

INTRODUCTION

The main components of this book are a series of working papers which were produced to assist the members of a committee charged with making recommendations on the decentralisation of government in Solomon Islands. The papers were prepared to provide a basis for discussion and decision by a Special Committee on Provincial Government, which was set up in December 1977 and presented its final Report to the Solomon Islands National Parliament in May 1979 (Solomon Islands 1979b). The papers were presented in response to a request by Committee members to have the relative advantages and disadvantages of alternative ways of dealing with important issues put before them, so that they would not make decisions without at least being aware of the available options. The contributors hope that the volume will be of value to people in other countries who are involved in, or are contemplating, some form of decentralisation programme. Although the working papers were prepared specifically for use in Solomon Islands, the basic issues which they address are those which would be faced by people in any country involved in decentralisation. The options canvassed provide a reasonably comprehensive guide to the alternatives which might usefully be considered by people in other countries. Some of the material may also be of value to people involved in decentralisation from subnational bodies, such as state governments in federal systems or provincial governments in unitary devolved systems, to more local levels of government.

DECENTRALISATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands became independent on 7 July 1978 with a constitution which contains a commitment, made in the name of the people, to -

ensure the participation of our people in the governance of their affairs and provide within the framework of our national unity for the decentralisation of power (Solomon Islands 1978a: Preamble).

But, apart from two changes of name - from 'Local Council' to 'Provincial Assembly', and from the subordinate 'Area Committee' to 'Area Council' - the system of government below the national level was not changed by the advent of independence. The basic legislation establishing provincial governments remained the *Local Government Ordinance 1963* (Cap. 14), renamed an 'Act' at independence, as modified in both law and practice by the *Plan of Operations 1974-1977* (Solomon Islands 1973).

Before the *Plan of Operations*, local councils had been mainly island councils - twenty-one in all, until the five councils in the Western District agreed to amalgamate in 1972. Their main sources of revenue had been the basic rate (a head tax), licences and fees for services which councils raised themselves, and grants from the central government. The long list of functions which the *Ordinance* conferred on councils had been of little practical effect - because councillors did not know of all the functions, because they lacked adequate resources to employ them, or because national legislation, policies or standards prevented them from being used.

In 1973, following discussions between the British administration and the Special Select Committee on Constitutional Development set up by the Governing Council, an experienced academic was asked to review the system of local government administration. The adviser's report (Campbell 1973) formed the basis on which a group of senior public servants prepared a comprehensive plan for reform, the *Plan of Operations*. The *Plan* provided for -

- a reduction in the number of councils from seventeen to eight through amalgamation;

- the transfer to councils of operational control over staff and finance involved in certain fields of administration (district administration, agriculture, education and public works); and
- an increase in 'untied' grants of money from the national government to councils (Solomon Islands 1973).

By independence, the *Plan of Operations* had been put into effect. Solomon Islands had a system of government below the national level involving seven largely rural provincial governments and the Honiara Town Council with the functions specified in the *Plan*. The provinces were further divided into smaller units, each with its own largely coopted consultative body, which were renamed 'Area Councils'. The financial arrangements between the national government and the councils had been modified somewhat.

'Ambitious' though the *Plan of Operations* might have been (Solomon Islands 1976: 13; Campbell 1977: 238), it did not satisfy the aspirations of all Solomon Islanders for decentralisation. Thus, even as the *Plan* was being implemented, the Constitutional Committee which had been set up by the reconstituted Legislative Assembly expressed concern at what it described as a lack of 'true devolution' and the power of the executive to establish and dissolve councils. The Committee recommended some specific changes to the system, and the establishment of a Special Select Committee to review it (Solomon Islands 1976: 14).

The *Principles* which the Solomon Islands delegation took to the constitutional conference in London in September 1977 also recommended the establishment of a special committee. The recommendation was accepted by the British government, as was the proposal that local councils be renamed 'provincial governments' (Solomon Islands 1977: 15-15a; United Kingdom Parliament 1977: 12). Meanwhile, some politicians from the Western Province had moved from advocacy of a federal system of government for Solomon Islands to support for secession of their province from the rest of the country (Larmour forthcoming a).

Both the changes being considered by the national government and those demanded by Western politicians were influenced by events in neighbouring Papua New Guinea: the widespread discussion of proposals for a system of provincial government which took place before independence (Conyers 1976); secessionist activity in the North Solomons (formerly 'Bougainville') Province, which borders Solomon Islands' Western Province; and the establishment of interim provincial governments, including criticism of their conduct.

