



# NATIONAL KAVA FORUM

## REPORT

*Moving Kava Forward in Australia*



18 JUNE 2021



*Minister Seselja, Dr Aporosa,  
Fa'onetapu Takiari*

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- His Excellency Mr Robert Sisilo, *Solomon Islands High Commissioner*
- His Excellency Mr Samson Vilvil Fare, *Vanuatu High Commissioner*
- Mr Curtis Tu'ihalangingie, *Deputy High Commissioner Kingdom of Tonga*

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- Mr Avi Rebera (Assistant Secretary Federal Government Department of Health)
- Mr Radomir Krsteski (Director Environment Health Food, Health Protection Service ACT Health)
- Mr Fa'onetapu Takiari (ACT community kava advocate)
- Mr Jordie Kilby (Panel moderator)
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## FOREWORD

The National Kava Forum held on 18 June 2021 was organised by an enthusiastic team from *Fair Canberra Inc* as the first in a series of forums planned for 2021 on topics of interest to members of our organisation.

*Fair Canberra Inc* is a not-for-profit community Association incorporated in August 2017 with the objective to advocate for issues of interest and concern to Canberra's multicultural community groups.

A significant number of members of *Fair Canberra Inc* have a Pacific Island background and each hold a deep cultural interest in the topic of kava.

Pacific Islander members of *Fair Canberra Inc* have made it clear that kava has a deep cultural, social and economic significance across the region. They have stressed that *kava* is not alcohol and does not have hallucinogenic properties nor does it inhibit reasoning or affect driving in the same manner as alcohol or cannabis. Members have further pointed out that scientific evidence shows that kava usage does not cause any serious, long-term health issues.

The National Kava Forum was organised at the request of members of *Fair Canberra Inc* as they were keen to learn about the Australian Government's plans for kava importation and wanted their voices heard by those responsible for decision making on the issue.

The National Kava Forum produced valuable feedback from both community representatives and from experts relying on science about the way kava is perceived in Australia.

This report outlines what changes need to be made and how those changes would be best implemented.

This report contains recommendations and insights which I am confident decision makers who are responsible for implementing Government policy on kava related matters would find useful.

Nic Manikis PSM  
President  
*Fair Canberra Inc*

## INTRODUCTION

*Fair Canberra Inc* applauds the Australian Government decision to lift the ban on the commercial importation of kava into Australia from early 2022.

The term 'kava', as used in this report, "....is the traditional beverage prepared by cold water extraction of the ground organs of the plant *Piper Methysticum*, and nothing else". This is consistent with the definition described in the Government of Vanuatu's *Kava Act* and, importantly, the *Australia New Zealand Food Standard Code*. Therefore, kava as defined here excludes kava in tablet or capsule form as prescribed by medical practitioners or sold in pharmacies.

*Fair Canberra Inc* organised and hosted the Forum after Pacific Islanders and interested stakeholders in the ACT expressed the need for community consultation regarding the Federal Government's *Kava Pilot Phase 2 (KPP2): Allowing the commercial importation of kava*.

For many Pacific societies throughout the region, kava is an important part of daily life. It is used both in formal ceremonial obligations and informally to maintain and strengthen social and cultural relationships. Kava is also a major source of income for an increasing number of farmers across the region. For example, in 2019 export earnings in Vanuatu alone reached almost \$AUD 34million.

Australian regulations on kava started in 1997. People without a permit were restricted to 2kgs per person, followed by a complete ban in 2007 for Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, while a 2kg limit remained for the rest of Australia.

In 2019, the Federal Government announced a pilot program in Port Vila Vanuatu that would provide \$1.9million over four years to increase consumer access to kava. Restrictions were eased in Australia and the limit was raised to 4 kgs per person.

The second stage of the pilot program in 2020 was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and is now scheduled to proceed in early 2022. This second stage will allow for the commercial importation of kava into Australia for non-medicinal purposes.

Against this backdrop, the Forum – the first of its kind in Australia - was held at a pivotal moment, where a large number of stakeholder representatives from the Pacific, Indigenous Australian and broader multicultural community came together to share their aspirations and concerns about the commercial importation of kava in Australia.

For people who were unable to attend in person, the Forum was broadcast on Facebook Live and on Zoom.

## The Objectives of the Forum:

- to provide an opportunity and platform for a range of participants to understand better the significant role that kava plays in the cultural, social and economic livelihood of Pacific Island peoples;
- provide details of the Federal Government's pilot program to key stakeholders and learn how this will benefit both local communities and the economies of the Pacific region;
- understand the scientific, health and social benefits, concerns and myths relating to kava;
- provide an opportunity for Indigenous Australian representatives to share their experiences of kava in their communities and provide possible solutions to kava concerns;
- explain how current regulation for the commercial and personal importation of kava needs to be changed to allow for the implementation of the kava pilot program; and
- collect community and stakeholder opinions on the Federal Government's kava pilot program.

## National Kava Forum Participants

In keeping with the intent of the Forum objectives, the Forum participants were invited from the following key stakeholder groups:

- Pacific Community Associations and multicultural community groups;
- Federal and ACT Government decision-makers (relevant politicians and officials);
- Heads of Pacific Missions to Australia, including New Zealand;
- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander representatives;
- Academia and researchers;
- Private sector businesses and organisations; and
- Local media representations.

This report is prepared based on the deliberations at the Forum, and includes a comprehensive analysis and recommendations for the way forward.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were informed and proposed by the National Kava Forum held at the Hellenic Club, Canberra, on Friday, 18 June 2021.

1. Recommendation One:  
*The Australian Government pilot program include trialling a licensing system that provides for interested community organisations, among other entities, in each State and Territory to hold a license to import commercial quantities of kava.*
2. Recommendation Two:  
*The Australian Government pilot program include trialling the establishment of a kava lounge/bar in an interested community club in the Australian Capital Territory for the duration of the pilot program.*
3. Recommendation Three:  
*The Australian Government, in collaboration with the Northern Territory Government, lead meaningful consultation and engagement with all Yolngu and Anindilyakwan communities and homelands in the East Arnhem Land Region to develop a regulatory, commercial and monitoring system regarding the legal sale of kava and its health and social effects, in line with the wishes of the communities involved.*
4. Recommendation Four:  
*The Australian Government assist the East Arnhem Regional Council to gain a better knowledge of the cultural significance and health related practices of kava from Pacific community members.*
5. Recommendation Five:  
*The Australian Government roll out the consultation and information programs (as tested in the Yolngu and Anindilyakwan communities and homelands in East Arnhem Land Region) to all relevant Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander communities.*
6. Recommendation Six:  
*The Australian Government establish a body to bring together community groups, Pacific diplomatic missions, and government departments to share information and counsel on the kava Pilot Phase 2: Allowing the commercial importation of kava.*

7. Recommendation Seven:

***The Australian Government Health Department make a statement recognising the distinction between kava and 'designer kava preparations'.***

"Designer kava preparations' are medicinal extract/modified tablet/capsule-kava together with pop-culture foods and beverages containing *kava*.

