

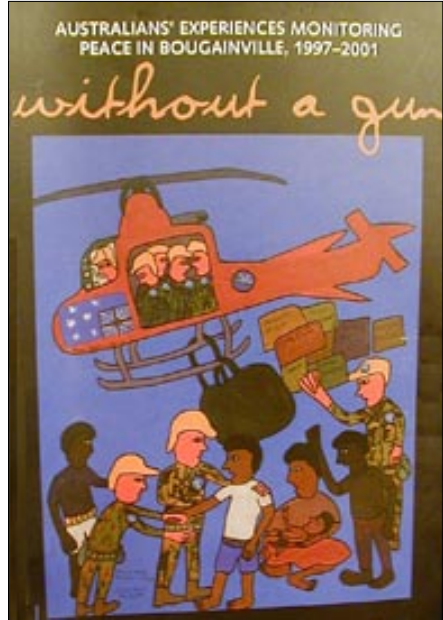
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laugh. And Seona Smiles' "Name games is hilarious.

*Niu Waves* does have a way with one's emotions. I reasoned that's because it's written by a variety of individuals pushing forth their different themes and perceptions of life — you really need to digest it slowly.

I quietly questioned, however, the appropriateness of certain words and images included in this collection which others like myself would find ill-suited for a younger audience that may be anticipated in secondary schools around the region.

Nicole answers: "We have come to the conclusion that if Oceania's young writers want to write sensual poetry, then Oceania's young readers will want to read about it. We're not helping our young people if we keep suppressing discussions about sex and sexuality."



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# Anzac rivalries undermine Bougainville peacekeeping

**Without a Gun: Australians' Experience Monitoring Peace in Bougainville, 1997-2001, edited by Monica Wehner and Donald Denoon, Pandanus Books, Australian National University, 2002. 204 pp. ISBN 1 74076 013 1**

FIJI'S often maligned military have won for themselves some rare praise for their work in an almost forgotten peace-keeping operation. And the way it all happens suggests their skills may be needed for the next regional conflict — between Australia and New Zealand.

But, it seems, Fijian soldiers find their Australian and New Zealand comrades vulgar and hedonistic.

The tributes come in a new book, *Without a Gun*, which tells of the peace-keeping operations in the Papua New Guinean province of Bougainville, scene of a bitter civil war between 1988 and 1997.

Some estimates put the death toll at between 15,000 and 20,000 and while the book, published by the Australian National University (ANU), tends to downplay the size, it says the impact of the conflict was incalculable.

The breakthrough came when New Zealand diplomats engineered a truce in October 1997. Quickly a Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) was sent in under New Zealand command, and after a peace treaty was signed in April 1998 Australia took over what became the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG). Although dominated by the military, both groups were unarmed.

Fiji and Vanuatu forces, which took part, and the Maori troops of the New Zealand Army, win praise.

It is a collection of chapters written by various Australians involved, edited by Monica Wehner and Donald Denoon. The latter says the Maori were separatist minded, creating one source of tension there.

“There were very tough Fijians with a long experience of peace-keeping rather than peace monitoring in the Middle East and elsewhere. They were much the most experienced of the peace monitors. There were ni-Vanuatu who were culturally much closer to Bougainvilleans than anybody else.”

One contributor, ANU Fellow Anthony Regan writes that the Bougainvilleans wanted the United Nations to send in armed peace-keepers. PNG did not want the UN as it would internationalise what they saw as a domestic issue while Australia and New Zealand were opposed to the UN because it would take time.

Canberra and Wellington pushed for a regional flavour.

“This ensured an appearance of regional endorsement of New Zealand's and Australia's roles,” Regan says.

“Neither country wished to be seen as dominating, and the concept of a regional force was attractive to both Papua New Guinea and Bougainvilleans for similar reasons.

“Even the relatively small contributions from Fiji and Vanuatu had important symbolic value. In fact, the

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force was not a regional initiative, but the contributions of Fiji and Vanuatu proved to be more than symbolic.”

Colonel Bob Breen of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF), who noted the “considerable friction” between Australia and New Zealand, wrote there had been difficulties in the integration of Fijian and ni-Vanuatu military personnel into TMG/PMG.

“Fijians came with a wealth of experience in peacekeeping in the Middle East but found the adjustment to being unarmed and working in monitoring teams, in two cases commanding monitoring teams, a significant challenge.

“The Fijians and ni-Vanuatu found some Australian and New Zealand military personnel vulgar, hedonistic and lacking in cultural sensitivity; some ni-Vanuatu personnel were overwhelmed by the scale of the operation and by long patrols carrying heavy loads over rugged terrain,” Breen writes.

“New Zealand and most ADF personnel tended to treat them as interpreters and appeared condescending of their lack of military experience and skills.”

Music made a difference once in the field in Bougainville.

“Monitors from New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu brought their own music and singing,” Breen says.

“Australians do not have much

musical culture to offer but soon joined in and contributed their own interpretations of population Western music....

Music, dancing and singing have contributed enormously to breaking the ice.”

Brigadier Bruce Osborn said there was no doubt the PMG’s multinational nature and its cultural diversity was one of its strengths.

“I think the PMG would still be at the starting line if not for the contribution of civilians, other Melanesians, Polynesians and New Zealanders.”

Andrew Rice, a civilian Canberra public servant who was with the PMG, said the coalition partners made all the difference.

“Aside from the benefits of military inter-operability, the understanding that comes from knowing the meaning of the haka, participating in the ritual of the kava session and having an insight into the ni-Vanuatu way of life cannot be overstated.... Australia’s re-engagement with the Pacific must be more than a romantic khaki-clad adventure.

Aboriginal diplomat Tracey Haines said the contribution of indigenous people in the force was significant.

“I think everyone would agree that the Maori, Fijian and ni-Vanuatu members of the PMG have an advantage over other members cause of their cultural affinity and rapport,” she

writes.

“They have been very effective as peace monitors and can provide valuable tips to others who are less culturally aware. They are recognised as brothers and sisters of Bougainvilleans, due to proximity in the region and cultural similarities.”

Add Major Luke Foster: “Ni-Vanuatu and Fijians had a tremendous advantage in establishing rapport with Bougainvilleans.”

The book makes grim reading when it comes to discussing relations between Australia and New Zealand which appear bad. It suggests the division between the two offers Pacific countries openings to exploit.

Regan said Canberra saw itself as the senior partner, giving rise to New Zealand resentment.

When Jim Bolger lost his job as New Zealand prime minister, his successor Jenny Shipley wanted New Zealand out of Bougainville. Australian Prime Minister John Howard had to work the phone to persuade her to say. But the lead role went to Canberra.

“Tensions were exacerbated by petty competitiveness between personnel of the two countries. New Zealanders regarded their personnel as more culturally sensitive to Bougainvilleans than Australians; conversely, Australians regarded the New Zealand military as less professional

and less properly equipped than its Australian counterpart.

“Australia was willing to take over; some Australian advisers were also keen to reassert what they saw as Australia’s primary responsibility for the south-west Pacific.”

Senior Australian diplomat Rhys Puddicombe says there were significant differences between the militaries of Australia and New Zealand.

“The New Zealand military was heavily weighted with Maori who had instant and close empathy with the Bougainvilleans. The predominance of Maori officers and soldiers was a deliberate and very effective choice. The TMG under New Zealand went out of its way to associate itself with the Bougainvilleans, and make them feel welcome in and around headquarters...”

The New Zealand Army had a closer “family” feel.

“On the down side, their vehicle transport was fairly appalling and their communications limited. The Australian-led PMG was larger and much better equipped, but had less of a Bougainville-friendly feel.”