

Co-Chair Committed to High Quality Research for Pacific Women

Regional

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‘I’m keen to ensure that the Advisory Group on Research (AGR) is a space to promote high quality research that addresses gender inequalities from Pacific scholars – especially the emerging number of women of Pacific heritage,’ said Dr. Yvonne Underhill-Sem, co-chair of the AGR of Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women).

Members of the AGR have an interest to increase the capacity, quality, accessibility and policy relevance of Pacific gender research and include Pacific Women implementing partners and research practitioners with strong experience and knowledge of research on gender inequality in the Pacific.

For Dr. Underhill-Sem, her experience in research include gender and development, critical population geographies, political ecology, enculturating economic processes, progressive social movements and Pacific development.

Coming into the role of Co-Chair for the inaugural meeting of the AGR alongside Ms. Linda Petersen, Regional Engagement Adviser from the Pacific Women Support Unit, she is determined to ensure that Pacific Women’s work is well grounded in research that contribute new knowledge and understanding in the areas where the Program is seeking to achieve change:

‘High quality research does not just happen – we need to make it happen in many and various places and ways,’ outlined Dr Underhill-Sem. ‘My willingness to step into the Chair followed from the work I did with a team of Pacific women scholars in the Pacific Women project on Gender Research in the Pacific and the highly engaged Symposium that followed.’



Left to Right: Dr. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop and Dr. Yvonne Underhill-Sem at the symposium in 2016.

The [symposium in June 2016](#) held in Fiji brought together 50 dynamic Pacific researchers and stakeholders to advance the gender research capacity-building agenda among Pacific Island Countries.

At the opening of the symposium, Dr. Underhill-Sem presented key findings of the Pacific Gender Research Scoping Study she led – saying research plays a valuable role in providing new concepts, ideas and insights into apparently intractable issues which includes gender inequality.

‘Research-informed policy making is a dynamic but imprecise process in the Pacific,’ she explained in 2016.

Such sentiment still rings true today:

‘As a Pacific feminist scholar, I have long been committed to promoting high quality research that allows us to better understand the transformations needed in gendered social relations, and the contexts that shape them, so that gender inequalities are eliminated,’ said Dr. Underhill-Sem after the AGR meeting.

The AGR was established in early 2017 to guide the development and implementation of the Pacific Women [Research Strategy](#) and last met in Suva on 23 and 24 January, 2018.

With guidance from the AGR, the Support Unit is now progressing the 2 research priorities identified by the implementation plan: research on the feasibility of establishing a cash transfer program for victims of gender based violence in the Pacific and research mapping on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The next meeting is planned for July to be held prior to the Pacific Update Meeting in Fiji.

The members of the group are Dr Claire Satter, Dr Betty Lovai, Helen Tiaoalii Tanielu, Dr Nicole Haley, Megan Chisolm, Caroline Lambert, Dr Milika Sobey, Heidi Tyedmers, Kim Robertson, and Jane Kierath. Alternate members of the group are Dr Iwona Kolodziejczyk, Sarah Whitfield, and Morgane Landel.