The Solomon Islands Special Committee on Provincial Government was set up in December 1977. It consisted of the presidents of all the eight councils; six backbench members of the National Parliament (including neither regular Government nor regular Opposition supporters); and two private citizens (precise details concerning the Committee's changing membership as well as information about staff and consultants are contained in Appendix A). Its chairman was the Honourable David Kausimae O.B.E., a member of the National Parliament with previous experience as a minister and the longest period of continuous parliamentary service.

The Committee's terms of reference were:

- (a) To review the boundaries of local council areas and advise as to whether these boundaries are satisfactory as provincial boundaries;
- (b) To consider the role of Provincial Assemblies in relation to National Government on the one hand and Area Councils on the other;

- (c) To consider and recommend on the degree of autonomy for Provincial Governments and in particular the powers of -
 - (i) enacting legislation
 - (ii) administration, and
 - (iii) finance;
- (d) To consider the role of public officers and their responsibility to and control by Provincial Government;
- (e) To consider and make recommendations on the role of chiefs and other traditional leaders both at -
 - (i) provincial level, and
 - (ii) area council level;
- (f) That the report by the Committee be submitted to the Parliament for consideration during the first sitting in 1979.

In their letters of appointment, Committee members were asked to bear certain 'guidelines' in mind:

- no recommendation should be made which increases substantially the cost of local government administration;
- no recommendation should be made the effect of which would bring Provincial Governments into conflict with National Government (Solomon Islands 1979b: 3-4).

The Special Committee began its work, as previous constitutional committees had done, by embarking on a nationwide tour to seek the people's views on the matters covered by its terms of reference. Only in the Western Province, where relations between the Western Council and the national government had become strained, did the Committee not hold public meetings for ordinary village people to put their views. Instead, it accepted an invitation from the Western Council to visit the provincial administrative headquarters at Gizo, where it held - rather tense - consultations with Council members and other leaders from the Western Province.

When the touring was almost complete, the Committee sought the assistance of 'independent consultants' to assist Committee members to clarify issues and to identify alternative approaches towards the issues with which it was dealing (*ibid.*: 7). Professor Yash Ghai, who had been constitutional adviser during the final stages of the transition to independence, was later asked to advise on a suitable system of law-making for the national and provincial governments under the decentralised system which was then emerging from the Committee's deliberations, and on other questions. The working-papers contained in this volume are a selection from a much larger number of papers prepared for the Committee by its staff, consultants, national government ministries, provincial governments, and other interested community groups and individuals (for a complete list of the almost 140 papers circulated to Committee members and deposited in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Honiara, see *ibid.*: i-vi).

As has already been suggested, the Special Committee on Provincial Government actively sought the views of official bodies, community groups and private persons interested in decentralisation - and held public meetings to receive both written and oral submissions. National government ministries were invited to make presentations. The Chairman visited Malaysia and Papua New Guinea to study two decentralised systems of government at first hand. Publications about other countries were made available by the staff and consultants (with funds provided by the Australian Development Assistance Bureau and the Commonwealth Secretariat).

Meetings of the National Parliament were timed to enable the parliamentarians on the Committee to attend to both commitments. Attendance at Committee meetings was accordingly high.

Submissions to the Committee were collated. When the Committee's recommendations began to take shape, a set of *Draft Recommendations* (Solomon Islands 1979a) was sent to national government ministries, provincial governments and interested and expert bodies for comment. The responses to the *Draft Recommendations* were then collated in a special volume, the 'Pink Book', in which each comment on a particular recommendation was reprinted under that recommendation. At its next meeting, in early 1979, the Committee worked its way through the 'Pink Book' considering each of its previous recommendations in light of the comments received.

Throughout the Committee's life, national government ministries, provincial governments and officials with relevant expertise provided members, consultants and staff with information on a wide variety of financial, administrative and other issues.

The final *Report*, which was presented to the Government and then the National Parliament in May 1979 was a consensus document. The only issue on which Committee members had found it impossible to reach consensus was the question of who should hold title to land in the national capital, Honiara, which question it referred to the National Parliament.

In October 1979, the Government published a *White Paper* setting out its views on the *Report* (Solomon Islands 1979c). A little more than one year later, a draft *Provincial Government Bill*, prepared by a group of senior public servants to give effect to the *White Paper*, was published by the government (Solomon Islands 1980).

