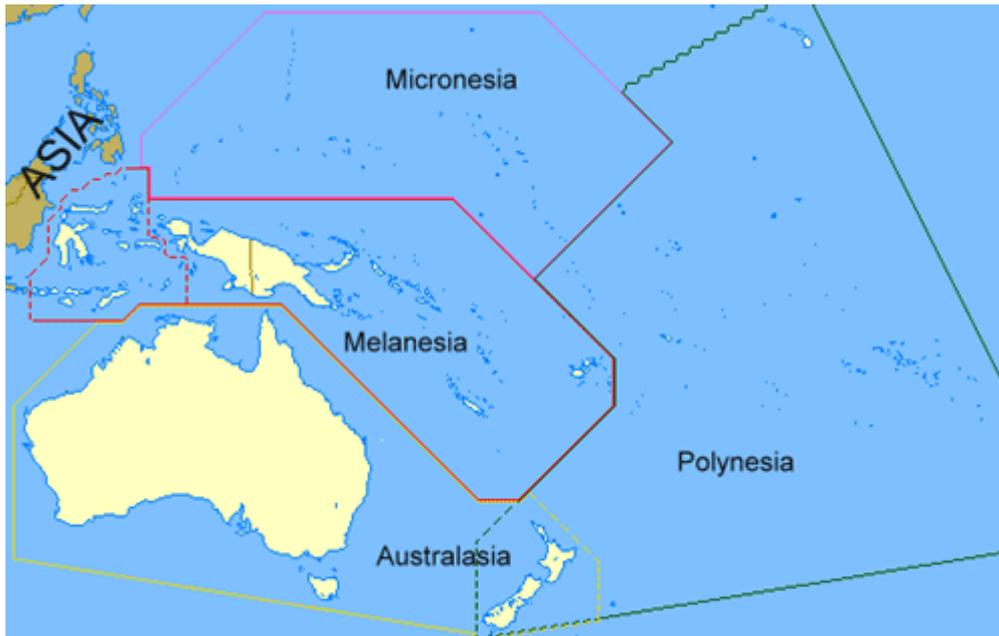


Our Oceania



The Oceania Ecosystem Services Forum celebrates one of the most vibrant, and biologically and culturally diverse regions of the world - Oceania! Because the area consists of islands many unique species of plants and animals, and human cultures (each with their own customs, languages, and dependencies on the natural environment), have evolved out of relative isolation from others. Whilst some nations in Oceania are highly developed with sophisticated and diverse economies, land-use planning, and communication, education, tourism, agricultural, trade and transport systems, many have been sheltered from globalisation. Therefore, many traditional and indigenous cultures, languages and lifestyles have remained preserved and continue to sustain ancient and ancestral ways of life. Most of all, the Oceania region is famous for its coral reef ecosystems especially the Great Barrier Reef (the world's largest coral reef) and the Coral Triangle (a geographical monument of tropical marine waters).

The long distance between nations, finite natural resources within island boundaries (e.g. arable land, fresh water, fisheries, forests, biodiversity), and natural and anthropocentric hazards (such as those from climate change), are common challenges to sustainable development in all nations across Oceania. These challenges influence local and national economic development, food and natural resource security, and the freedom to choose and maintain both traditional and modern ways of life. According to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for sustainable development to be achieved it is crucial to harmonise its three core elements of environmental protection, social inclusion and economic growth; and recognise these elements are interconnected, and are crucial for the well-being and resilience of all sector communities (e.g. governments, business and industry, non-government, consulting, academia, youth, indigenous and local communities).

The concept of ecosystem services; which focuses on the 'benefits that people derive from ecosystems' (e.g. regulating climate, natural hazard protection, productive soils, recreational and tourism opportunities, providing clean air and water, fuel wood, and a sense of place), and how people acquiring these benefits impact on ecosystems; provides an integrative and interdisciplinary mechanism to assess and communicate the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The Oceania Ecosystem Services Forum will provide an opportunity for sector communities from around the world to come together, and to share their knowledge by presenting, discussing and brainstorming innovative approaches to using ecosystem services concepts to address sustainable development.