



South Pacific Division headquarters, Wahroonga, NSW, Australia.

Photo courtesy of Danijela Schubert.

South Pacific Division

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Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

The name “South Pacific Division” was voted in 1985 for that territory of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church which had previously been variously known as the Australasian Union Conference, the Australasian Inter-Union Conference, and the Australasian Division.¹ Its headquarters are in Sydney, Australia.²

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has its headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. The South Pacific Division of the General Conference has its headquarters at 148 Fox Valley Road, Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia. Article III of the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws states:

The General Conference conducts much of its work through its divisions, which in turn are comprised of unions in specific areas of the world. Each division of the General Conference is authorized to carry out responsibilities in the territory assigned to it. It shall act in full harmony with the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws, the General Conference *Working Policy*, and actions of the Executive Committee. In order to carry the authority of the General Conference, the actions of division committees shall, of necessity, be in harmony with and complementary to the decisions of the General Conference in Session, and the actions of the General Conference Executive Committee between Sessions.³

Article 1, Section 4 of the General Conference Bylaws states:

Administrations of all organizations and institutions within a division's territory shall be responsible to their respective executive committees/boards and operate in harmony with division and General Conference Executive Committee actions and policies. General Conference institutions and fields without divisional affiliation shall operate in harmony with the General Conference Executive Committee and its policies.⁴

The South Pacific Division is one of thirteen divisions of the General Conference.⁵ Its territory is: Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the islands of the Pacific lying south of the Equator (including Nauru, Samoa, American Samoa, Niue, Wallis and Futuna, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Fiji, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and others) between Longitude 140 East and Longitude 120 West, and Kiribati north of the Equator; comprising the Australian, and New Zealand Pacific Union Conferences; and the Papua New Guinea, and Trans Pacific Union Missions.⁶

At the end of 2018, the South Pacific Division had a membership of 541,989. In terms of membership, it is 10th in order of size compared to other thirteen Seventh-day Adventist world church divisions. Accessions in 2018 totaled 11,770. At the end of 2017, there was a total of 13,510 active employees in the division and 448 literature evangelists working in the territory of the division. There were 2,184 organized churches and 4,065 companies. The tithe amounted to US\$94,256,071, and the total of all tithes and offerings was US\$146,814,984.⁷

Organizational History of the South Pacific Division (1985-2020)

The South Pacific Division previously existed between 1894 and 1985 as the Australasian Union Conference, the Australasian Inter Union Conference, and then the Australasian Division. This article deals with the time period between 1985 and 2020.

At the General Conference Session of 1901, the decision was made that all island groups "adjacent to Australia" be administered from and by the Australasian Union Conference rather than from and by the General Conference.⁸ This has meant that throughout its history, the entity now known as the South Pacific Division has carried a unique responsibility in caring for its mission territories. Rather than calling for persons from other

divisions to service the personnel needs of the Pacific, the SPD has utilized its own human and financial resources to meet these needs. This has meant that the General Conference is able to deploy elsewhere people who would otherwise be needed in the South Pacific. It is impossible to quantify the savings that have accrued to the denomination from this arrangement, but it would be in the order of tens of millions of dollars.

Developments in Administrative Structures (1985-2000)

When the name “South Pacific Division” was adopted in 1985, there were five unions in the territory of the division.

The Papua New Guinea Union Mission, with ten local missions, was headquartered were in Lae, Papua New Guinea. The local missions were the Central Papuan Mission, the Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission, the Madang Manus Mission, the Morobe Mission, the New Britain New Ireland Mission, the North East Papuan Mission, the North Solomons Mission, the Sepik Mission, the South West Papuan Mission, and the Western Highlands Mission.⁹

The Western Pacific Union Mission, with six local missions, was headquartered in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The local missions were the Eastern Solomon Islands Mission, the Kiribati and Tuvalu Mission, the Malaita Mission, the New Caledonia Mission, the Vanuatu Mission, and the Western Solomon Islands Mission.¹⁰

