



**DEBATE: Should West Papua be independent?
Melbourne University Debating Society v Monash Association of Debaters**

**SAMPARI FORUM FOR WEST PAPUA
ACU ART GALLERY, 26 Brunswick St, Fitzroy (Melbourne)**

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TRANSCRIPT: JULIE LI. Second speaker, Affirmative team

The opposition today wanted to speak about the feasibility of West Papuan independence, which is the major focus of my speech today, and a rebuttal will be integrated.

The opposition wanted to talk about how there isn't support neither from Indonesia, nor from other states. Well actually today I will prove to you why there are incentives and reasons why Indonesia will support West Papuan independence, and why other nations have already started to move to recognize West Papua's independence.

Before I continue, I just want to bring up some further benefits. We think that in terms of the environment, the importance which Melanesians place on the corporal connection to the land, we can draw analogies to indigenous Australians and their connection to the land. It is vastly different from the Indonesian-Asian and their connection to the land, and we think that's another reason why West Papua should be independent.

Another point would be that in terms of social cohesion, we see that in West Papua, there are, like any other future nation, disagreements between groups. We can see that between the tribes of the highlands and the tribes of the lowlands. We believe that when all West Papuans can move and champion behind a cause which is their independence, it unites their identity and the social cohesion between one another, and we thought that was very very important.

So now onto the major part of my speech. I'm going to be talking about the feasibility of West Papua's independence. It's going to be split between two main limbs. Firstly, the legal feasibility of it, and secondly the practical feasibility. Under practical feasibility, I will speak about how we can actually convince Indonesia and other states and foreign corporations to support West Papuan independence. Secondly about governmental expertise, and then thirdly about economics.

So let's talk about legal feasibility first. West Papua has already declared independence. It is clear that when we look at the Montevideo Convention states that three requirements for statehood. Firstly of territory, secondly of population, and thirdly of governance. We believe that West Papua meets all three points of this convention, which basically codifies the statehood as being officially part of international customary law. In addition to this, in addition to having a governmental structure represented by the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, we see

that the ULMWP also has the capacity to enter into relationships with other institutions and other states. We can see this through the Melanesian Spearhead Group, as my first speaker mentioned, where they currently have Observer Status, and they will soon be granted and promoted to full status. We think that this is a positive move in the right direction to gaining statehood, independence, and recognition within major platforms such as the United Nations.

Secondly, the practical feasibility. The opposition wanted to mention that there is no way that realistically Indonesia would support West Papuan independence. That is what is commonly accepted, but we would like to actually prove that argument wrong. Because the fact is that when you look at the actual incentives there, we can see that it is quite burdensome for Indonesia right now to have its administration and its military suppressing the West Papuan activists and the locals who yearn for freedom. We think that is a massive massive cost in comparison and in proportion to any benefits that they derive. The benefits are proportionately less. We can see through Indonesian relationships and contracts with US corporations where there is a 91—9% split in the profits. We think that that is far outweighed by the costs.

Secondly in terms of social cohesion, we see that Indonesia has other provinces that are also pushing for freedom and independence. We see that there are provinces such as Aceh. We think that this provides great strain and also furthers the fractitious relationships within Indonesia.

Thirdly, we think that in terms of the international reputation, once people pay more attention to this issue of West Papuan independence, this will bring a back-lash. Consequences such as sanctions. We can see the harsh economic consequences on Russia when they annexed Crimea. And secondly about reputational damage on the individual politicians and their national pride. We see that when there was a massive outrage in Australia over East Timor. What happened there? There was a UN intervention.

Now we move to governmental expertise. We think that there will not be an Immediate transition from resistance to governance compared to other post-colonial states such as East Timor. Right now we have viable governmental structures, comprised of experts, intellectuals, and academics, who have had governance experience, who are going to support the move to independence, and who are going to govern West Papua when they succeed. We think that because they are already functioning right now: internally they have been acknowledged only a few weeks ago by the church, and externally also because they act as ambassadors, they also have relationships with state governments, and universities such as the ACU, and other different institutions. That is signifying that there won't be a void when they transition to independence. It is set up so that it will succeed.

Lastly, on economic feasibility. We think in the short term, despite what the opposition want to say that there won't be foreign investment sector because the economy isn't as big as Indonesia's. We want to disagree because in the short-term West Papua is a resource-rich country, from where they can generate revenue. Even if that wasn't possible, they could use

their resources as security to make loans with other nations. In the long-term we thought that because they have this revenue, they are able to fund industries and infrastructures such as schools so that they can train and educate people. And when we set up these industries, what does that mean? It means that the government is able to tax these industries, and provide funding for future operations.

And for all those reasons, we thought that any arguments proposed by the opposition about how this was unrealistic or not actually feasible were proven to be wrong. And for all those reasons we are so proud to propose.