

## Preface

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This report summarises research undertaken over the period May 2007 to late 2009, updated through some further work and discussions during 2010 and again in early 2012. With the exception of Samoa, it does not cover developments since the beginning of 2011.

The research was conducted in consultation with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), the Commonwealth Secretariat, university and development partners, and representatives of local and national governments across the South Pacific. It was largely funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat, but also supported through my work with the CLGF Pacific Project and by the Centre for Local Government at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

The idea for the research sprang from discussions with Professor Graham Hassall, then with the University of the South Pacific in Suva; and Terry Parker, then regional adviser to the CLGF Pacific Project. Their input is gratefully acknowledged.

Many people throughout the Pacific subsequently contributed information, ideas and insights into the workings of local government legislation, and gave generously of their time. Special thanks go to those colleagues who commented in detail on the draft text: Terry Parker again; Afamasaga Toleafoa, an esteemed Samoan chief, former senior diplomat, social commentator and researcher; and Rebecca Bigg-Wither, former legal adviser to Honiara City Council. The final document owes a great deal to their advice, but of course any outstanding errors or omissions are my responsibility.

Sincere thanks are also due to Dr Munawaar Alam of the Governance and Institutional Development Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat. He not only secured funding for the project, but also offered continuing encouragement and showed enormous patience as delays in finalising the report mounted up. Dr Alam has been a great advocate for more local government research across the Commonwealth.

Finally, I particularly want to record the assistance and friendship of John Leigh. John played a crucial role in the CLGF project to build the capacity of Honiara City Council, first as a financial adviser and later as acting city clerk. He died after a short illness in June 2011 – far too young and with much still to contribute, but having achieved a great deal.

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