



WANSOLWARA

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Coral reef destruction continues unabated

By Rachna Lal and Kalpana Prasad

The "tremendous" decline of Pacific coral reefs in the past two decades is continuing unabated, says a researcher.

Joan Koven of Astrolabe Incorporated, a non-profit organisation that promotes coral reef conservation, has called for immediate action.

She said individuals and governments should do everything possible to curb greenhouse gas emissions, the principle cause of warming sea surface temperatures and ocean acidification that will destroy coral reefs.

"Coral reefs are an important resource and need to be preserved as over 100 countries rely on them for sustenance, fisheries and tourism," Koven told

Wansolwara.

Koven, who gave a lecture on climate change and coral reefs at the USP recently, said she doubted any country was fully aware of what it would lose if it had no coral reefs.

"The majority of the world's people live within 30 miles off a coastline. As the sea level rises due to the melting of Greenland and western Antarctic ice sheets, the world will face environmental refugee populations on a scale never seen before."

Leading scientists believe that coral reef ecosystems, which act as nurseries for many marine species, could be destroyed beyond repair due to human activities.

Such concerns have increased

since the release of a report this month saying that Australia's Great Barrier Reef could disappear in 20 years.

The Australian Government-commissioned report said the damage could be irreversible and is expected to cost the Australian economy AUD\$37.7 billion over the next century.

died as a result of bleaching.

The WWF project coordinator in the Cook Islands, Jacqui Evans, said she had observed complete bleaching of about 30 per cent of corals in Rarotonga Lagoon.

Furthermore, after the sea temperature in PNG's famous dive spot, Kimbe Bay, reached 32 degrees Celsius, at least 10 per

Coral reefs are an important resource and need to be preserved as over 100 countries rely on them for sustenance, fisheries and tourism

Koven says it is impossible to predict when the last of the coral reefs will die. But she says that she has seen a tremendous decline in the Pacific over the past 20 years.

A 2000 report by WWF South Pacific says 12 per cent of the corals in Fiji's Beqa Lagoon had

cent of the corals in the area were bleached.

The report said that over the past decade, bleaching had hit reefs in Polynesia (Tahiti), Micronesia (Palau) and parts of Melanesia (Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands).

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Sandy wins hearts



Sandy with two fawning admirers

By Michelle Meyer and Aleesha Hogan

Fiji has an abundance of stray dogs, and Suva is no exception. On the USP Laucala Campus, students see many homeless dogs.

Ninth Hall on campus has become home to one such dog. This dog does not bother the 36 women in the all-female dormitory but protects them.

She is friendly and has never hurt anyone.

Sandy, as she is known, has resided at the hall for some years. With her soft golden fur, floppy

ears and a furry curved tail, she has won over the residents.

Sandy rarely leaves the grounds surrounding Ninth Hall unprotected.

She has taken it upon herself to keep her furry "friends" out of the yard. She doesn't allow them to poke into the rubbish bins either.

She often can be heard barking at dogs or people who trespass into her territory.

Another job that Sandy takes seriously is escorting residents,

Continued on page 4

Wansolwara exposé prompts state action

By Rachna Lal, Kalpana Prasad and Arin Chandra

Two exposés in the April 2009 issue of Wansolwara have resulted in state intervention.

The stories looked at the legal marriageable age for girls in Fiji and online gaming and truancy.

In July this year, amendments to Fiji's marriage act were passed by Cabinet, raising the legal marriageable age of girls from 16 to 18 years.

Previously the legal marriageable age was 16 for girls

and 18 for boys.

A Wansolwara story written by Rachna Lal, Kalpana Prasad and Sharishma Kumari highlighted problems associated with early marriages.

This included spousal abuse, rape and other forms of exploitation as related to Wansolwara by NGOs and other groups.

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Pacific coral reefs need saving

News that the decline of coral reefs is continuing unabated in some parts of the Pacific is alarming, to say the least.

Experts interviewed by *Wansolwara* are unanimous in their view that our coral reefs are in peril, and that immediate action is needed.

One expert, Joan Koven, says she has seen a tremendous decline in the Pacific over the past 20 years.

As pointed out by Koven, coral reefs are a critical resource. Over 100 countries rely on them for sustenance, fisheries and tourism.

So why the inaction, and the apparent lack of concern over reports of their demise, one might ask?

The problem is not an easy one to overcome. Greenhouse gas emissions are the principle cause of warming sea surface temperatures and ocean acidification that destroy coral reefs.

The industrialised countries are the worst emitters of greenhouse gases. They have ignored pleas from smaller Pacific island nations to reduce emissions to any significant levels.

One of the world's biggest polluters, Australia, a next door neighbour, is a typical example. Australia will not reduce coal mining, which is the backbone of its economy.