The *Report* was reprinted in 1980 to give it wider circulation than it had previously had - and references to the *Report* in this volume come from the second printing.

WHY DECENTRALISE?

The words 'decentralisation of government' are often used to refer to the transfer of some of the powers or functions of government from the national level to regional or local levels. This volume is designed for use in countries where a commitment has already been made to decentralisation in one form or other. It is, therefore, more concerned with the advantages and disadvantages of alternative forms of decentralisation than with the desirability of decentralisation as such.

Political scientists have a variety of terms which they use to distinguish different types of decentralisation. For example, they compare deconcentration with devolution, and distinguish between unitary, federal and confederal systems of government (Conyers 1978; Wolfers 1978). Our experience, however, suggests that such terms can sometimes be more confusing than helpful. They give the impression that there are only a few alternative systems and that every country can easily be fitted into one category or another. In fact, there is an almost infinite variety of forms of decentralisation, and it is often difficult to fit a particular system into any one of the categories previously mentioned. For instance, even lawyers who were involved in drafting the legislation for Papua New Guinea's post-independence programme of decentralisation are uncertain whether the country 'officially' has a unitary or a federal system of government (Ghai 1978).

We prefer to look at the different types of decentralisation in terms of what they are intended to achieve. On this basis, it is possible to distinguish three main forms of decentralisation: political, administrative and geographical.

Political decentralisation involves the decentralisation of political power - that is, the power to pass laws or to make policy decisions - from the national government to existing or newly-created elected bodies at the regional or local level. The most common reason for political decentralisation is to allow wider popular participation in government decision-making. In many countries, an increase in popular participation is seen as an important end in itself - a democratic 'right', often associated with the process of achieving independence and political freedom. However, in many cases, it is also a way of achieving development that is more relevant to local needs and conditions, and of encouraging local commitment to development programmes. It may also play a part in helping to make government legitimate, especially in soon-to-be-independent or newly independent countries.

In some countries, the initiative to increase opportunities for popular participation in government decision-making may come from the national government, or from some other national level body; but, in others, the pressure may come from below, with regional or local groups demanding greater autonomy from the national government.

The national government may have ideological reasons for favouring decentralisation, or it may seek simply to increase its legitimacy. Subnational groups may want to ensure that certain matters become subject to local control, or that certain policies are changed. In Tanzania, for example, the process of decentralisation in 1972 was initiated almost entirely at the national level, while in Papua New Guinea pressure from subnational groups was a very important factor. In Solomon Islands, both national and local forces played a part in the government's decision to decentralise. And some demands for decentralisation seem to have been essentially demands to formalise previously informal arrangements (for example, demands to impose a legal requirement on the Central Planning Office in Solomon Islands to consult provincial governments about their development priorities, even though its officers believed that they were doing so already).

Administrative decentralisation is concerned primarily with the decentralisation of control within the public service, or other administrative framework. It involves giving more powers to regional or local civil servants to plan and implement government programmes subject to national policy. These powers may be given to local representatives of individual ministries or departments, to a single administrator with coordinating powers over other staff in a certain area, or to some form of coordinating committee. Administrative decentralisation is designed primarily to increase the efficiency and responsiveness of the administrative system by reducing delays, improving coordination and (as also in political decentralisation) making decisions more relevant to local needs. In countries with poor communications, a certain amount of administrative decentralisation may be almost inevitable.

Geographical decentralisation differs from the other two types of decentralisation in that it does not involve the decentralisation of decision-making powers. It consists only of the relocation of the headquarters of a ministry or department to a regional centre, or the posting of more staff from headquarters to the regions. Such programmes are usually designed either to reduce concentration of activity in the capital city and increase employment and/or other economic opportunities in the regions, or to bring government physically closer to the people, especially people in rural areas. However, although there is some value in distinguishing between the three different types of decentralisation and the purposes they are intended to achieve, they cannot, in practice, always be separated from each other. The process of decentralisation in which the Solomon Islands Special Committee on Provincial Government was involved has been primarily political, since the main aim has been to give political powers to provincial governing bodies. But the process also involves administrative decentralisation, and the geographical movement of more staff to the provinces. In countries with a one-party system of government, such as Tanzania and more recently Zambia, decentralisation tends to be primarily administrative, since the national government retains control over most policy matters. However, even there, it has a political component, in the sense that powers are usually decentralised to local committees or councils

which, although under the control of the national party, have some form of local representation, and popular participation is stated to be an important aim of such decentralisation programmes.

