



# Challenges for Pacific Islander youth in Sunraysia

# Research and Data collection

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‘Pacific Islanders in regional Victoria: settlers, visitors and overstayers’

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- Partner Organisations: Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Mallee Sports Assembly

# Fieldwork in northwest Victoria

- **Fieldsites:** Mildura, Robinvale and surrounding rural areas
- **Fieldwork:** frequent visits of varying duration; ongoing
- **Methods:** survey, interviews, focus groups, participant observation, workshops, Pacific Islander Advisory Group
- **Research Participants:** (total 172)
  - 153 Pacific Islanders (Tongans, Fijians, Cook Islanders, Solomon Islanders and ni-Vanuatu)
  - 12 professionals in the education sector
  - 7 stake holders (hospitals, government departments, service providers)



<http://www.mapsofworld.com/australia/states/victoria/road-map.html>

# Key findings 1

- None of the Pacific young people want to work on a farm, **but:**

The majority of Pacific migrants **do** engage with farmwork.

- Unstable income
- Believe that it lacks career opportunities
- Long hours of physically exhausting work
- Stigma, racism

# None of the Pacific youths want to work on farms

'Apparently my mom told me it's not good to work every day [on farm] because it seemed like watching you as a slave, doing the picking the grapes and you get less money. I'm like, "Oh okay, I'll make sure I do better than this." Instead of picking grapes, I'll just do something better to get, yeah'

(16 year old female student)

# Unstable income, risk of exploitation

- *Interviewer:* How much do you get paid hourly?
- *Speaker:* It's ... we ask but they don't tell us.
- *Interviewer :* What do you mean?
- *Speaker:* Like ... I ask so many times ... like, "How much do I get paid hourly?" to the ... our employers there ... "Oh, ask this person" and then that person would say, "Oh, ask that person." And then it's just ... you just ...
- *Interviewer :* Oh, so you don't know?
- *Speaker:* Nah, none of us do.
- *Interviewer :* So you get paid ...
- *Speaker:* Yeah, I get the pay slip but it doesn't say how much we get on it.
- *Interviewer :* Does it make you worried?
- *Speaker:* A little bit but when I think of it, I come from the islands. I'm pretty much thankful for anything. If it's ... I don't know, I'm just thankful I have a income. And I have something to put aside for myself.

(19 year old male, migrated to Australia when he was four years old.)

# Long hours of work

'They leave at six in the morning. Five in the morning. Come back like nine. And then ... But I don't see them much, because when they go in the morning, I don't see them. When they come back at night, I'm already asleep. When I wake up again, they're still gone'.

(16 year old male student; parents and two older siblings work on farms)

# Racism

'They judge us straight away. They don't ... They think we're not good enough for different other works. They just look at us, as like, "Oh, don't worry about them. They work at the farm." They tell their kids off, "Don't get with that one, because he's going to end up working at the farm"'.

(16 year old male student; parents and two older siblings work on farms)

There's such a stigma for people like us from here we are just, we are good for nothing. You just get pregnant, you don't finish school, you're stupid, anything. I think that's why some of us Tongans or those Tongans trying to be good. Like do big things, for them to not look at us like that. There's more to us than that. (21 year old male university student)

# Key findings 2

- Both parents and young people feel they are **invisible**
  - **Being hidden between refugees and Aboriginal people**
  - **Lack of recognition of their contribution to the region**

# Feeling invisible

'No one really notices us. And if we do something bad, they're just mad at us for doing the bad thing because even though we try to do good stuff, they don't see that, only the bad things'.

(17 year old male student)

# Key findings 3

- Young people place most importance on their **family**; however, Pacific cultures can bring some challenges
  - Hierarchical relationships with parents
  - Responsibility to support family members (often financial and time commitment)
  - Donations to church and other fundraiser events
  - Seeking support outside family is not encouraged

# Hierarchical relationships

'There's one I don't like about our culture. The oldest, whoever is the oldest is always the boss. It's when our father's always the boss, full stop. We can't have any say. The young kids, we have nothing to say. Even if they're wrong, we can't say anything, so that's the one thing. If you're the oldest, like my grandpa's the oldest, and the kids listen to whatever they say, like my father listens to what he say. Even though he's wrong, they can't say anything. Every time they speak, he goes "oh, shh". So my father does that to us, every time we speak he's like "shh". Everyone, even my cousins and that, those who were here, every time they speak. It's always the oldest, the eldest is the leader. And their fathers. The husband's always the boss. I don't really like that. And they don't give the wives chance to be the boss. We'll have a family meeting and [they ask] "what do you think of this?" And then when we say we don't like it they say "oh, it doesn't matter what you like, it matters what I like". That's what I don't like. It really makes me angry. It's always the eldest or the husband or your family. It's like ... Boys. It's always the boys, are the boss. And the girls just have to listen to the boys'.