A statement by the Australian Government Health Department would benefit policy makers, researchers and commentators who often misapply research findings and anecdotal commentary deriving from studies that utilised 'designer kava preparations' to *kava*.

That overlay and conflation has led to a misrepresentation and misunderstanding concerning the effects and health aspects of *kava*.

8. Recommendation Eight:

***The Australian Government Health Department make a statement that kava in all States and Territories is regulated under the Australian New Zealand Food Standard Code (the Food Standard).***

Specifically, *Standard 2.6.3 of the Food Standard states:*

1. a beverage obtained by the aqueous suspension of *kava* root using cold water only, and not using any organic solvent, or
2. dried or raw *kava* root.

9. Recommendation Nine:

***The Australian Government Health Department request States and Territories to align their Boarder Force regulations with the Food Standard, and therefore treat kava as a standard food item at the border.***

10. Recommendation Ten:

***The Australian Government include representatives from Pacific Island countries at future meetings on Australia and New Zealand Food Standards when kava is on the agenda.***

11. Recommendation Eleven:

***The Australian Government Health Department make a statement, and action, delinking of kava from The Poisons Standard.***

The basis for this recommendation is as follows:

1. A search of *The Poisons Standard* shows only 'alcohol' contained in medicines is listed, whereas alcohol (as used in socialisation) is not listed.
2. The Australian drug-harm ranking study found that, ..."Overall, alcohol was the most harmful drug when harm to users and harm to others was combined...". That combined score is 77 harm points for alcohol, whereas *kava* was ranked the least most harm at 3 harm points.
3. It is argued that alcohol (as used in socialisation) as opposed to *kava* should be listed in *The Poisons Standard* as alcohol is 'technically' a poison.

12. Recommendation Twelve:

***Kava packaging and labelling recommendations and standards (for retail purposes) be directed and driven by the Food Standard and not The Poisons Standard.***

13. Recommendation Thirteen:

**The Australian Government Health Department make a clear statement in all discussions, written material or reports on *kava* acknowledging the harm ranking of *kava* when compared with alcohol and other substances as ranked by the Australian drug ranking study.**

The basis for this recommendation is as follows:

1. The Australian drug ranking study and findings was undertaken by a panel of 25 drug experts, some being Australian Government drug advisors. This provides meaningful, simple to understand, important, necessary and transparent information from Australia's leading health body concerning *kava*'s level of harm.
2. It is suggested, although not recommended, that the Statement requested in this recommendation also include reference to the recent *kava* and health paper published in the triple peer reviewed 'Journal of Drug Science, Policy and Law' aimed at informing policy and medical professions about *kava* safety.

14. Recommendation Fourteen:

***The Australian Government Health Department make a clear public statement regarding all and any health concerns they have concerning kava use to provide clarity, transparency and consistency across States and Territories.***

Currently, Australian Government kava 'health concerns' are vague and inconsistent. Clearly defined and detailed *kava* health concerns will allow researchers to investigate and understand the specific concerns of the Australian Government while also providing space to address misinformation.

15. Recommendation Fifteen:

***The Australian Government Health Department continue to cite in all its statements the 2016 World Health Organisation's kava risk assessment, particularly the statement '...On balance, the weight of evidence from both a long history of use of kava beverage and from the more recent research findings indicates that it is possible for kava beverage to be consumed with an acceptably low level of health risk'.***

16. Recommendation Sixteen:

***The Australian Government Health Department make a clear statement that kava has been misrepresented as a key driver to socio-cultural disharmony and disfunction in Aboriginal communities (as inferred in numerous studies and media reports).***

This was first raised in 1995 by Darwin School of Medicine Professor Peter D'Abbs writing about *kava* in Aboriginal communities argued that: 'traumatic social change exacerbated by land confiscation, Government influence, legal injustices and disempowerment over the previous 50 years were key drivers to Aboriginal social-cultural upheaval, and not *kava*'.

This is further reinforced by Hunter and D'Abbs who wrote in 2003 that *kava* appeared to have become the scape-goat for Aboriginal sociocultural upheaval, citing: 'anecdotal and often sensational reports circulated about all-night (*kava*) binges, with ensuing detriment to families' health, rising absenteeism and even breakdowns in essential community services'.

A clear statement from the Australian Government regarding this matter is ethical and aligns with human rights and issues of justice as recommended in Section 46C(1)(a) of the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*..

A clear statement from the Australian Government that they will take action against non-Aboriginal health workers who coerce or lead Aboriginal leaders to make comments about *kava* and health or *kava* and negative sociocultural impacts (as appeared to be the case, and was

discussed by several in attendance during the Zoom-in at the National Kava Forum.

Coercion and leading (in this manner) are unethical and counters Human Rights protection provisions.

**17. Recommendation Seventeen:**

***The Australian Government appoint a kava researcher, experienced in both kava health and the social use of kava, to the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre kava importation evaluation team.***

This appointment will ensure best practice and transparency, and aid balanced accuracy of assessment and monitoring.

**18. Recommendation Eighteen:**

***The Australian Government appoint a designated researcher (PhD holder) with kava cultural, health and sociocultural expertise, with a track record of collaborating with international kava researchers; and motivated to recruit and supervise post-graduate students to research kava health and social issues.***

This position should be funded and positioned within an academic setting tasked with measuring the health, social, and economic and regulatory impacts of *kava* in Australia



# NATIONAL KAVA FORUM PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSION

## Traditional Kava Ceremony

As is custom at formal public Pacific gatherings, in the ACT and in many Pacific nations across the region, a kava ceremony was performed to strengthen relationships (kinship, business etc) between participants and to formally open proceedings.