The Central Pacific Union Mission, with six local missions was headquartered in Suva, Fiji. The local missions were the Cook Islands Mission, the Fiji Mission, the French Polynesia Mission, the Pitcairn Island Mission, the Samoa Mission, and the Tonga and Niue Mission.¹¹

The Trans-Tasman Union Conference, with six local conferences, was headquartered in Gordon, Sydney, Australia. The local conferences were the Greater Sydney Conference, the North New South Wales Conference, the North New Zealand Conference, the Northern Australia Conference, the South New Zealand Conference, and the South Queensland Conference.¹²

The Trans-Australian Union Conference, with five local conferences, was headquartered in Surry Hills, Melbourne, Victoria. The local conferences were the South Australian Conference, the South New South Wales Conference, the Tasmanian Conference, the Victorian Conference, and the West Australian Conference.¹³

Between 1985 and 2000, several structural changes took place within the unions of the South Pacific Division. The Kiribati Mission was separated from a Tuvalu Mission in 1986. The territory of the Kiribati Mission was “Kiribati, Line, Nauru and Phoenix.”¹⁴ The territory of the Tuvalu Mission was the “Tuvalu Islands.”¹⁵ The Kiribati Mission remained in the Western Pacific Union Mission.¹⁶ The territory of the Kiribati Mission was altered in 1989 to include Kiribati and Nauru.¹⁷

Developments in Administrative Structures (2000-2020)

In 2000, a major reorganization in the South Pacific Division occurred at the division session. The number of unions in the division was reduced from five to four. The action of the South Pacific Division session on October 31, 2000, read:

VOTED: to approve the formation of:

1. An Australian Union Conference comprising the nine conferences in Australia.
2. A New Zealand Pacific Union Conference made up of the North New Zealand Conference, South New Zealand Conference, French Polynesia Mission, New Caledonia Mission, Cook Islands Mission, and Pitcairn Island Church.
3. A Western Pacific Union Mission with headquarters in Fiji, comprising the Samoa Mission, Tonga/Niue Mission, Fiji Mission, Tuvalu Attached District, Kiribati and Nauru Mission, Vanuatu Mission, Malaita Mission, Eastern Solomons Mission and Western Solomons Mission.

And

FURTHER: That the above new organisational structure be operative from January 1, 2001, and

FURTHER: That this body direct the Division Executive Committee to amend the relevant sections of the Division Working Policy.¹⁸

This action meant that the South Pacific Division had four unions rather than five as of January 1, 2001.

Subsequent to being voted at the division session, the name "Western Pacific Union Mission" was changed to Trans-Pacific Union Mission at the first session of the union meetings which took place November 15-18, 2000, at the Fulton College campus, Tailevu, Fiji.¹⁹ The four unions in the South Pacific Division were then as follows:

The Australian Union Conference, with headquarter offices in Ringwood, Melbourne, Victoria, included the local conferences of Greater Sydney Conference, North New South Wales Conference, Northern Australia Conference, South Australian Conference, South New South Wales Conference, South Queensland Conference, Tasmanian Conference, Victorian Conference, and Western Australian Conference.²⁰

The New Zealand-Pacific Union Conference, with headquarter offices in Manukau City, New Zealand, included the administrative entities of the Cook Islands Mission, the French Polynesia Mission, the New Caledonia Mission, the North New Zealand Conference, the South New Zealand Conference, and the Pitcairn Island Attached Church.²¹

The Papua New Guinea Union Mission with headquarter offices in Lae, Papua New Guinea, included the local missions of the Central Papuan Mission, the Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission, the Madang Manus Mission, the Morobe Mission, the New Britain New Ireland Mission, the North East Papuan Mission, the North Solomons

Mission, the Sepik Mission, the South West Papuan Mission, and the Western Highlands Mission.²²

The Trans-Pacific Union Mission with headquarter offices in Tamavur, Suva, Fiji, included the local missions of the Eastern Solomon Islands Mission, the Fiji Mission, the Kiribati Mission, the Malaita Mission, the Samoa Mission, the Tonga and Niue Mission, the Tuvalu Field, the Vanuatu Mission, and the Western Solomon Islands Mission.

