



Australian  
National  
University

Department of  
Pacific Affairs

# In Brief series

## *Notes for authors*

Department of Pacific Affairs

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## Notes for authors

DPA In Briefs present academically rigorous analysis of research findings, conferences and topical events in the region in a concise two-page format, designed to be readily accessible to policymakers, development practitioners, and the academic community. All DPA In Briefs are double blind peer reviewed. In Briefs should be 1250–1300 words in total. They are designed to fit on one double-sided A4 page when typeset. In Briefs must be referenced in accordance with [DPA Editorial Guidelines](#), although authors should keep references and endnotes to a minimum. Email your In Brief submission to the submissions editor at <kathryn.skorkiewicz@anu.edu.au>, together with an author’s biographical note of one or two lines. You are welcome to contact the editor to discuss whether your idea is suitable for the series. Occasionally DPA publishes an In Brief in the form of an opinion piece. These are assessed on a case by case basis and are authored by someone with standing in the community or region such as a community leader, a civil servant or an activist.

The DPA Editorial Board has devised these tips and instructions to assist you write high-quality In Briefs.

### 1. Thinking about writing an In Brief

When thinking about writing an In Brief, it may help to keep in mind that there are common types of In Briefs with particular aims, including:

- claiming a space on a particular issue that needs attention/research
- presenting and reflecting on a policy-relevant concept or a few interrelated ideas
- reporting on findings from recent or ongoing research
- reporting on a recent conference or workshop
- reacting to a particular news item or set of media reports and providing broader evidence-based insight/understanding into the issues
- summarising research findings or a longer recent publication
- Almost all In Briefs are intended to be evidence based, not opinion pieces. This means backing up and demonstrating your statements with reference to particular policies, reports, or research. It is easier to do this if we avoid making grand claims or propositions.

### 2. In Brief style

Stylistically, In Briefs have three main features: They are concise, accessible, and professional in tone.

Achieving concise writing demands you have a clear objective and plan for your In Brief. It helps to first think about the main point, idea, or information that you want to get across, and to whom, why, and why now.

Once you have this figured out, ask yourself: Which type of In Brief does this resemble? This will help clarify your aim and structure. Is it focused mainly on sharing an important idea, or presenting a new take on a policy problem? Does it report on recent or ongoing research, or respond to a recent event or debate? A good In Brief doesn't just have a clear purpose, it goes beyond that. It doesn't just report on research, it also links that research to a current problem or debate, and shows why it is significant. It doesn't just present an idea, but it shows why that idea would help clarify or advance thinking on a particular set of issues.

Perhaps sketch a rough outline, if you haven't already. This will keep you on track and save time cutting back your word count.

Make sure your 'five friends' are present: who, what, when, where, why.

Rewrite, refine, rephrase – you can always say it better!

Have someone read your In Brief and note any sentences that they had to re-read to understand. These will likely need to be rewritten.

Most In Briefs do not require more than a few references as they are not a literature review. Most In Briefs also include at least two references that can be used to point the reader to other resources, even in the case of a fieldwork or conference report.

### 3. In Brief structure

A typical In Brief identifies its purpose in the first paragraph, or the first two paragraphs if they are short, through a topical sentence such as 'This In Brief [reports on, suggests, describes, argues] ...'. It then usually contains a paragraph or two related to the context – the bigger picture: What is being said about this topic in academia, in policy discussions? Why is this topic relevant now? If not a topic sentence, then have a strong lead that attracts attention and encapsulates the gist of the In Brief.

It then discusses/summarises/explains/reflects for a few paragraphs.

A typical In Brief then takes one to two paragraphs to spell out:

- the relevance for a policy audience, with varying degrees of specificity, including (perhaps) particular challenges and/or opportunities that the issue/results/concept presents
- recommendations for further research, discussion, etc.

As you are developing your In Brief, check whether:

- you deliver on what you promised to report on, discuss, explain, etc.
- the beginning and the end correspond – are you still talking about the same thing by the end? Your conclusion should refer back to the points and/or contexts raised in the introductory paragraphs.

## 4. Formatting instructions

Your paper must follow the [DPA Editorial Guidelines](#).

Ensure that it does not exceed 1300 words in total, and is in 12 point font.

Anonymise your submission for review — do not include your name on the document itself; rather, include all your details in an email to the submissions editor. Remove direct references to your own work by replacing the citation with (Author year).

