

Section A		
Institution: The University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 22b (Social Anthropology)		
Title of case study: The Establishment of a Catholic Family Centre for Papua New Guineans in Cairns, Far North Queensland		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Sept 2012 – Dec 2014		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name: Karen Sykes	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Social Anthropology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Sept 1996 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Sept 2014 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Sykes's research underpinned the decision by the Catholic Diocese of Cairns, Australia, to establish a drop-in centre in 2015 in this seaport city, which is a hub for large multi-residential Papua New Guinean (PNG) households. Sykes described how households comprise a mutually dependent network spread across Australian and Papua New Guinean towns and villages, including cities in southeast Asia. Members move easily between several dwellings over the course of a year, but become vulnerable upon leaving their network.</p> <p>A proposal by priest [Text removed for publication] to the Diocese used Sykes's data to advise that a centrally-located shopping mall near his church could be the location for a family centre to meet social needs, enhance wellbeing, and build the PNG community by linking together numerous household networks. The resultant Papua New Guinean Catholic Centre (PNGCC) is addressing these fundamental goals by providing members of PNG households with an essential point of contact for meeting and message-carrying.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Sykes carried out ESRC-funded ethnographic research into Papua New Guinean households in Far North Queensland (FNQ) and North Queensland (NQ) [1]. The research was undertaken January–December 2012 and October–December 2014, in the wake of a moral panic about the flood of Papua New Guinean economic migrants into Queensland. The study allowed her and her two local PNG research assistants to better assess the distribution and the habits of residence and association of Papua New Guineans in Queensland state. The study clarified confusing 2011 census data, which recorded 25,000 PNG-born residents in Australia, of which 15,000 resided in Queensland, with many of these in the FNQ and NQ regions of the State. The census did not yield more exact region-level figures and warned against making inferences from the published data. Sykes and her RAs found that the census office cautioned wisely. Despite the census data for numbers of Papua New Guineans in Queensland, accurate figures are hard to determine by conventional census methods. Sykes's ethnographic moral economy approach showed that the population of a large network of PNG people in FNQ and NQ might swell from 5000 to 8000, were all the transnational household members to be present in those two regions during one month, and not in residences they possess in PNG, southern Queensland, other Australian States, or Manila, Singapore and New Zealand.</p> <p>Sykes's research [2] discusses the failure of the conceptual apparatus of standard political economy approaches to accurately identify the number of Papua New Guineans living in Australia. The 2011 census data recorded PNG ancestry by birthplace of parent or grandparent, which might include in the census data many 'white settlers' who had chosen</p>		

to move to Australia before PNG Independence in 1975, after residing more than one generation in PNG. Furthermore, Sykes's critical assessment of the usual measures of the PNG population, such as data derived from the property register, as well as school and health registers, exposed the inadequacy of these indicators for capturing the reticulating mode of settlement that typifies PNG households, with multiple residences in Queensland and PNG.

Sykes and her RAs (Nalisa Neuendorf and Vincent Backhaus) collected an ethnographic record of the moral economy of the PNG presence from accounts of life in 60+ households and histories of household composition and settlement over three generations. Extended case studies, ethnographic interviews in family kitchens, qualitative surveys, and social network maps revealed a reticular migration pattern over two generations. Ethnography allowed Sykes to show that PNG identity was determined by a moral economy of people's habits of association, rather than by measures of ancestral descent and property ownership. Data on the use of money and household provisioning evidenced the supportive linkages across many residences, revealing the character of the multi-residence PNG household and its habit of connecting members across great distances in the Asia Pacific region. Families mobilise multiple residences in Australia and PNG to act as one transnational household to provide care for aged parents over the course of a year and to support education for children from the village. In Queensland, PNG people disperse themselves as homeowners, choosing to settle at distance from other PNG people and not cluster together in one neighbourhood, yet they encounter each other in farmers' markets, at church gatherings, at their children's school and sporting events, and in the comfort of air-conditioned shopping malls. Therefore, Sykes defined the PNG household broadly (mixed race, loose and changing membership, multi-residential) and made visible the scale of the community created by their interactions and transactions over both great distances and protracted times. The discussion of this domestic moral economy is published in a book chapter [2] and a series of journal articles [3, 4, 5]. Project RA, Nalisa Neuendorf co-authored an article in *GeoForum* [6].