The Forum master of ceremonies, Dr George Carter explained that the cultural significance of kava in the Pacific and in Australia is to bind families, countries and the region. He emphasised that the kava ceremony also binds people in their business aspirations and now the forum binds the multicultural community in Canberra.

Mr Penaia Verebalavu from the Fijian community provided an explanation of the traditional *Yagona* (kava) ceremony to welcome the guest of honour, the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator the Hon Zed Seselja MP, and to formally open the National Kava Forum.

## **Senator the Hon Zed Seselja MP (Minister for International Development and the Pacific)**

Senator the Hon Zed Seselja MP provided an overview of the Australian Federal Government's kava pilot program that will see the easing of the restrictions on the commercial importation of kava to Australia. The Australian Government acknowledges the significance kava holds for its Pacific family overseas and for communities in Australia and its potential benefit of exporting into the Australian market to Pacific economies. Kava export earnings were also cited as beneficial to the Pacific region post-COVID-19 recovery.

Senator Seselja mentioned that the Australian Government is working with Pacific governments to support their kava farmers throughout the pilot program and looking at ways to share its expertise in good agricultural practices. The Australian Government will also provide support to improve national quality and regulatory frameworks and develop export standards and market access.

Senator Seselja went on to say that the Australian Federal Government would also work with States and Territories to ensure the Government gets the regulations right. This will include consultations on robust monitoring and evaluation of the pilot program to assess the impacts on Indigenous communities in consultation with members of those Indigenous communities.

Senator Seselja closed his remarks by giving an assurance that it is the Government's intention to maintain traditions such as kava which appear to be an important element to the multicultural fabric of our society.

## The Aboriginal Community Experience

### **Djuwalpi Marika and Dale Keehne (Eastern Arnhem Regional Council)**

Mr Djuwalpi Marika Deputy President and Gumurr Miwati Ward Councillor of East Arnhem Regional Council (EARC) was joined by Mr Dale Keehne CEO of EARC via zoom from their hotel in Cairns.

The EARC is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Local Government, comprised of fourteen Councillors elected from six culturally based electoral wards and up to 126 Local authority Members across nine local authorities, to represent over 10,000 people, with an Aboriginal population of over 90 percent.

Mr Marika provided an overview of how kava has been used in the East Arnhem region since its introduction by missionaries and other people from Pacific Island nations. Mr Marika and Mr Keehne spoke about the East Arnhem Regional Council's approach to the impending reintroduction of the legal sale of kava. Mr Marika also provided possible solutions to concerns regarding kava in the communities within his local area.

Mr Marika explained how Yolngu people of Arnhem land have not had a proper introduction to the kava legislation, how to monitor it or the cultural significance of kava for Pacific people. As some see kava as a substance like alcohol and other drugs, to empower Yolngu people, the EARC want community and homeland members to understand more about the health effects of kava use, and for the sale of kava to be managed and monitored by Yolngu, with support of the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

When kava was first introduced into their communities it was not explained well by Pacific Islanders and the government. There are many health concerns about kava in the community and Mr Marika emphasised that more health research needs to be conducted and be made available.

Some community concerns highlighted include problems with skin, losing weight, spending money on kava instead of food and clothing for families, all of which needs careful investigation with possible remedies. In 1982, Mr Marika was the Town Clerk (leader) of the Yirrkala Dhanbul Council before he became part of EARC. The Yirrkala Dhanbul Council sold kava and a lot of the profits went back into community projects. Kava was sold in small quantities, one bag at a time for individuals and their names and ages were recorded.

Currently, kava is being sold on the black market. Mr Marika and Mr Keehne discussed the need to work with government to bring in regulations and monitoring to control negative health and social impacts from overuse of kava, and money could go back into community projects.

Mr Keehne emphasised that other Councillors and Local Authority members have discussed this issue over the last six to eight months as regular meetings, and they are very clear and have formal resolutions that support thorough and meaningful consultation and engagement with community and homeland members on the issue of kava. There is a need for more meaningful engagement with the Indigenous communities and small homelands in East Arnhem Land, the Northern Territory and the rest of Australia.

Mr Keehne mentioned the Federal Government's proposal for a 'National Indigenous Voice' policy is a genuine way of engaging with community. The EARC sees this as a tangible way of listening to people on a real and current issue like the reintroduction of kava into their communities and homelands. Mr Keehne also emphasised the need for the consultations to start soon given the impending reintroduction of the legal sale of kava and the EARC supports the same for other Aboriginal communities that have a history of kava use in other parts of Australia.

The EARC is happy to continue to work with *Fair Canberra Inc.*



*Mr Djuwalpi Marika, Valerie Bichard, Ahmed Imran and Dale Keehne ( post Forum photo)*

## Setting the International and Regional Scene

### **Dr Apo Aporosa (University of Waikato NZ)**

Dr Apo Aporosa, a research fellow based at Te Huataki Waiora School of Health at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand, addressed the dominant kava health concerns by drawing on peer reviewed and published research.

Dr Aporosa is a New Zealand government funded health researcher with a dominant focus on kava. He has over 20 publications on various kava themes including kava's cultural significance and its evolving use in diasporic and non-Pacific communities, and kava's interaction with productivity, health and cognition.

Dr Aporosa's current project investigates the impacts of kava on cognition related to driver safety following the consumption of traditionally influenced volumes of kava.

According to Dr Aporosa, New Zealand's Indigenous population, Maori, are increasingly engaging in kava use, a practice applauded by Elders as they encourage Maori to move away from alcohol and re-engage with their pre-migration Pacific culture.

Dr Aporosa commenced his presentation by explaining that kava is regulated as a 'food' under the *Australia New Zealand Food Standard Code*. Further, because kava's action in the body is psychotropic, it is also classified as a 'drug': this being similar to coffee, tea or energy drinks. Moreover, Dr Aporosa made it clear that kava is not alcohol and does not cause intoxication, marked euphoria or hallucinogenic effects. Drawing on work by a senior adviser from the Darwin School of medicine, he also pointed out that kava does not lead to violent behaviour or inhibit reasoning, rather it has positive effects that make the users feel warm, sociable and relaxed.

Dr Aporosa drew on an *Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin* article (Butt, 2019) and emphasised that the 14 health concerns discussed in the paper - dermatopathy, elevated liver enzymes, ocular effects, cardiovascular function, lethargy, driver impairment, drug interaction, low body mass, nausea, seizures, poor general health, cognitive disruption, dependence and risks associated with practice - are generally not a direct result of kava use. Instead, they often resulted from other factors and socio-cultural issues. He supported the claims by drawing on peer reviewed and published research findings, including research from the Australia's Darwin School of Medicine.