Since 2000, the four-union structure of the division has remained stable. However, within unions there have been a number of changes. In August 2004, the Australian Union moved into a new headquarters office at 289 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood, Victoria.²³ The name of the Samoa Mission was changed to the Samoas Tokelau Mission, reflecting the territory of the mission, in 2005.²⁴ Also in 2005, Niue was detached from the Tonga Mission and aligned directly with the Trans-Pacific Union as the Niue Attached Church.²⁵ The Trans-Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) executive committee voted on June 21, 2006, to amalgamate the three local missions of the Solomon Islands into one. The new mission was named the Solomon Islands Mission. The action took effect on January 1, 2007.²⁶ The Papua New Guinea Union Mission moved into new headquarters at Coronation Drive, Lae, 411, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, on June 10, 2008.²⁷ The territory of Nauru was dropped from the Kiribati Mission in 2011.²⁸ The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference moved into new headquarters located at 18 Fencible Drive, Howick, Auckland, New Zealand, purchased December 15, 2011.²⁹ In 2016, the North East Papua Mission changed its name to Northern and Milne Bay Mission.³⁰ American Samoa was detached from the Samoas Tokelau Mission and became the “American Samoa Attached Region,” with headquarters in Pago Pago, American Samoa.³¹ It was then administered directly by the Trans-Pacific Union Mission. After the separation of American Samoa from the mission, the name of the Samoas Tokelau Mission was changed to the Samoa Tokelau Mission.

Change in the Constituent Nature of the Division (2005)

When the Australasian Union Conference was organized in 1894, it had its own constitution and legal constituency, apart from the General Conference. This continued to be the case until 2005, despite name changes—the Australasian Inter Union Conference in 1949, the Australasian Division in 1956, and then the South Pacific Division in 1985. The constituent nature of the division set it apart from all other divisions of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church. None of them had their own constitution specific to that entity. Rather they operated as divisions of the General Conference under the constitution and bylaws of the General Conference.³²

Since organization in 1894, the South Pacific Division and its antecedents had conducted regular business sessions according to the dictates of its constitution. At the last such session held in 2005, the constituency of the division voted to dissolve the constitution and the constituency, and that the South Pacific Division would,

henceforth, operate under the constitution and bylaws of the General Conference in harmony with all other divisions of the global church.³³

Institutions Under the Administration of the South Pacific Division

In 1985, the division directly administered six major institutions in the South Pacific Division. Division institutions were administered by a governing board, committee, or council, were subject to a constitution and division working policy and were responsible to the division.

Avondale College, located in Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, by 2020 had changed its name to Avondale University College.

Pacific Adventist College, located on Sogeri Road, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea, became Pacific Adventist University in November 1996, when negotiation between the Adventist Church and the PNG government resulted in the PNG parliament passing the Pacific Adventist University Act (Act No 34, 1997). The change involved some reorganization, such as the principal being titled vice chancellor, departments being termed schools, and each school headed by a dean.³⁴

The Health Food Department operated as Sanitarium Health Food Company with the headquarters office located in Berkeley Vale, New South Wales, Australia, in 2020.

Sydney Adventist Hospital. By 2020 the operation of the hospital and its associated services are incorporated as Adventist HealthCare Limited with headquarters in Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia.

Signs Publishing Company. By 2020 the operation of the Signs Publishing Company comes under the umbrella of Adventist Media which is an integrated entity caring for print, audio-visual and digital media production and marketing for the Division. Its headquarters are located in Wahroonga. New South Wales, Australia.