The findings of Sykes and her RAs suggested that access to the PNG population in Queensland would be more successful if government services, church officers, and businesses contacted any of the numerous women who are well connected within the multi-residential transnational households, than if they tried to contact (non-existent) neighbourhoods, settlements, or enclaves of Papua New Guineans. These women carried news of comings and goings of people in different households, and thereby moved individuals to seek each other out while they were in the same town. The permanence of the Papua New Guinean Catholic Centre (PNGCC), directed by a committee of PNG women, created a reliable point of contact for the community by facilitating and even intensifying this kind of message carrying. It has become a vehicle to support PNG people in building community and supporting their mutual well-being.

3. References to the research

[1] Grant: "The Domestic Moral Economy". Karen Sykes PI; Chris Gregory Co-I, Fiona Magowan Co-I. ESRC Standard grant, 1 October 2011–31 March 2015, GBP295,000 + GBP78,000 (for 2 x Doctoral Studentships)

<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FH034943%2F1>

[2] Sykes, K. (2018) The Moral Economy of the PNG Household: Solidarity and Estrangement amongst Transnational Papua New Guinean Households. In *The Quest for the Good Life in Precarious Times in the Asia-Pacific Region* (ed.) C.A. Gregory, ANU Press. (Open Access <http://doi.org/10.22459/QGLPT.03.2018>)

[3] Sykes, K.M. (2013). Mortgaging the Bridewealth: Problems with Brothers and Problems with Value. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3(2), pp. 97-117. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.14318/hau3.2.007>

[4] Sykes, K.M. (2020), A Father's Perspective on Bridewealth in the Making of the Transnational Papua New Guinean Household. *Oceania*. DOI:[10.1002/ocea.5283](https://doi.org/10.1002/ocea.5283)

[5] Sykes, K.M. and C. Jourdan, eds. (2020) *Bridewealth and the Autonomy of Women in Melanesia*. Special Issue, *Oceania*, Vol 90, no 3. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ocea.5227>

[6] Henry, R., Wood, M., Neuendorf, N. and Brooksbank, J. (2020) Planning for Later Life: Transnational and Inter-generational Care among Papua New Guineans in Australia. *Geoforum*, 112, pp. 24-30, DOI: [10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.03.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.03.017).

4. Details of the impact

Sykes's research into PNG household composition led to the founding of the PNGCC in Cairns, the largest city in the northern regions of Queensland. PNG families do not form an enclave or neighbourhood in Cairns. Instead their residences are widely spread throughout the small towns of the city's hinterlands. They do not connect by internet in this region where broadband provision is weak, but it is common to meet with other families while shopping in the city. The PNGCC is located in Raintrees Shopping Centre with its affordable shops and medical and dental services. It is a short drive to the government offices of Cairns and very near to St Francis Xavier's Church where news of the Centre's activities is shared through the Catholic community and PNGCC directors use the church office facilities to support their work.

Sykes's research into the wide dispersal of PNG residences was used first to draft a policy for PNG people written by **[Text removed for publication]**, whose ardent interest in the well-being of the Papua New Guineans in Australia shaped his work as a Diocesan priest at St Francis Xavier's Church. When he relocated from PNG to Australia, he sought support from his Bishop for the large mobile community of unknown numbers of PNGs, now on his doorstep in the north of Queensland. The Diocese of Cairns chose to support the proposal and open a PNG community centre.

Pathways to Impact

Development of the proposal for a PNG Catholic Centre

Sykes shared key research findings over three public presentations in 2014, all to larger groups of PNG men and women who were members of different churches in the area (Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist, United-Methodist, and Salvation Army). These presentations addressed: a meeting of 30 PNG women who represented various social groups in the region (including popular clubs and sports); a meeting of 8 church leaders working with PNG families; and a meeting of 60 PNG women and men from the wider PNG community. In these meetings, Sykes discussed PNG transnational households and their multi-residential composition across Australia and PNG, and sometimes into the South Pacific, southeast Asia, Europe and North America. She highlighted the ways that people moved between the households, and the urban lifestyle of Cairns and Australia more widely, which created the need for a strong PNG community beyond the immediate family unit.