Dr Aporosa discussed research undertaken by Australian Government drug advisors that compared the harm levels of commonly used drug substances in Australia (Bonomo et al, 2019). He explained that the study ranked alcohol as the most 'dangerous drug' in Australia with a combined harm score (sum of

scores of harms to user and harm to others) of 77, whereas kava had a harm score of 3. Dr Aporosa commented that kava, regardless of its minimal harm risk to the user and community, attracted disproportionately harsher importation regulations than alcohol.

When summing up, Dr Aporosa quoted the World Health Organisation's 2016 kava risk assessment, "On balance, the weight of evidence from both a long history of use of kava beverage and from the more recent research findings indicates that it is possible for kava beverage to be consumed with an acceptably low level of health risk."



Dr Apo Aporosa

### **Professor Jerome Sarris (Western Sydney University)**

Professor Sarris leads the Healthy Minds Research team at NICM Health Research Institute at Western Sydney University. Professor Sarris is a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Fellow. He has also received funding from Mediherb Pty Ltd, Integria Health Care Australia and provides scientific advice as a paid consultant to Fiji Kava. He reflected on the research and data he has published on kava since 2007. Prior to his involvement as a scientific advisor, Professor Sarris' research is all peer-reviewed and published in high impact journals.

Professor Sarris provided a summary of the main double-blind randomised controlled trials (RCT) conducted on medicinal kava. He stated that two out of three studies showed kava had quite potent effects in reducing anxiety. This RCT of kava on anxiety was conducted over a one-week period then over a longer period of six weeks.

More recently medicinal kava was trialled over 16 weeks at 2 capsules, twice a day (this should be differentiated from larger amounts taken recreationally). This study did not show a separation from placebo. Professor Sarris emphasised that kava in smaller amounts may not necessarily be as effective as therapy or anti-depressant medication used to treat chronic clinical generalised anxiety. Other studies in people with milder anxiety did show with statistical significance that it was highly effective in reducing anxiety. Professor Sarris noted that (as mentioned by Dr Aporosa) kava is a completely different compound to alcohol and his research data showed that dependency, addiction and withdrawal affects at the lower-level use of kava was not found – it seemed quite safe.

Professor Sarris stated that in some cases it did raise liver enzymes (enzyme gamma glutamyl transferase or GGT). He spoke with a colleague Professor Rolf Teschke, a liver specialist in Germany, who does work in this area, he said that it was natural to get a priming of liver enzymes when the liver is trying to metabolise certain compounds like kavalactones (this does not imply 'subclinical' liver toxicity). In terms of other safety data there were no major issues. Some people did get digestive discomfort and nausea (as raised by Dr Aporosa) but it was something that was reversible and not overly troubling.

Professor Sarris mentioned that in one study kava had an interesting effect on enhancing some women's sex drive. This was interesting and correlated to reducing anxiety and improving sex drive. "I'm not advocating that you go out there and use it as an aphrodisiac but what we are saying is that there are some supplementary beneficial effects that people may not be aware of".

Professor Sarris also noted that they have conducted RCT's using driving simulators and kava in smaller medicinal doses and there was no issue when compared to oxazepam (used in the treatment of anxiety and insomnia) which reduced breaking time, but kava did not. There is also some genetic research they looked at showing that there may be differences in people's genetic polymorphisms in certain neurochemical pathways.

In summarising the research Professor Sarris emphasised that the research used qualitative data: human experience of taking kava which was assessed in one of the trials and compared to people taking placebo found that many people reported that they had slept better, they felt more relaxed and felt happier within themselves. This also correlated with one study showing that for some people this was a statistically significant effect in improving their mood and reducing depression beyond placebo.

Professor Sarris raised the question of how this research fits into the frame of whether kava should be imported. His opinion is based on the safety data and his understanding of Pacific culture, his great grandmother was Gilbertese (now Kiribati) He stated that it must be acknowledged that in the past trafficking of kava into certain Indigenous communities in Arnhem land was an issue. 'We do not want people mixing kava with high amounts of alcohol and in our understanding that was the main problem along with black market in kava –

making prices go through the roof – we don't want that'. Professor Sarris supported local law enforcement and restrictions on this issue with an understanding of why that should occur.

Professor Sarris emphasised his strong personal belief that Pacific people in Australia and across the Pacific region should not be penalised for practising their culture. He stated that denying people kava in Australia, which is a critical part of their culture, is a breach of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Australia is a signatory.

Professor Sarris concurred with his colleague Associate Professor Yvonne Bonomo who published the critical harms paper (detailed in Dr Aporosa's presentation) – the harm level of kava is practically nothing compared to alcohol. He raised the question of whether we wanted Pacific people (especially young people) abusing substances like alcohol or having kava within a community setting? Aside from the relaxing and potential beneficial medicinal effects of kava, there is a sense of pastoral care that happens in the community by sitting around the kava bowl – this is critical and needs to be honoured and respected. He also noted that there is the political issue: we should be coming together with our Pacific Island partners and friends, and we should acknowledge and respect that.

In conclusion, Professor Sarris emphasised that their (NICM) data relating to the safety profile for kava is very favourable compared to other things (besides alcohol) like paracetamol – the harm aspects of kava are so low. He stated that it was important to maintain good kava quality and there were minor issues in the past. He noted that this was in the jurisdiction of the Pacific Island communities and Fiji is making great strides in that area. He stated that there was a need to address the issues where they need to be addressed and not conflate them. From a personal perspective based on the data, the science, the understanding of politics, the safety issues and cultural elements outlines – certainly things need to be changed. Professor Sarris hoped that the Forum encourages strong and firm decisions to be made in order to move forward.

## Samoan Dance Performance

This performance showed the Forum participants the importance and educational influence of 'ava (kava) in Samoan society. The 'ava ceremony is one of the country's most important traditional ceremonies. The performance emphasised the educational value of the 'ava ceremony enacted through a dance performed by the local Samoan community's young people and adults.

It showed how local young people learn to access and appreciate the history of 'ava by enacting the various tasks and specific language used in the traditional ceremony. The cultural significance of the mothers performing with the children showed the close and entertaining bond that exists between Samoan mothers and their children that often lasts throughout their lives.