The material in this volume will be of most direct value to people in countries where political decentralisation is an important component of the overall programme of decentralisation, since many of the options are concerned with the structure and powers of elected political bodies at the local level. However, many parts should also be relevant to people in countries concerned only with administrative decentralisation, or with the primarily administrative decentralisation programmes common in one-party states. Some material is also relevant to geographical decentralisation (see especially Working Paper 4.2 and Appendix 4.1), a subject to which Solomon Islands politicians have given much attention but with which they have generally tried to deal through the budgetary and planning processes. The volume does not, however, say much about decentralisation of the courts and other constitutional offices such as the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Public Solicitor and the Ombudsman - because of the prior existence of a system of local courts in rural areas of Solomon Islands; a shortage of qualified personnel; and an apparent reluctance by Solomon Islands politicians to appear to be interfering with the separation of powers or the independence of constitutional office-holders. But the issues involved in dispersing the staff of those bodies and in vesting responsibility for certain functions and areas of discretion in dispersed staff are similar to those canvassed in the working papers in Chapters 3 and 4.

DECENTRALISATION TO WHAT? A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Some confusion is caused by the use of many different terms to refer to the geographical areas to which powers are decentralised or, in the case of political decentralisation, to the elected governments in those areas. 'Regions', 'districts', 'provinces', 'states' and 'local governments' are some of the more commonly used terms. In some cases, political scientists have attempted - with somewhat limited success - to define some of these terms precisely. For example, technical criteria regarding the amount of legal power devolved or the legal form of devolution have often been used to try to distinguish between local governments and state governments. In other cases, common usage of the terms gives some indication of their meanings. Thus, in most countries a district is a subdivision of a region or province, rather than vice versa.

However, on the whole, there are no hard and fast rules which can be applied, and there is little point in trying to generalise across countries about use of many of the terms previously mentioned. For example, a provincial government in Solomon Islands has somewhat similar powers to a provincial government in neighbouring Papua New Guinea, but it covers a much smaller area; a provincial government in Canada not only covers an area far greater than that in Papua New Guinea or Solomon Islands, but also has much greater powers, being the equivalent of a 'state' government in other federal systems.

In this volume, the terms 'province' and 'provincial government' will be used, since they are the terms used in Solomon Islands. The Special Committee on Provincial Government was, after all, committed to giving 'provincial government' a specifically 'Solomon Islands meaning' (Solomon Islands 1979b: 10). But, it should be borne in mind that the equivalent terms in other countries may well be different. The question of the choice of terminology in any particular area is specifically discussed in Working Paper 1.1.

THE QUESTION OF SCALE

The question of the terminology applied to subnational units is related to that of scale. There is an enormous variation in the size of nations and in the size of the subnational units, whatever they are called, to which powers are decentralised.

Solomon Islands, with a population of about 200,000 at independence, is a very small country. The whole country is only the size of one of the larger provinces in Papua New Guinea; while Papua New Guinea itself, with about three million people, is still a small country by world standards. One may well then ask, firstly, whether decentralisation is necessary at all in a country as small as Solomon Islands and, secondly, whether the Solomon Islands experience can be of any relevance at all to much larger countries.

A comparison of the objectives and main components of decentralisation programmes in a number of countries of varying size suggests that the answer to both the foregoing questions is 'yes'. It seems that, whatever the size of a country, there will almost always be pressures for decentralisation for the same sorts of reasons - the desire to increase local participation, to improve access to government, and to make government more effective and responsive to local needs. Furthermore, in larger countries, the demand for decentralisation does not stop at decentralisation to the primary administrative level. At each level in the political or administrative hierarchy there is likely to be pressure for decentralisation to a lower level. Thus, in Tanzania, for example, the primary focus of the 1972 decentralisation programme was the region, but, subsequently, increasing emphasis has been placed on further decentralisation to district level and, within districts, to wards and villages (Maeda 1978). In Papua New Guinea, the Constitutional Planning Committee recommended that provincial governments should have final control over existing, lower-level local government bodies, but said that the former should 'respect and decentralise power' to the latter (Papua New Guinea 1974a: Part 1, 10/25). Even in Solomon Islands, it has been necessary to consider decentralisation below the provincial level, in this case to Area Councils (see Working Paper 2.4).