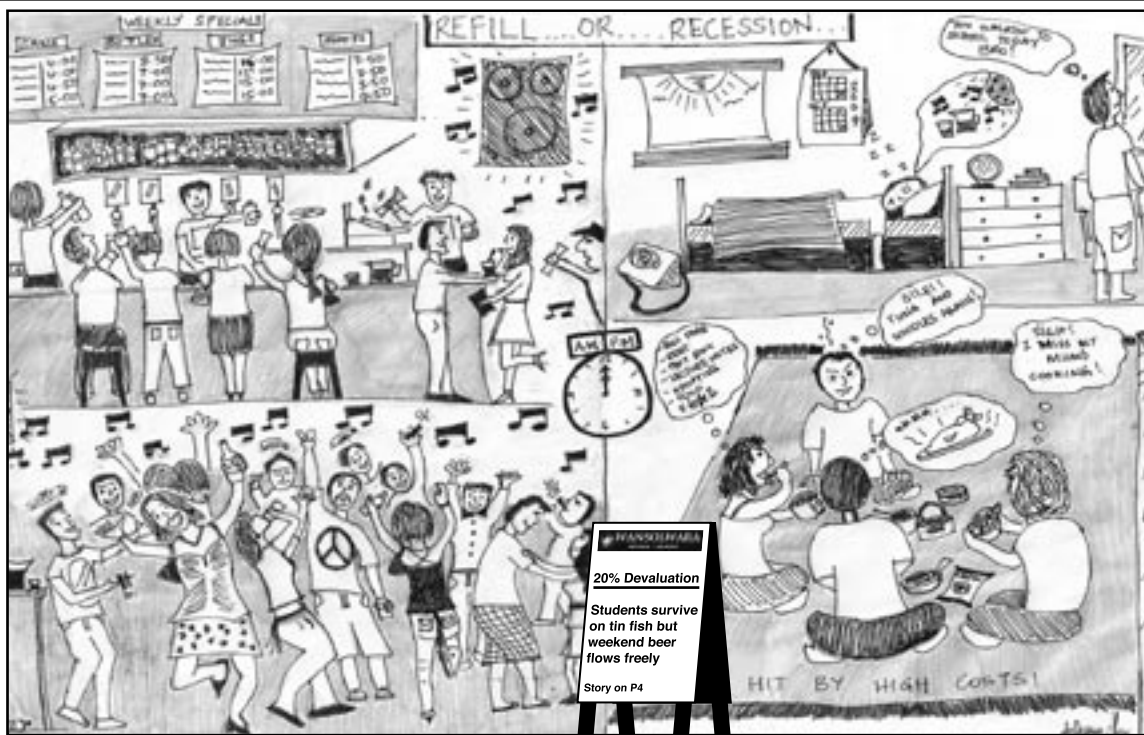
But greenhouse gases that cause global warming is not the only culprit. Overfishing, and pollutants and poisons dispelled into the sea, are also taking their toll. Governments can at least do something about these factors.

One expert, Ed Lovell, feels that authorities are in confusion about how to deal with what is a huge problem. That's why no clear path had been set to address this issue.

Local communities can be useful in terms of combating the problem. But funding to educate and empower them is not forthcoming. This perhaps reflects how governments still do not see coral reef preservation as a critical area.

A lack of appreciation about the true extent of the problem and its consequences seem to have lulled decision-makers into complacency.

The release of a report this month saying that Australia's Great Barrier Reef could disappear in 20 years should be a wake up call. We can no longer take our environment and our resources for granted. The time to act is now.



Letters to the editor

Pacific youth festival

I would like to congratulate all students from the University of the South Pacific who participated in the Pacific Youth Festival (PYF) in Fiji.

This truly reflects the true spirit of Pacific identity and a better tomorrow.

Although Fiji is faced with challenges from all around, the students by being part of the event showed the rest of the Pacific Island countries and the world that we are resilient.

The students were seen to be involved in various activities held throughout the week.

In the area of promoting healthy living peer educators highlighted the importance of safe sex.

A Safe Festival campaign advocating that 'Sex is your choice, make it safe' won the hearts of many who became better informed of the risk of sexually transmitted infections.

Peer educators who were mostly university students highlighted the need to be well informed of HIV and AIDS.

It was great to see students being part of an event that showed the spirit of moving on despite the hard times.

Pacific Island countries usually at the mercy of developed countries have one thing to be proud of and that is its spirit of unity seen at events such as the PYF.

Konisi Ratumaiwai
S11051908

On hold penalty

September 4 was the deadline for USP students to pay rental and tuition fees.

Since last year students living

in the halls have also been asked to pay their rents on the same deadline as tuition fees.