(18 year old male)

# Responsibility to support family members

'It's a lot of pressure because just sitting within our Tongan tradition because I am the oldest male. So basically, like once my dad passes, I'm the head of the family. So, they look at me right now. They already, my mum always talks to me she is like you know, "If something happens, you have to step up and look after everyone, like all my sisters. I have to look after them. That's why she always tells me: "Study hard, because you have so many sister ... five sisters to look after." I have five of them and a little brother as well. It's a big pressure. That's what I always try and put in my head when I am studying. I try and get the best, **I know that my study is not for me, it's for my family. And, if I succeed, they succeed** as well. But my main goal is to study and get my own parents out of the blocks. That's why I come down on the holidays, because they still work. So I come down, I come help them in the blocks and then go back again'.

(20 year old male university student)

# Key findings 4

Regional environment for Pacific youth and education

Increase in completions of Year 12, yet dropping out at University level

Difficulty adjusting into university life in cities

Return to Sunraysia and work on farms

How do you think Pacific Island lifestyle? Country vs. City

### Country:

- Better Bond
- Better Athletes
- More Respectful.
- Unique
- Better Matter.
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### City:

- Bad manners
- Disrespectful
- Trouble makers
- Party life
- Bangers.
- Busy
- 

~~Why~~ Why did islanders moved to Mildura?

- For money
- Jobs
- Family
- Experience a different lifestyle
- Safer place to live.

What's the pros and cons for living here?

### Pros:

- Better connections
- Safer than the city.

### Cons:

- Better opportunities
- Hot.
- Cold.
- Weird weather

Q1 - DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISLANDER IN CITY VS. ISLANDER IN COUNTRY?

- MORE JOBS OPPORTUNITIES IN CITY
- CITY ISLANDERS ARE MORE ON LOOKS
- COUNTRY ISLANDERS ARE MORE FAMILY ORIENTATED
- DIFFERENT WAYS OF SPEAKING
  - CLOTHING
  - LIFESTYLE

Q2 - PROS AND CONS OF LIFESTYLE IN MILDURA?

### PROS

- FAMILY BONDING
- KNOWS EVERYONE
- STEADY LIFESTYLE

### CONS

- FINDING JOBS
- NOT MUCH GIRLS
- SHOPPING WISE
  - CLOTHING
- EDUCATION

Q3 - WHY DO ISLANDERS MOVE TO MILDURA?

- = WORK
- MONEY IS EASY TO GET
- NEW START
- CHANGE WAYS/LIFESTYLE

# Dropping out at University level

I always tell my mom, "Uni is not for everyone." Just because someone doesn't go to uni doesn't mean they're any less. And I feel like ... especially us Tongans they have this mentality, if you go to uni, you are really up there. And so that's why they take a lot their time pressuring and push their kids but I always tell them like you need to stop that. That's why you, we've had ... because a lot of, quite a few Tongans have made it there but we, a lot of them have dropped down and never went back. They come back and go back to the grapes or almonds. (21 year old male university student)

# Positive changes in the region

- Some Pacific youths successfully complete university and acquire skilled jobs in the Sunraysia area and become a role model
  - 'Diversity got me through the hardest of times. Embracing the obstacles that came with it. Embrace the diversity of your class. Don't doubt yourself. Don't surround yourself with people who doubt your abilities. Don't surround yourself with people who set limitations for you. If you find yourself succumbing to the stereotypes of being from Robinvale or attending Robinvale College, if you ever find yourself yielding to the stereotype of your demographic I hope that you will remember me and my journey and that you will have faith in yourself to do the same' (Tongan woman's speech at the Valedictory Dinner 2017 @ Robinvale College, *The Robinvale Sentinel*, p. 8)



**Thank you**

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