The performance also provided a moment for reflection and a wonderful way to move to the next part of the Forum program.



### Performers:

Adults: (Mothers): Anapogi Luteru, Faoa Sione, Litia Lemisio, Lieta Sauiluma-Duggan (Choreographer)

Young People: Esther Luteru (25 years), Mary Sione (21 years), Nixon Lemisio (12 years), Princeton Kepa (4 years)

## The Australian Terrain

### **Avi Rebera**

**Assistant Secretary for the Regulatory Services and Drug Control Branch of the Department of Health, Australian Government.**

Mr Avi Rebera provided an overview of the Federal Government's kava pilot program phase 2, allowing the commercial importation of kava. Currently, kava importation is predominantly for therapeutic goods/medicines. Outside of that, restrictions are in place for the access of kava.

In 2019, the Prime Minister announced a pilot scheme to relax the import control of kava.

Phase One – an increase of the personal traveller exemption from 2kg to 4kg was implemented on 13 December 2019.

Phase Two – pilot for the commercial import of kava as a food to be implemented by the end of 2021. The Federal Department of Health is working towards establishing a two-year pilot program to look at how the government can manage and provide greater access for the commercial importation of kava.

The Department of Health has engaged the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre to monitor and report the pilot. The pilot will run to the end of 2023. The Department of Health is working towards implementing the pilot in January 2022.

Public consultation on the pilot program phase two took place in March – April 2021. Over 20 submissions were received. They were predominantly supportive of Australia allowing commercial importation of kava.

In-depth discussions with State and Territory governments about how the Phase Two pilot program will be run are ongoing. These jurisdictions currently rely on the Commonwealth legislation to control kava supply.

While the Federal Department of Health is the lead agency, involvement across several Federal agencies, including Customs and Border Force, is necessary to ensure that legislation across the Commonwealth is in harmony.

A regulation Impact Statement is being completed and will be made available to the public. The Statement will look at the options that have been considered to implement the phase two. One of the areas being looked at is how Australia needs to change regulations around custom imports to allow for the importation of kava and how to measure the amounts coming into the country.

Advice on how to participate in the pilot will be published on the Office of Drug Control website.

At the end of the pilot, NDARC will assess the information gathered. A final report will be provided to the Federal Government to allow for a decision to be made. Once the decision is made the pilot program will either move out of its pilot phase or based on recommendations have adjustments made to legislation. It is envisaged that the commercial importation will continue until a decision is made sometime in 2024.



Toa Fulivai Takiari and Avi Rebera

## **Radomir Krsteski**

**Mr Radomir Krsteski, Director, Environment Health Food, Health Protection Service, ACT Health**, provided the current regulatory policy and process to operate kava food business in the ACT.

Mr Krsteski explained that kava is considered both a food and a medicine in the ACT. Kava is a schedule 4 (prescription only) medicine under the Commonwealth Poisons Standard. The ACT adopts the Poisons Standard under the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008*. Kava Standard 2.6.3. of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) establishes kava as a food if it is: (a) a beverage obtained by the aqueous suspension of kava root using cold water only, and not using any organic solvent; or (b) dried or raw kava root.

- Kava is still a schedule 4 medicine under the Poisons Standard. If a kava product meets the requirements of the Code, then it is regulated as a food under the *Food Act 2001* and is exempt from the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008*.

Currently commercial importation permits will only be issued for scientific or medical purposes. To import kava, you must obtain the following from the Office of Drug Control: Licence to Import Controlled Substances; and Import permit for each consignment of kava. Any amount of kava imported by any other means such as post or air cargo, requires a permit. Kava regulation varies across Australia.

Mr Krsteski outlined, in detail, the food business requirements and food safety training.

## **Fa'onetapu Takiari (ACT community kava advocate)**

Kava advocate Mr Fa'onetapu Takiari shared the history of the kava advocacy and community engagement in the ACT amongst the Pacific community and supporters for over ten years.

The local Pacific community and kava clubs, such as the *Tongan Fofonga*, reached many milestones in the past ten years. These included: the community kava forum in 2012 to achieve an exemption to showcase the use of kava at the *National Multicultural Festival*; 2014 Kava forum coordinated by the Community Services Directorate ACT Government; *2015 Kava Movement* conducted by Professor Siua Lafitani; and the *2021 National Kava Forum*.

Mr Takiari echoed similar positive messaging and themes regarding kava research presented earlier in the Forum by Dr Aporosa and Professor Sarris, including a focus on Arnhem Land communities. He emphasised that the social and mental health benefits of kava are often underappreciated in Australia.

Mr Takiari explained how kava was used during academic and cultural activities at both the University of Canberra and at the Australian National University. He also spoke about the popularity of kava lounges at annual National Multicultural Festivals. However, these often ran at a loss in financial terms for the community group hosting the kava lounge as selling and donations were prohibited.

Mr Takiari spoke of the *Codex Alimentarius Commission* that Vanuatu spearheaded with broader collaboration amongst Pacific nations. He emphasised that kava has been formally recognised as a 'food' under *Codex*.



Mr Fa'onetapu Takiari

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

A panel discussion comprising of His Excellency Mr Samson Vilvil Fare, High Commissioner for Vanuatu, Mr Avi Rebera, Federal Department of Health, and Dr Apo Aporosa, University of Waikato NZ, was held, followed by an interactive and highly engaging Q&A session. Mr Jordie Kilby ably moderated the panel and invited His Excellency Mr Fare to open the discussion with a summary of Vanuatu's work on kava.

### **Case of Vanuatu**

H.E Mr Fare High Commissioner for Vanuatu spoke about the significance of kava in bringing people together, which is an integral part of the Pacific identity for thousands of years. H.E.Mr Fare acknowledged that kava is part of us, it is us as the ocean is us. Kava is us because it runs deep in our blood. He also acknowledged the good work that is being done by Pacific communities across Australia on kava. He proceeded to share the work that is being done on an international level with regards to kava.

H.E. Mr Fare referred to academic Dr Vincent Lebot, who continues to conduct scientific research in Vanuatu and kava's promotion at an international level. The ban on kava in Germany in 2000 put a lot of stress on the Vanuatu economy because it exported a lot of kava to Europe. H.E. Mr Fare informed the Forum that Vanuatu is working hard at a diplomatic and technical level to reintegrate kava back into the European market. He mentioned Codex and how it sets the food standards around the world. When Codex defines a food or beverage it is then translated into national legislation and regulations. Some countries do not take Codex decisions quickly because it takes time to go through a national process. He acknowledged that Vanuatu was the chair of Codex and, at the last meeting in October 2019, finalised the regional standard for kava and noni. On 26 September 2020, Codex recognised kava as a beverage.

