



FACULTY OF ARTS

Adelaide Summer Research Scholarship 2021-2022

China in the Pacific Islands: partner or problem?

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Since reports in April 2018 that China was in talks to build a military base in Vanuatu (which were denied by both governments), Australia's anxiety about China's presence in the Pacific Islands has escalated. Australia has consequently engaged in an extensive 'step-up' to enhance its relationships in the region. But it was not that long ago that Australia was seeking to partner with China on joint development projects, exemplified by a program to address malaria in Papua New Guinea.

This summer research project will involve a longitudinal analysis of the Australian discourse about China's presence in the Pacific over the last ten years. The purpose of this analysis is to track how the discourse has evolved, particularly how references to China's role in the region have changed. The summer scholar will identify and collate official Australian government discourse, media publications, academic articles and think tank reports on China's role in the region over the last decade. The scholar will then analyse this material to identify how China's role in the Pacific has been characterised, what issues have received attention at different times, and how references to China have shifted over time.

Working with Professor Wallis, the student will identify the implications of this analysis for Australia's foreign policy, answering the key question: is China a partner or problem in the Pacific Islands?

The student will gain the following research skills and experience;

- Co-publication with the supervisor
- Gain familiarity with finding a range of primary sources, analysing them using discourse analysis techniques, and then applying international relations theories to analyse their implications for Australia's foreign policy.