Adventist Media Centre. By 2020 the operation of the Adventist Media Centre comes under the umbrella of Adventist Media which is an integrated entity caring for print, audio-visual and digital media production, marketing, communication and publishing department functions for the Division. Its headquarters are located in Wahroonga. New South Wales, Australia.

As of 2020 there are now five division institutions which come under the supervision of the South Pacific Division and its incorporated entities.

Departments and Ministries of the South Pacific Division in 2020

At the beginning of 2020, the South Pacific Division offered seven ministry departments. Discipleship ministries included liaisons for children's ministries, family ministries, health ministries, women's ministries, youth ministries, church planting and church growth, prayer ministries, Sabbath School and personal ministries,

stewardship, and worship. The other six departments were ADRA South Pacific, Adventist Mission, education, field secretary, ministerial association, and Spirit of Prophecy coordinator.

Services and Entities of the South Pacific Division

At the beginning of 2020, the South Pacific Division offered twelve services. The services of the division employ considerably more people than the departments of the division. These services are performed by the division on behalf of the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific where it is fiscally advantageous and more efficient to offer them in a centralized manner.

Corporate Services

Division Financial Services

General Conference Auditing Service- Trans Asia Pacific Area

Information Technology

People Services

Risk Management Services

ACA Health Benefits Fund

Adventist Heritage Centre

Australasian Conference Association Limited

Ellen G. White Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre

Sunnyside and South Sea Islands Museum

Adsafe

Executive Officers Chronology

Presidents

Australasian Union Conference (1894-1922): W. C. White (1894-1897), A. G. Daniells (1897-1901), C. H. Irwin (1901-1905), O.A. Olsen (1905-1909), J. E. Fulton (1909-1916), C. H. Watson (1916-April 1920), C. K. Meyers (acting, April 1920- June 1920), C. H. Watson (June 1920-1922).

Australasian Union Conference/Australasian Division (1922-1948): J. E. Fulton (1922-1926), C. H. Watson (1926-1930), W. G. Turner (1930-1936), C. H. Watson (1937), E. B. Rudge (1838-1946), W. G. Turner (1947-1948).

Australasian Inter-Union Conference/Australasian Division (1949-1956): N. C. Wilson (October 1948-July 1951), F. A. Mote (acting July 1951- October 1951); F. A. Mote (October 1951-1954), F. G. Clifford (1954-1962).

Australasian Division (1957-1985): L. C. Naden (1962-1970), R. R. Frame (1970-1976), Keith S. Parmenter (1977-1983).

South Pacific Division (1985-): Walter R. L. Scragg (1983-1990), Bryan W. Ball (1990-1997), Laurence J. Evans (1997-2007), Barry D. Oliver (2007-2015), Glenn C. Townend (2015-).

Secretaries

Australasian Union Conference (1894-1922): L. J. Rousseau (1894), H. C. Lacey, (1895-1897), Anna L. Ingels (1897-1898), Edith M. Graham (1898-1910), A. H. Piper (1911), C. H. Pretyman (1912-1918), C. K. Meyers (1919), W. G. Turner (1920-1922).

Australasian Union Conference/Australasian Division (1922-1948): F. A. Allum (1923), W. G. Turner 1924-1926), A. H. Piper (1927-1936), E. E. Roenfelt (1937-1940), H. E. Piper (1941), S. V. Stratford (1942-1945), W. G. Turner (1946), R. E. Hare (1947-1948).

Australasian Inter-Union Conference/Australasian Division (1949-1956): F. A. Mote (1949-1951), H. G. Moulds (1952-1953), Vacant (1954), L. C. Naden (1955-1962).

Australasian Division (1957-1985): R. R. Frame (1963-1966), F. T. Maberly (1967-1970), K. S. Parmenter (1971-1976), R. W. Taylor (1977-1985).

South Pacific Division (1985-): Athal H. Tolhurst (1986-1991), Laurence J. Evans (1992-1997), Barry D. Oliver (1998-2007), Lawrence P. Tanabose (2008-2013), Lionel H. Smith (2014-2020), Mike Sikuri (2021-).