Student access to USP services is put "on-hold" for non-payment of charges.

We tend to see tuition fee and accommodation charges as two different things.

Tuition is paid by sponsors while rent is paid by the students themselves.

Hence, students pay tuition fees upfront so that they attend classes in good time. Students perceive rental bills as something paid on a monthly basis.

To penalise students by denying them access to USP services for not paying rent is unfair as those rental charges are yet to be incurred.

Student allowances are sometimes paid in tranches. It is thus impossible to pay upfront a large lump sum.

Denying students access to facilities will not help them.

On the other hand, a more flexible stance will not harm USP.

Our priority is to study, and our right to education should not be deprived.

Jimmy Soalakaua
S00004251

USP IT services

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the USP IT services for increasing the internet quota for students to \$80.00.

It is good for the students as far as online research is concerned.

I hope that the students will make the best use of it and not abuse it.

Josese Mira.
B/A Sociology & Psychology.
S11052489.

Rubbish galore

The rubbish thrown about on campus is not a good reflection of the higher level of education we receive at an institution known as one of the best in the region.

It is an eyesore and a reflection of how much we value our campus.

It seems we are too proud to even bend down and pick up a stray piece of paper, an empty packet of bongo or whatever rubbish we see, and put it in the bin.

Some may argue that it's the cleaners' job. But it's also our jobs to protect the environment. The cleaners can only do so much.

My plea is for students to take pride in their beautiful campus and surroundings.

Losalini Vata
S96008352

Inspiring example

Congratulations to second runner up at the 2009 Vodafone Hibiscus Queen contest, and a student of the University of the South Pacific.

She is a living proof that we can achieve anything in life once we put our minds to it.

There have been many others like her who have gone beyond what they hoped to achieve.

Whatever career path we pursue when we leave USP, we will always be viewed as USP graduates.

People already in the workforce look at us with high expectations.

These expectations should not bring us down but challenge us everyday.

Setaita Tavanabola
S11023584

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Wansolwara is a training newspaper produced by students enrolled in the BA in journalism and Diploma in Pacific Journalism at the University of the South Pacific. It is a showcase for their professional work. *Wansolwara* is a phrase common in Tok Pisin, Bislama and Pidgin which means that everybody living in the Pacific is related by sharing the same ocean. Opinions expressed in *Wansolwara* are those of the authors and editors and should not be taken to reflect USP policy.

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2006 Highly commended, Print edition, Best News Story
2006 Highly commended, Print edition, Best Feature Story
2005 Highly commended, Print edition, Best News Story
2004 Winner, Print edition, Best Regular Publication (any medium)
2002 Winner, Print edition, Best Regular Publication (any medium)
2000 Winner, Online edition, Best Regular Publication
2000 Highly commended, Print edition, Best Regular Publication
1999 Highly commended, Print edition, Best Regular Publication
PINA/ SPREP Award for Environmental Journalism
2007 Winner, Student Category, Best Print Story
Fiji Awards for Media Excellence
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2005 Winner, Best Print News Story
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School of Language, Arts and Media
University of the South Pacific
Private Mail Bag

Campus gym struggles to attract students



State-of-the-art but where are student users?

By Jasvin Lala

A mere two per cent of the 10,000 students on Laucala Campus use the university gym, deemed to be one of the finest in the region.

Gym manager Mark Fung said the number has remained low despite their best marketing efforts. He said students should "put as much effort in looking after their health as they do in their education".

Full time students taking more than three units per semester now have free use of the facility from 5am-9pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

For other students there is a minimal fee of \$2.50 per session. It was recently reduced from \$5 per session.

Students randomly questioned about their lack of interest offered various reasons. Foundation students Josaia Koroilavesau and Isireli Katumaitavuki said they preferred to play sports rather than hit the gym.

Faiyum Khan, 19, said he likes to workout but cannot find time for it. First year student Sajneeldra Rohit gave the same reason while adding that "a good person is a person who is able to manage his time well".

Some students complained that they were sidelined by gym instructors, which discouraged them from returning.

They said they are not given the same treatment as the paying customers, and that instructors are partial. The changing room facility and the showers, they complained, were reserved for paying customers only.

Fung said he would like to see all clients given the same treatment and quality service to achieve their goal in fitness.

He said he welcomes any complaints about the staff or any other matter of discontent about the facility.

Dr Lavenia Kurunawai, a physician at the Suva Private Hospital, said students should invest time in their physical wellbeing. Dr Kurunawai, who has been working out at the USP gym for the past two years, says the facility and the services provided were good.

She said working out relived stress as it released "feel good" hormones known as endorphins.