You may include tables but you will need to reduce the word count. Looking at previous In Briefs should give you an idea of how much space they require. As a guide, cutting the word count down to 900–1,000 may be necessary. There is no specific table format; the layout may be altered by the copyeditor/typesetter.

Images can be submitted with your paper but:

- do not embed them in your paper — include a caption in the text where the image should go
- you will need to reduce the word count
- they must be of sufficient quality and resolution for a printed version of your In Brief
- you must obtain permission from the copyright holder as appropriate. Just because an image is on the internet, does not mean you can reproduce it. For further information, see the Australian Copyright Council website.

### Hyperlinking

The hyperlinking policy is complex because we have identical print and online versions, and we want to accommodate more content by minimising referencing while maintaining academic integrity.

Hyperlinking is not a way to include many more references than you can fit in your In Brief, and since we continue to use the print versions, please consider not overusing hyperlinks as you will have blue underlined text throughout your publication. We accept hyperlinks to extra information (or for merely illustrative purposes), but not for references/citations that are needed for academic integrity or to support a particular claim. For hyperlinks to extra information, highlight two–three keywords and embed the link there. Do not then repeat it in the reference list.

References that are necessary to support claims should be cited in the normal way.

To cite an online source (another In Brief, for example) in the reference list, embed a hyperlink in the title of an online source, rather than giving the URL separately. The in-text (Author date) citation should not contain a hyperlink.

## 5. Receiving feedback from reviewers

All In Briefs are double peer reviewed. In general, we ask reviewers to make suggestions that they think would improve the paper. In preparing your In Brief, you might find it useful to read the instructions for reviewers (below) to know what to expect.

Remember that reviewers have been asked to assist you to improve your In Brief, not cause trouble or bad feelings.

Take reviewers' perspectives on your ideas and claims into consideration, especially if they are saying you haven't provided enough evidence or that you have missed some important context. If you disagree with their advice or recommendations, please justify to the submissions editor why you won't be changing a particular aspect or statement. In Briefs that do not substantiate their assertions will not be published.

Ask for assistance from the submissions editor if you don't understand what a reviewer is asking of you.

If your reviewers say that something in your In Brief is not clear to them, we highly recommend you revise that part. In Briefs that fail to clearly communicate ideas will not be published.

It is possible that reviewers provide conflicting advice. Since you possess expertise on the topic of your In Brief, you may have a sense of which reviewer has provided you with the more accurate or better advice. In this situation, you might also explain to the editor why you have chosen to make revisions that favour one review over the other. If you need further assistance, you might seek advice from a colleague or directly from the submissions editor.

The 1300 word limit can be challenging if reviewers ask for more information or analysis that you do not have space to include. In many cases, it is possible to cut words by: rewriting more concisely; removing repetition, redundancies or writing that is not essential; or deleting non-essential references. If your In Brief needs additional text, cut something less vital, or try rewriting in a more pointed fashion. Perhaps you can refer to a source of information or analysis, acknowledging that you are aware there is more out there on this issue, without going into detail on it.

Before resubmitting, check your word count again and check any references you may have added.

It is not uncommon for you to receive additional feedback from the editor once you have resubmitted your revised In Brief. This is because not all reviewers provide comments on all aspects of an In Brief, and it is the responsibility of the editor to ensure clarity and quality in the series.

## 6. Copyediting and checking your proof

Well done, your In Brief is now with one of our copyeditors, who will check for:

- inconsistencies
- spelling and grammatical errors
- appropriate referencing
- compliance with the [DPA editorial guidelines](#).

She/he may have particular questions for you. Address these as soon as possible, so as not to delay the publication process.

Once queries are resolved and you have accepted the copyeditor's changes, she/he will create a PDF proof and email it to you. Please check your proof carefully — this is the last opportunity to request corrections and minor changes.

If there were changes to be made, you will receive a final proof to check. Tell the copyeditor if he/she can proceed with publishing. Remember that you are ultimately responsible for the content of your In Brief, not the submissions editor or the copyeditors.

## About the Department of Pacific Affairs

Established in 1996 and funded in partnership by ANU and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), DPA (formerly SSGM, the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program) is the leading international centre for applied multidisciplinary research on issues of governance, state and society in the Pacific. Situated within the Coral Bell of Asia Pacific Affairs, DPA seeks to set the international standard for scholarship on the region. DPA undertakes a comprehensive suite of research, education and outreach activities, exemplifying the ANU's strategic vision of uniting scholarly excellence with contributions that make an impact on public policymaking in an area of high national importance.

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