H. E. Mr Fare mentioned that Vanuatu took the initiative to work with the *European Union* and *The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP)* and ensured kava was included as one of their priority commodities of ACP in 2015. This opened the opportunity to receive funding from the European Union to support national and regional kava strategies. Before this decision, thorough research was conducted in a German lab and across the Pacific to show how kava does not cause health issues as previously claimed. However, the research found that kava may exacerbate existing health conditions. This led to overturning the kava ban by Germany. Extensive work was also carried out, at the time, to examine various trade, social and cultural barriers, followed by a report providing pathways to support the trade in kava on an international and regional levels.

H.E. Mr Fare emphasised the need to engage more with exporting countries in the region to work together hand-in-hand with regional bodies such as the Pacific Island Forum and the Secretariat of the Pacific Communities to ensure Pacific countries meet standards required by Australia for market access. He noted that the Forum did not mention much about the exporting countries.

H. E. Mr Fare said that Vanuatu is the only country in the Pacific with specific legislation for kava – the *Kava Act (2002)*. Vanuatu is currently incorporating kava into the Food Act to ensure it is authorised as a beverage rather than a drug or narcotic as described in other places. He complimented Tonga’s good food standards on kava. There are four large kava exporting countries and Mr Fare encouraged more knowledge sharing on good practices within each country. It is important that all Pacific countries come together to work on these issues.

H.E. Mr Fare stated that from 2018 Kava now accounts for 60% of Vanuatu’s GDP and it is exporting to five countries so far. Kava has surpassed the tourist industry. He noted the large potential market for kava with Pacific diaspora in Australia. Kava exports has contributed to meeting the cost of 25,000 homes across Vanuatu. Kava is exported to Fiji, New Caledonia (EU and French regulations), Solomon Islands, Kiribati and the USA. There are over 140 kava bars in the USA.

H.E. Mr Fare said that these are good examples for Australian regulators to consider.

*The following is an edited transcript of the Questions & Answers*

**Q1. There is a strong view among Pacific community groups that the ACT should be a participant in the Federal Government’s second phase pilot program. How likely is this to happen later this year?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** – Broadly, what we want is to work with all the jurisdictions so that we have consistency on a national basis with every State and Territory regarding the pilot program and how it will operate – that will make things simpler in terms of the importation so that there won’t be a requirement for not only big changes on a Commonwealth level but if there are differences for example between ACT and NSW that would make it more complex. On a Commonwealth level we continue to have conversations with all the jurisdictions to get uniformity where we can. One of the things we do need to be conscious at a Commonwealth level is that the States and Territories have the right to make their own decisions. This is what we are working towards. To find out whether the ACT will agree to what’s finally implemented I will hand over to my colleague at this stage.,

**A: Mr Radomir Krsteski** – Currently the ACT is quite supportive of the importation of kava there may have to be some work behind the scenes to work out the requirements for when it is sold – some jurisdictions already have things in place to restrict the sale of kava – currently in the ACT we don’t – since the introduction of kava standards 2.6.3 those requirements around kava being restricted as a medicine provided an opportunity for it to be considered as a food. However, in other jurisdictions like the Northern Territory kava is regulated under their Liquor Act.

**Q2: H.E Hinauri Petana (High Commissioner of Samoa): A lot of our economies in the Pacific have suffered as part of Covid-19. Kava has been with us for quite some time with all the barriers that we have faced whether it is in Europe or here now. We heard excellent presentations from Dr Aporosa and Professor Sarris about all the research that has been done on kava.** Looking forward on how to progress this second phase of the pilot through to 2023 – in the ACT, at least, seems to suggest that there is a whole layer of extra things to do to make kava acceptable to the Australian market. So, it becomes almost over sanitised and therefore the time barrier we are looking at in terms of moving towards commercial consignments seems even further away than we anticipate. We are very grateful that the government is moving towards establishing this health study and that you have given yourselves this period to consolidate. I'm coming from the perspective of economic security of our small island countries whose agricultural base is very small. Looking at market force here and elsewhere we would welcome what can be done to accelerate the lifting of those barriers to allow commercial volumes to be brought in. When you describe [Mr Krsteski] the kind of things you need as a regulating regime about sanitised situations – I said to my colleague, "...we have all had kava and we have all survived not having to over clean ourselves to that extent even to making sure that the kava was put in the fridge after four hours of not using it...". This goes against the traditional values of kava as a drink, as a food but at the same time its that level of acceptance that you don't have to go overboard with some of the regulatory conditions that seem to be coming out and so I just wanted to put it to you – because as I see it, these layers are going to provide more barriers (or filters) that we will have to go through in order to look at any commercial quantities and also could you be clear about what your requirements will be to that extent? Thank you.

**A: Mr Radomir Krsteski** – With regard to food safety – those requirements are there for all food commodities. Its not a specific requirement for kava. It is required for all food that is prepared. The beautiful thing about our regulatory system is that it also outcomes based. So, if you can demonstrate a process or demonstrate that your kava can stay out for greater than four hours then that would be acceptable. But, then its up to you to demonstrate it. You need to provide the evidence of testing per se and once you've validated that method of outcomes-based food regulatory system that gives you that flexibility to do. Now if you are looking at kava for personal use obviously those requirements do not apply to you so if you buy the root or the powder you can prepare and drink it however way you would like if you followed the instructions on the packet. You can prepare it how you like in the home. You are looking at two separate issues there: the commercial use and the domestic use.

**Q3: H.E Hinauri Petana: If there is a body of research that's been done and I'm sure it is the same thing all around Australia. How much cooperation will there be to ensure that, that body of knowledge goes into your policy decision process when you are looking at the regulatory framework?** We would like a positive outcome from all of this. Rather than start something new, instead see what can be extrapolated and brought into that regulatory and policy framework when you're addressing this over the next two years.

*The moderator moved to the next question. Mr Rebera refers to this question later in the proceedings.*

**Q4: How do we safeguard the interests of farmers?** What happens if people in other places start growing kava and start taking over our trade? Could strands of kava be patented so we can limit the export from a certain country that the kava strain is unique to? How can we prevent the culture from being lost? We are getting ahead of ourselves with commercial importation with no one mentioning the impact on the islands and the increased cost as external are put on the islands. I know kava is getting more expensive, how can we safeguard them from losing their traditional way of drinking kava so that people don't deviate to drinking alcohol etc.

