PNG LNG project, which has the capacity to produce more than eight million tonnes of LNG a year.

“The arrangements … mark an important step towards the proposed expansion at the PNG LNG plant via a 2.7 million tonnes a year third LNG train fed by existing project resources and P’nyang,” Santos managing director Kevin Gallagher said.

“We are very pleased to execute the letter of intent with the PRL 3 participants who are also affiliates of Santos’ partners in the PNG LNG project.

“We look forward to working with the PNG Government, our partners and landowners to make expansion at PNG LNG a reality.”

The agreement is subject to an arrangement between the parties on entry into FEED for PNG LNG plant expansion.

ExxonMobil and Oil Search affiliates now hold an equal stake in the PRL 3 (36.86 per cent), with Merlin Petroleum Company owning the remaining of the interest (11.96 per cent).

Santos is expected to pay around $US120 million following the execution of the sale and purchase agreement in June 2019.

The remainder will be paid in instalments subject to the award of a production development licence to replace PRL 3 and an investment decision for the construction of an additional LNG train at the PNG LNG plant site….

FR POL – AVIATION: RNZ PACIFIC Mon 20 May 2019

**Air France to provide link between Tahiti and London**

PAPEETE, 20 MAY 2019 (RNZ PACIFIC) ---Air France will offer flights to French Polynesia from London for the 2019 tourist season.

It will be doing so by offering codeshare flights on Virgin Atlantic between London and Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is the stopover point for Air France between Tahiti and Europe.

Visitors from Britain account for a very small percentage of tourists but London is being seen as a significant hub…

**OPINION: Pacific defense pact renewal vital to the US amid rising tension with China**

*By Tommy Remengesau Jr., Opinion Contributor —*

KOROR, 20 MAY 2019 --- Talk of the trade conflict between the United States and China has captured international headlines for the better part of the past two weeks. But it is in the Western Pacific, where China has been constructing military bases and wooing new allies with multibillion-dollar projects that hostilities would likely erupt if a miscalculation ever turned a trade war into a shooting war.

It is against this backdrop that I will join the presidents of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) in Washington on Tuesday to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump so we can reaffirm our commitment to the Compact of Free Association (COFA)—an agreement between the U.S. and our nations that has formed the backbone of America’s Pacific military strategy for decades—and continue negotiations for COFA’s final renewal in 2023 for Palau and 2024 for RMI and FSM.

Much has changed since the compact was formed in 1982: The Soviet Union, the U.S.’s former Pacific rival, fell in 1991; Palau became the final compact member to gain independence in 1994; and China has risen as a serious challenge to American dominance of the Pacific Ocean today. Yet, the provisions of the agreement have failed to keep pace by deploying capabilities needed to defend the region against 21st century threats.

In many ways, Palau’s and our neighbors’ strategic importance is the same as it was during World War II, when the islands were the site of some of the fiercest fighting of the Pacific campaign: The territory is the only dry land available for airfields over thousands of miles of blue ocean. Today, however, Japan is one of Palau’s closest partners and a new contest has arisen over the control of nearby South China Sea and the Strait of Taiwan. Having exclusive military access to the Freely Associated States’ waters provides the U.S. with what Admiral Harry Harris, former Head of Pacific Command, described in 2017 as “a measurable advantage in our strategic posture in the Western Pacific.”

Palau’s value, however, goes beyond our real estate. At the United Nations, we are one of America’s most reliable allies, joining with the U.S on more consequential votes than even Canada.We have also been staunch defenders of Israel and Taiwan, with whom we share the values of free expression and the rule of law. This support has not come without a cost. China policy, for example, restricts travel by its citizens to countries like Palau that recognize the Republic of China, resulting in significant lost revenue from tourism.

Such steadfast reliability makes Palau and the other Freely Associated States natural allies in the Pentagon’s new Indo-Pacific strategy, a plan to counter Chinese expansionism and its militarization of islands in the region. More details on the approach will be revealed at a defense conference to be held in Singapore at the end of the month, but Palau has already begun to identify its strategic needs in discussions with representatives of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard.

First, Palau’s airports on Angaur and Peleliu, scene of the highest casualty rate for U.S Marines in history, critically need modernisation to meet the demands of civilian travel, let alone to serve as a base of operations if, God forbid, an armed conflict were to break out.

Second, we also lack a fully functioning maritime port capable of accommodating the needs of today’s advanced civilian and military vessels.

Finally, Palau would welcome a larger U.S. armed forces and law enforcement presence in our archipelago as a deterrent, yes, but also to train local citizens to take on an even greater role in the partnership. Palauans (and citizens of the other Freely Associated States) serve in the U.S. military at one of the highest rates of any population. COFA is most effective when we share its responsibilities.

For over 75 years, Palauans and Americans have worked together, and some have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure peace, prosperity and stability in the Western Pacific and around the world. But the world today isn’t like what it was back then, and the time has come for our alliance to adapt….

***Tommy Remengesau Jr. is the president of Palau.***