Additional meetings were held in 2014 to discuss Sykes's findings in more detail, with aged care providers and several local government civil servants who knew the challenges facing the most vulnerable PNG people, such as the PNG widows of white Australian men who lacked support from their husband's family and friends, and had only weak or no connections with members of other PNG families. These PNG individuals might 'fall through the cracks'

between PNG households, and be overlooked by organizations that typically support mostly elderly white Australian women. Sykes's research created the opportunity to speak about the issues raised by her research more generally and recognise the need for preliminary reports pertaining to the problem of care for the aged. During late 2014, Sykes held three one-to-one meetings with [Text removed for publication] in order to discuss her research findings in more depth. He used these discussions to develop his proposal to the Diocese of Cairns for a PNG Centre. The [Text removed for publication], states that *'together [Sykes and [Text removed for publication]] recognized that the research evidence pointed to a need for a PNG Centre to draw people into a community'* [A] in order to support the wellbeing of all members.

Impact

Opening of the PNG Catholic Centre

The Centre was envisaged as a meeting point for all PNGs in the region. The Diocese's support included:

- i. Allocating a portion of [Text removed for publication] time to assist the PNGCC Director.
- ii. Dedicating office space and administrative support at St Francis Xavier's Church to support the Centre; and funding the refurbishment of the physical space at Raintrees shopping mall.
- iii. Making a formal commitment to the saying of a 'PNG' mass once a month to strengthen the spiritual community. The mass is said in Tok Pisin (one of PNG's three official languages) and is attended regularly by 150–200 people in St Francis Xavier's Church.

Continuing impact of the Centre for the PNG population

The significance of the Centre is felt today in the role it plays as a physical space bringing PNG families into a community of mutual support. [Text removed for publication] describes the vision of the PNGCC *'to help the PNG community more broadly, simply by providing a space to meet for all Papua New Guineans. The Centre supports families who might attend regular events, and other Papua New Guineans who might simply drop in for a friendly chat'* [A]. This significance can be evidenced in various ways:

- i. Daily community events hosted by the Centre: Arts and Crafts Groups; PNG Music Groups, PNG Mother's Group, as well as groups that offer spiritual community (such as Friday rosary). [Text removed for publication] notes that regular attendance is upwards of 40 people in some of these events, but they also welcome drop-in guests. Although the Centre does not keep a formal membership, its Facebook website is followed by 690 members of the community, and is used to share details of events, community discussions, videos and photos [B].
- ii. The reach of the PNGCC is extended by the work of Centacare, the Social Services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Cairns, whose communications between other service providers and the wider network of PNG families support community building at a wider level [C].
- iii. For example, project RA Nalisa Neuendorf [F] used the PNGCC to organise a 2018 workshop for the Centacare programme, 'Our Place', because it is the only space dedicated to hosting regular PNG community meetings. Neuendorf returns regularly to help out at the Centre, and to support what is now a successful community-building programme [C].
- iv. The casual style of the PNGCC [B] helps to solidify the PNG families into a community of mutual support. The Centre welcomes anyone that drops by, offering them informal casual conversations and referrals. For example, widowed PNG

women began to drop into the Centre for companionship in the different mid-week groups, often on recommendation of funeral directors and health care professionals and workers who knew they needed friends.

The PNGCC nurtures general wellbeing in all these ways. In their work, the Centre's leaders focus on key issues for sustaining, supporting and building community.

Capacity building

Sykes's research enhanced the capacities of the community to research its own interests. Each of the two Research Assistants in Cairns completed doctorates and found employment in research and higher education. While working with Sykes, the Research Assistants learned techniques for mapping social networks, as well as interviewing skills. Later they were both re-employed on an ARC grant to study ageing amongst PNG expats in Australia [D]. Vincent Backhaus turned to questions of second-generation migrant socialisation and education, and completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge. He now heads the Centre for Indigenous Education at James Cook University (JCU), having first established a programme to facilitate retention of second generation Indigenous and Pacific Islander students in secondary education [E]. Nalisa Neuendorf received her PhD (JCU, 2020) with Sykes as an external supervisor, becoming the second PNG woman to complete a PhD in Anthropology [F]. Neuendorf worked in the community services sector throughout the project and facilitated community-building workshops for Centacare in Cairns. She is now employed as a researcher at the PNG International Medical Research Institute in Goroka, conducting projects on community-based responses to domestic violence as a health crisis.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] **[Text removed for publication]**

[B] Facebook website for the Papua New Guinean Catholic Centre

<https://www.facebook.com/CairnsPngCatholicCommunity/>

[C] **[Text removed for publication]**

[D] ARC Discovery Grant, 2014–19. *Planning for later life: An ethnographic analysis of ageing among Transnational Papua New Guineans*. Australian Research Council (grant DP140100178). See output [6] in section 3, above.

[E] Vincent Backhaus: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3376-8089>

[F] Nalisa Neuendorf: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5104-890X>