**A: H.E. Mr Fare** – This is a very good question. I will speak from a Vanuatu perspective – we can unpack a lot of sub-questions out of that. We have issues with Geographical Indications GIs. This is something that our region should work on. We should come up with a regional strategy. We have regional organisations that look after these – I'm speaking of the SPC and technical agencies. We must be careful, if someone grows kava in another country [outside the region] how do we stop that? There is also the issue of food security that we need to look at within the Pacific region – suppose we come into a momentum where people over grow kava, and they forget to grow their own food. There was a time when we were over growing kava. People assumed that by growing so much kava that they would find an overseas market to sell the kava. They then discovered that the market was oversaturated. Exporting kava in Vanuatu is highly regulated because you need to meet certain biosecurity regulations to import kava. Intercropping must be encouraged to ensure food safety.

Another issue we must look at is land right, land tenure system. In Vanuatu and I assume anywhere else, people grow kava on other people's property – so how do you go about land right when you know that the land belongs to you? Where can you grow your own kava as well? So that can create other social tensions as well.

The World Intellectual Property Organisation will work with regional organisations to help protect the GIs and make effective legislation to prevent biopiracy.

**Q5: Can kava be posted in the mail for personal use in Australia like in New Zealand as part of the trial?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** – I would like to get some advice with regards to posting for personal use. The pilot focuses on commercial importation, so any kava coming in for commercial use would require permits to import. If something was coming in the post for an individual doesn't meet that. I would have to take on notice what would happen at the border of Border Force picked up postage.

If I could, I would like to answer the question Your Excellency has around regulations. A lot of evidence was provided today regarding what we are saying in Australia about the perception and myth around the health implications [of kava]. While the Department of Health is running this process, its predominantly because of regulations like the Narcotic Drugs Act and so forth in terms of what has happened at the Commonwealth level. When you look at what it is trying to achieve and what the issues are that we are looking at in terms of NDARC and how they would evaluate this program – the things they are going to look at include whether it [the pilot] provided greater access to kava in this country; has it increased trade opportunities for our Pacific partners? What are the social and cultural benefits that are derived from this? None of these are directly related to health. So yes, there is a health aspect to the assessment during the pilot, but it is only one part of it. In some of the jurisdictions there is a level of concern about the impact on communities. It doesn't mean that its justified. What this pilot program will do is help articulate what that is, so I think it is a positive. The health impact is not the only reason why we are doing this pilot.

**Q6: How will community organisations get commercial access to bring kava into Australia for cultural events and multicultural festivals? Don't say go to a website, because we like face-to-face, and this is what community is all about?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** – The Federal Department of Health is currently working on the details surrounding imports and who will be eligible for permits, and different jurisdictions are in conversation. The permits are needed during the pilot period to track the import of kava in terms of the place, quantities and form of the imports. More information will be published on the website – the legislation and regulations will drive it – so that must be published. Technically once it is a food, eventually anyone and not just community organisations should be able to import it.

**Q7: How will the second phase pilot be communicated to importers in Australia and exporters in Pacific Island countries?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** – This will be a multifaceted approach involving multiple agencies working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be followed. The ACT and other jurisdictions will be involved and will have trade trips with partners into the Pacific Island countries. There will also be a collaboration with representatives from diplomatic areas.

**Q8: Given that Queensland has the Pacific Agriculture Research Station where kava can be grown for research, and that the health benefits of kava can be proven, why do we have so many regulations and is more education on kava needed?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** - The regulations are not primarily based on health issues but rather on commercial importation and its implications for supporting Pacific Island communities and their economies. Domestic production is not considered in the regulations. A kava task force can also be established to speed up the process to help Pacific Island countries whose economies are struggling due to the impact of COVID-19 in tourism

**A: H.E. Mr Fare** – I think that I'm happy to hear this response. I would like to say, if I may, along with my senior colleagues, I suggest that the High Commissions of the Pacific work together with your office through DFAT and the ACT Government. We would very much like to engage more with you on kava. So that when you shape your policies around food standards, you may lack some elements on kava that we could provide to you as well. Australia has already supported kava in the region a lot through various projects. One of them together with New Zealand is called Phama Plus (one of our good colleagues online is called Semy). I would like to praise them for doing a lot of work across the region. This program is funded at \$ AUD35million. This is now the second phase of that program. They are doing a lot of work on kava quality and building nurseries. What we find is lacking in Canberra with our Pacific missions is that it is like a two-way highway and the community is one lane of the highway the other lane is our official representatives of our high commissions we can also work together with your institutions and the ACT Government to provide you with those insights on kava. We know that you go a lot to your respective high commissions in our countries which is fine, however, we are also here and available to work with you. We can work closely with you to provide the data that you may not have in your system now. We can also provide you with all the policies that we have already have in the region.

I would like to make a request personally on behalf of Vanuatu that when you next have your meeting on Australia and New Zealand Food Standards, specifically on kava matters, we would like to be invited to that meeting as well. So, we can hear how you work, what kind of regulations you put forward on kava so that we can also contribute to that on a State and Territory level.

We are Indigenous people of the Pacific, and we understand the Indigenous issues that our brothers and sisters in Australia may face. So, we would like to work with them together on cultural diplomacy.

Adding to my sister from Samoa, economically, COVID-19 has really hit our countries badly. We could have a taskforce on kava to speed up this pilot project where you could also involve the High Commissions to be involved in that taskforce so that we can help you to start and run the project quickly to support our economies back in the Pacific. We can no longer count on tourism. We have invested a lot into our agriculture.

**Q9: Mr Curtis Tu'ihalangie Deputy High Commissioner Kingdom of Tonga – What is the pathway and the role for the community to make this program successful? Can you be more specific about the way forward? You need to guide us, and we can help you.**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** I think to clarify when the program starts at the end of this calendar year, and we have the agreements and legislation and the regulations have been changed. Kava can be imported at commercial quantities from January 2022. At this stage, I am not aware of any restrictions on quantities either. So, it doesn't mean that people must wait before the end of the pilot before starting to import from your countries. We will be providing more regarding what measures we will be looking at – that will be undertaken throughout that 2 year pilot program. That will give more clarity around what is needed to be successful. I've noted that NDARC who is doing the assessment, they have various groups that they will work with and consult throughout that pilot process and they can get feedback on whether things are going successfully. From a stakeholder perspective I have noted that you guys are stakeholders and that they should be coming to speak with you throughout the process. I still need to have discussions with a broad range of departments, like the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Agriculture, Border Force etc.