Dr Kurunawai cautioned that as people approach middle age, the tendency to gain weight increases. This makes people susceptible to diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Continued from page 1

Coral reef destruction

James Comly, a USP-based British researcher, says corals take millions of years to grow, and they are the food and habitat of millions of sea species. Due to climate change and human activities, the coral reefs are dying, says Comly.

This could pose a great risk to the low-lying islands since corals protect the shores of such islands from surges of giant waves.

A coral reef ecologist at the USP's Institute of Marine Resources, Edward Lovell, said around one-third of corals around the globe are under threat of extinction.

"This is not a light matter," he said.

Lovell added that reports about the extinction of the Australian Barrier Reef must be taken seriously as the research was carried out by one the best people in the field.

"We must now work towards protecting our own corals."

Lovell added that while authorities were aware of the impact of climate change on reef systems, there was confusion, and no direct path had been set to address this issue.

Professor Randolph Thaman, Head of the School of Islands and Oceans at USP, said that while Pacific people and governments are aware of the impacts of climate change, they did not understand the complexities.

"Governments must address climate change and other variables which contribute to coral loss," said Thaman.

He said currently there wasn't enough funding given for the protection and

rehabilitation of reefs.

Money to help communities to protect resources and adapt to changes was not forthcoming either, he said.

Another USP-based expert, Professor

William Aalbersberg, said coral reefs were in for a hard time.

Aalbersberg, the director of USP's institute of Applied Sciences (IAS), has experts working on coral reef research. He said coral reefs already under threat from

human activities were suffering from increased seawater temperature, resulting in coral bleaching and acidification.

Apart from being a haven for a multitude of sea creatures on which Pacific people rely for sustenance, coral reefs form a barrier against higher and stronger storm surges.

Because such surges are expected to worsen due to climate change, it has become all the more important to protect reefs. Koven said that localised village or town efforts should be encouraged with education and ways of lessening greenhouse gas emissions to address coral reef damage.

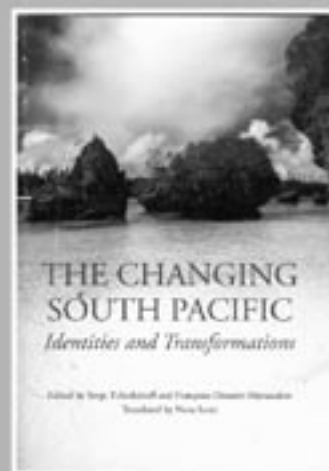
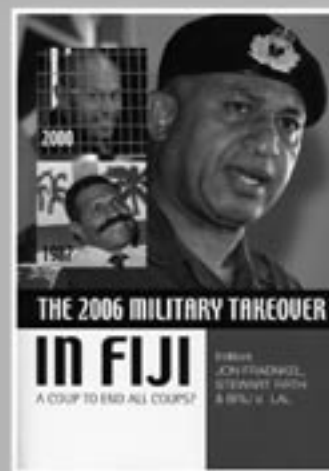
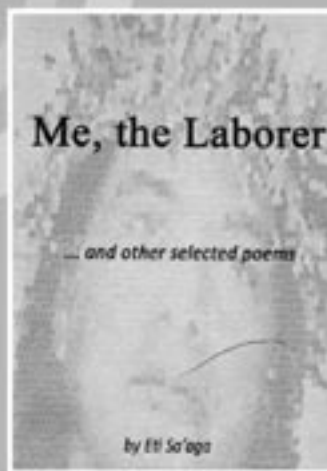
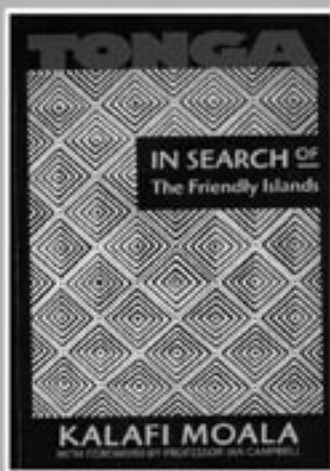
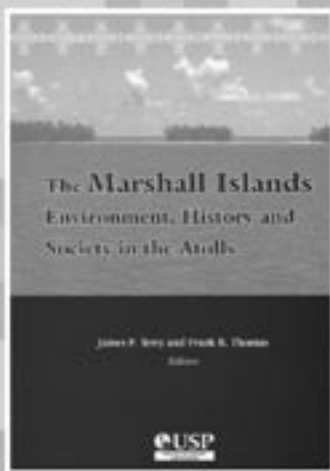
"All schools in Pacific island and rim countries should include marine science in their curricula.

"It should also be offered to all tertiary students to encourage better understanding of the coral reef ecosystem by future Pacific leaders," she said.

USP anticipates funding from AusAid and the European Union for research, investigation and mitigation of climate change impact on coral reefs.



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