In spite of differences in scale, the main issues which have to be considered in any decentralisation programme are similar. This does not mean, of course, that scale is irrelevant or that there is one master plan for decentralisation which can be applied anywhere. Scale does have an effect, particularly in terms of the volume of resources, especially administrative staff and finance, with which one is dealing. Scale, therefore, affects the capacity of the political or administrative bodies to which power and/or functions are decentralised, and the feasibility of alternative administrative structures. Internal communications also affect decentralisation (as has been suggested, difficulties of communication between outlying islands and Honiara have tended to make at least some degree of administrative decentralisation in Solomon Islands almost inevitable).

Advocates of decentralisation often hope that if local authorities are given more powers or responsibilities, then they will automatically receive more staff and money. But decentralisation does not by itself generate additional resources. In practice, the decentralisation of powers may often necessitate the subsequent provision of extra resources, but additional resources do not necessarily follow, and decentralisation does not increase the total resources available to the nation (except to the extent that local authorities are given the power to generate their own revenue).

Sometimes, decentralisation leads to a reallocation of resources within, and less commonly between, subnational units. It may lead to substantial changes in government policy. It may also lead to replication at subnational level of the concentration of power and resources previously found in the national capital - in what the Special Committee referred to as 'mini-Honiaras'.

Thus, while the question of scale cannot be ignored, much of the Solomon Islands' experience seems to be relevant to much larger countries.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The way in which the decision to decentralise is made and in which the details of the decentral-

ised system are worked out varies widely from country to country. In most cases, decisions are based on the recommendations of some form of advisory body, but the composition and terms of reference of such bodies vary enormously. In some countries, a parliamentary committee is appointed; in others there is a more broadly based committee, including national and local politicians, civil servants and representatives of other important interest groups; and in some cases, such as Tanzania, the main role is played by external consultants. Sometimes, the advisory body is given very detailed terms of reference, which already determine certain conditions regarding the degree and form of decentralisation; and sometimes it has few or no restrictions placed upon it.

There is also much variation in the mode of operation of advisory bodies. Particularly important variables include the quantity and quality of technical advice available to members.

Experience suggests that the composition of the advisory body and its mode of operation are quite likely to affect the entire process of decentralisation. Thus, a body which consists entirely of backbench politicians is less likely to be sympathetic to views put forward by the executive than one which includes ministers or senior public servants amongst its membership. A body which relies exclusively on outside consultants for information and feedback contributes little to preparing the public service to implement its recommendations - and runs the risk of confrontation with those public servants who fear a loss of power and/or changes in routine.

However, conditions differ from one country to another, so it is not possible to recommend an 'ideal' decision-making process. Among the considerations which should be taken into account in deciding on the process to be used are the amount of agreement (or disagreement) within the country about the nature of the decentralisation programme, the source of the initial demand for decentralisation - whether national or local - and the country's political structure, which determines where the main decision-making power is located. Also important are the technical skills available, the need to ensure that outside consultants transfer their skills to nationals, preferably those who are likely to be involved in implementation of the final programme, and the urgency attached to decentralisation. A brief comparison between the decentralisation programmes in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands will illustrate the effects of some of the factors mentioned.

In Papua New Guinea, attitudes towards decentralisation at the national level were mixed, some politicians advocating significant decentralisation, while other politicians and many senior civil servants were sceptical. There was, however, considerable support for decentralisation at the local level, particularly in one or two provinces, where significant pressure was put on the national government. The initial proposals for decentralisation were made by a committee, composed entirely of parliamentarians, which was responsible for making recommendations not only on decentralisation but also on all aspects of the constitution which would come into force at independence. However, the recommendations on decentralisation were subjected to a great deal of discussion and modification at the national level, and no provision for decentralisation was included in the initial version of the independence constitution. It was only after a prolonged period of debate and dialogue between national and local authorities that a system of provincial government was finally set up (Conyers 1976).

While the future of provincial government was still in doubt, the secession of North Solomons was declared, in protest at the national government's reluctance to introduce meaningful decentralisation. Agreement on administrative aspects of decentralisation was reached only with the assistance of external consultants, whose recommendations were not particularly radical but were accepted because they were well presented and regarded as 'neutral' by the various national and provincial bodies which had been unable to agree among themselves. The end result, therefore, was a rather complex system of decentralisation, not entirely consistent, and giving undue weight to the views of leaders from one province, North Solomons, and agreed upon only after a long period of debate and under considerable

political duress.