**Q10: How can risks be mitigated for small businesses arising from the fortunate few businesses that secure a permit to import kava potentially establish an oligopoly in the kava market due to the pilot program?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** - A number of businesses eligible to get a permit during the pilot program will not be restricted so that any business can import kava. There also will not be a restriction on the quantity of imports. The factors that determine eligibility for permits are currently under consideration.

**Q11: If the pilot does not restrict kava import based on the number of eligible businesses or the quantity of import, why then have a 'pilot' instead of permanently legalising kava?**

**A: Mr Avi Rebera** - The pilot program is meant to test the legal, commercial importation of kava and gain people's trust, especially those who might disagree with completely and permanently legalising kava imports without restrictions. It also provides an opportunity to evaluate the legislation surrounding kava and improve and refine the legislation before making it permanent. While health concerns surrounding kava usage are still on the agenda, other key factors, namely social, cultural and economic factors, will be considered and evaluated through the pilot program.

In addition to the Q&A, the participants made some comments and suggestions to make the policies and legislations uniform and consistent across the nation, especially to combat the black market trade in kava.

## Next Steps and Concluding Remarks

Professor Satish Chand, Professor of Economics at the University of NSW in Canberra, gave the concluding remarks for the National Kava Forum and provided insights into the next steps forward. This is a summary of his comments:

Professor Chand emphasised the importance of including Indigenous Australians in the conversation and, in particular, noted bringing Australian South Sea Islanders into the conversation and including them as a natural bridge between Pacific Islanders and Indigenous Australians. He noted their huge contribution to Australia. He went on to say that ‘...we can argue the legalities, but the community issues are just as important...’.

Professor Chand reiterated that kava has much cultural and social significance, and is closely connected to church and sport, especially for Fijians. In the 2016 Census, there were 62,000 Fijians in Australia and he estimated that the number of people drinking kava could be double that number from across the Pacific diaspora and the broader Australian community.

Professor Chand mentioned how kava also has a huge market in Australia, among both Pacific Islanders and Australians, and has benefits for both Pacific Islander countries and Australia. He addressed the importance of being able to import kava legally into Australia, in order to combat the impure, adulterated kava that is sold on the black market. He stated that the black market price for kava ranges from \$250-300 per kilo and that anecdotal evidence suggests that it is sold on the black market in Sydney for up to \$500 per kilo.

The evidence regarding the health research presented at the National Kava Forum shows that there is a lot of work that needs to be done to educate the Australian public on the benefits of kava.

Professor Chand stated that the National Kava Forum showed that everyone at the Forum knows more about kava than the average Australian and he appointed everyone at the Forum as a ‘KAVA Ambassador’ and encouraged them to go out and tell people the value of kava both in Australia and at home.

Professor Chand took the opportunity to reiterate the value of kava to the economies of Pacific Island countries. He used the example of the Fijian economy to emphasise this point. He said that Fiji exported \$43million worth of kava each year, most of which goes to small businesses, thus urging Australia to move forward with the pilot program to legalise commercial kava importation into Australia.

## Vote of Thanks

The National Kava Forum was closed with a vote of thanks from Mrs Toa Fulivai Takiari (Vice President *Fair Canberra Inc*).

Mrs Takiari expressed her appreciation of all attendees for making the Forum a roaring success. She praised attendees for their enthusiasm shown throughout the evening and active participation.



Toa Fulivai Takiari

- 5:30pm Arrivals and light dinner
- 5:45pm Prayers – Church Minister **Ms Wati Savu** (*Fiji Methodist Church*)
- 6:00pm Introduction – **Mr Nic Manikis PSM** (*President Fair Canberra Inc*)
- 6:05pm MC – **Sala’ Dr George Carter** (*Research Fellow ANU*)
- 6:10pm **Mr Penaia Verebalavu** introduces the Fiji Kava Ceremony
- 6:20pm **Keynote - Senator the Hon Zed Seselja MP** (*Minister for International and the Pacific, Australian Government*)
- 6:35pm **The Aboriginal Experience**  
**Mr Djuwalpi Marika** (*Deputy President, Gumurr Miwatj Ward Councillor, Yirrkala Local Authority Member, Eastern Arnhem Regional Council, and Rirratjingu Clan Elder, also Chairperson Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation*)  
**Mr Dale Keehne** (*Chief Executive Officer East Arnhem Regional Council*)
- 6:50pm **Setting the International and Regional Scene**  
**Dr Apo Aporosa** (*Research Fellow University of Waikato NZ*)
- 7:20pm **Professor Jerome Sarris** (*University of Western Sydney*)
- 7:30pm Samoan Dance Performance
- 7:40pm **The Australian Terrain**  
**Mr Avi Rebera** (*Assistant Secretary Regulatory Engagement and Planning Federal Department of Health*)
- 8:00pm **Mr Radomir Krsteski** (*Senior Director ACT Health*)
- 8:15pm **The Pacific Community Experience**  
**Mr Fa’onetapu Takiari** (*ACT community kava advocate*)
- 8:30pm MC introduces Panel & hands over to Moderator – **Mr Jordie Kilby**  
**PANEL Discussion with Q & A**
- 9:25pm **Next Steps/Concluding Remarks**  
**Professor Satish Chand** (*Professor Economics UNSW Canberra*)
- 9:40pm **Vote of Thanks**  
**Mrs Toa Takiari** (*Vice President Fair Canberra Inc*)
- 9:45pm *Kava Club – Fofonga .....Kava & Talanoa (Informal)*
- 10:30pm Ends

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**PANEL** (Moderator: **Mr Jordie Kilby**)  
**Mr Avi Rebera** (Federal Department of Health)  
**H.E. Mr Samson Vilvil Fare** (Vanuatu High Commission)  
**Dr Apo Aporosa** (University of Waikato NZ)

**Note takers**  
**Dr Ahmend Imran** (Uni of Canberra (UC) Chair Policy Committee *Fair Canberra*)  
**Dr Walter Selvakumar** (UC)  
**Dr Shikha Aroa** (UC)