

(Marc Tarlock/Flickr)

Decentralisation in PNG: a political analysis

Friday 29 October 12:30-1:30pm (AEDT) / 11:30am-12:30pm (PGT)

This paper provides an overview of decentralisation in Papua New Guinea (PNG) since independence, with a focus on political decentralisation. We show that PNG's decentralised system has several distinctive and, in some cases, unique features. It is constantly evolving – in fact, heading in different directions. PNG's system of decentralisation has become highly complex, with four tiers of government. It relies heavily, perhaps uniquely so, on indirect representation, with both provincial assemblies and district committees dominated by national politicians. We also argue that four political forces have shaped, and will continue to shape, PNG's decentralisation reforms: the political dominance within the country of national members of parliament (MPs); the dominance, within that group, of district over provincial MPs; as a countervailing force, strong, though variable, political support for provincial autonomy; and, finally, the underlying clientelistic, fragmented and unstable nature of PNG politics. These findings are consistent with those of Spina (2013) in a very different OECD context.

This presentation is based on the speakers' chapter in the forthcoming ANU-UPNG edited volume on contemporary issues in PNG.

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This online seminar is free and open to the public. Registration is required to attend.