

**Commercial Law Reform and Development in the South Pacific:
Tonga, the Solomon Islands & Vanuatu
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Speakers' Bios

Peter Wagner

Peter Wagner is a journalist with more than 30 years of experience in newspapers and magazines in Hawaii, the Pacific, and the U.S mainland. He covered numerous beat assignments for the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and was Editor of Island Business Magazine. He currently is Editor of the Pacific Islands Report, an online digest of news and information from developing Pacific nations. The daily report is gathered from news publications and services across the Pacific, and is a service of the Pacific Islands Development Program at the East-West Center in Honolulu

Gordon Walker

Dr. Gordon R Walker is the Professor of Commercial Law at La Trobe University School of Law, Melbourne, Australia where he is also Director of the LLM in Global Business Law and the LLM for International Students programs. From 2004-2007 he served as Head of the Law School. A native of Southland, New Zealand, Professor Walker went to Otago University as the Lissie Rathbone Scholar and graduated BA (Hons.), LLB (Hons.) from that university. He practiced law Wellington and taught and practiced in Adelaide where he received an LLM degree from the University of Adelaide. In the 1980s, he taught at Sydney University School of Law, practiced with Freehills (an international law firm), and worked in investment banking. He has an MBA from the Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) and an SJD from Duke University School of Law.

Moderator's Bio

Charles D. Booth is a Professor of Law at the William S. Richardson School of Law and the Director of the Institute of Asian-Pacific Business Law. He returned to the School of Law in 2006 after teaching for 16½ years at the University of Hong Kong. He is serving as the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Law Expert for an institutional legal reforms project for the Asian Development Bank for which he is advising the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission on personal bankruptcy and corporate insolvency law reform.

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Comment Summaries

Instability: An Overview of the Social and Political Climate in the Solomon Islands

Peter Wagner

The Solomon Islands government has reached a degree of stability with orderly elections and relative calm in the wake of a tumultuous decade. But while the Solomons have established a new Foreign Investment Act (2006) aimed at clearing the path for investors, the social framework is fragile and continues to rely on RAMSI – the Australia-led Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands, which has been keeping the peace in this volatile country since 2003.

Company Law Reform in the Pacific Islands

Gordon Walker

The traditional approaches to law reform suffer have not been very successful because of the ignorance of the importance of adapting transplanted laws to local needs and culture and reform timelines that are too short to effect real change. Investment in the Pacific Island region requires long time horizons, effective enforceable contracts, strong property rights and commercial law, anti-discrimination provisions protecting local businesses and communities, and availability of ADR processes. The Pacific Islands are weak in all these areas and therefore present a challenge to legal reform. To be effective, law reform projects must be tailored to the countries' circumstances and needs, have thorough analysis of the economic and legal impact of reform measures, strong government ownership, comprehensive consultations, rapid response by donors, and thorough implementation. A case study of the Solomon Islands will be presented.