Treasurers

Australasian Union Conference (1894-1922): Echo Publishing Company (1894), N. D. Faulkhead (1895-1897), Edith M. Graham (1898-1906), A. Mountain (1907-1908), C. H. Pretyman (1909-1910), Edith M. Graham (1911), C. H. Pretyman (1912-1916), W. O. Johanson (1917-1918), C. H. Pretyman (1919-1920), T. W. Hammond (1921).

Australasian Union Conference/Australasian Division (1922-1948): T. W. Hammond (1922 -1936), R. H. Adair (1937-1943), W. L. Pascoe (1944-1948).

Australasian Inter-Union Conference/Australasian Division (1949-1956): W. L. Pascoe (1948-1954), E. J. Johanson (1955-1956).

Australasian Division (1957-1985): E. J. Johanson (1957-1966), E. J. Howse (1967-1968), Lance L. Butler (1969-1980), W. T. Andrews (1981-1985).

South Pacific Division (1985-): W. T. Andrews (1985-1995), Warwick. H. Stokes (1995-2000), Rodney G. Brady (2000-2021), Francois Keet (2021-).

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"WPUM to Become TPUM." *Record*, December 8, 2000.

"Year-end Meetings Go Paperless." *Record*, December 3, 2016.

NOTES

1. This article should be read in conjunction with the article *Australasian Union Conference and Australasian Division*. The history of the development of the division is dealt with in that article.
2. Unless otherwise credited, the information in this article is written from the personal knowledge and experience of the author who was general secretary of the South Pacific Division from 1997 until 2007 and president of the South Pacific Division from 2007 until 2015.

3. "Constitution of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," in *General Conference Working Policy, 2017-2018* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), 13.
4. "Bylaws of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," in *General Conference Working Policy, 2017-2018* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), 23.
5. Ibid.
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "South Pacific Division," page 335, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2016.pdf>.
7. *Annual Statistical Report: 153rd of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 2017* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2017), accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2017.pdf>. A current statistical overview of the division at any time may be accessed at <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fStatistics%2fASR&FolderCTID=0x01200095DE8DF0FA49904B9D6521>.
8. A. H. Piper, "The Cook Islands," *Union Conference Record*, April 1, 1902, 5.
9. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Papua New Guinea Union Mission," page 298, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1986.pdf>.
10. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Western Pacific Union Mission," page 309, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1986.pdf>.
11. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Central Pacific Union Mission," page 295, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1986.pdf>.
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14. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Kiribati Mission," page 315, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1987.pdf>.

15. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Tuvalu Mission," page 302, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1987.pdf>.
16. Ibid.
17. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Kiribati Mission," page 291, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1989.pdf>.
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19. "WPUM to Become TPUM," *Record*, December 8, 2000, 2; R. A. Larsen, Secretary of the TPUM, email to author, April 25, 2019.
20. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Australian Union Conference," page 297, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2002.pdf>.
21. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "New Zealand Pacific Union Conference," page 303, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2002.pdf>.
22. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Papua New Guinea Union Mission," page 305, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2002.pdf>.
23. Michael J. Worker, Secretary of the Australian Union Conference, email to author, September 26, 2018.
24. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Samoa Tokelau Mission," page 302, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2006.pdf>.
25. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Niue Attached Church," page 304, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2006.pdf>.
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27. "New Mission Offices Opened in Papua New Guinea," *Record*, July 26, 2008, 4.
28. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Kiribati Mission," page 343, accessed February 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2012.pdf>.

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 30. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Northern and Milne Bay Mission," page 356, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2017.pdf>.
 31. "Year-end Meetings Go Paperless," *Record*, December 3, 2016, 8.
 32. Up until 1963 special provision for this anomaly was made in the Bylaws of the General Conference. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Constitution and Bylaws: Bylaws article X, Section 5," page 9, accessed February 24, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1963.pdf>.
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