By way of comparison, the process of decentralisation seems to have proceeded more systematically and to have been less traumatic in Solomon Islands.

To begin with, there had already been a substantial measure of decentralisation in Solomon Islands before the final stages of the transfer of power began. The national government was, relatively speaking, neither as large nor as centralised as in Papua New Guinea. The decision not to specify the details of the system of provincial government in the independence constitution was discussed and accepted by most members of the National Parliament well before independence. And the decision was coupled with firm commitments to set up the Special Committee within a year of independence, and to ensure that the views of subnational bodies would be given an effective hearing by providing for the inclusion of Council members (Solomon Islands 1977: 15-16; United Kingdom Parliament 1977: 12).

The circumstances in which the Solomon Islands Special Committee on Provincial Government began its work were not, in some respects, dissimilar from those in which the Papua New Guinea Constitutional Planning Committee had begun. Both committees were faced with increasing demands for decentralisation, and even secession, shortly before independence. Both were, in practice, committees of backbenchers (in Papua New Guinea, the three Ministers rarely attended meetings, while in Solomon Islands, members who became Ministers resigned from the Committee - and one recently resigned Minister joined). Members of both committees asserted their independence of the Government, and developed a strong *esprit de corps*. Both claimed a special legitimacy for their recommendations after nationwide tours, and both had independent sources of advice. Eventually, both committees found that their recommendations received no more than qualified acceptance by the Government, and that implementation was delayed. Moreover, the decentralisation programme in Papua New Guinea was well-known to members of the Special Committee on Provincial Government in Solomon Islands, and two of the latter's consultants, Ghai and Wolfers, had worked with the former. Finally, both committees were concerned with decentralisation in countries composed predominantly of Melanesian societies with broadly similar social structures.

There were, however, important differences too.

In Solomon Islands, neither Government nor Opposition were directly involved in the Committee. So a strong *esprit de corps* and a commitment to recommendations arrived at by consensus posed less of a threat to the internal unity of Government or Opposition. The council presidents (who quickly became known as provincial 'premiers') had practical experience of some of the difficulties and problems of decentralisation, and had developed working relationships with one another as well as the national government. The Committee, as a whole, was more willing to be briefed by, and to consider feedback from, national government officials. Committee members preferred to make their recommendations on the basis of options put before them, instead of questions, which had been the means preferred by members of the Constitutional Planning Committee. The consultants tended to deal with government departments and other official bodies through the Committee's staff, who were themselves public servants, rather than directly. Above all, the fulfilment of the *Plan of Operations* meant that further political decentralisation in Solomon Islands would not require as fundamental a reordering of government as in Papua New Guinea, and ministers of the national government in Solomon Islands seem not to have acquired as strongly a centralist - or nationalist? - perspective as some of their Papua New Guinean counterparts.

STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

This volume is divided into nine chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect of decentralis-

ation. Each chapter opens with a brief introduction, followed by relevant working papers used by the Solomon Islands Special Committee on Provincial Government. In most of the papers, a number of options is presented, together with a summary of their relative advantages and disadvantages. These papers provided a basis for decision-making by Committee members.

The working papers are presented more or less in their original form, with only minor editorial changes, and some re-arrangement. Specific references to Solomon Islands have been left in place where they suggest how local factors might affect decisions about decentralisation.

Most chapters deal with issues which are relevant in any country where decentralisation is under consideration or taking place. Factors peculiar to the Solomon Islands case are explained in the introductions to the various chapters.

The order of the chapters follows more or less that of the *Report* of the Solomon Islands Special Committee on Provincial Government. That order seems to be a fairly logical one, and even critics of the Committee's *Report* seem to have had little difficulty in following it. However, it should be noted that different aspects of decentralisation are interrelated; that early decisions tend to have implications for later decisions; and that any division is, as a result, almost inevitably arbitrary. Thus, the sequence in which readers of this volume might find it useful to employ the working papers by adapting them to local circumstances will depend on the relative salience in those circumstances of the various issues with which they deal.

The relative advantages/disadvantages of the various options will also need to be adjusted to suit local circumstances, including the attitudes towards decentralisation of members of the relevant advisory or decision-making body.