It may be a tribute to the importance of *South Pacific Futures: Oceania Toward 2050* that Helen Hughes resorts to so many inaccuracies and personal attacks in her attempts to repress it in her review in *Pacific Economic Bulletin* (20(3):142–44). It is a rare experience to read so many distortions in such a short piece.

Some of the more salient misrepresentations will be noted below in an analysis of her book review. She has either not read, not remembered, not understood or chosen not to consider significant sections of the book. Rather than assessing the alternatives to her view, she condemns the messengers (particularly me, Beris Gwynne, and the Foundation for Development Cooperation), who have presented the four alternatives (as well as her own globalisation and doomsday view) for the first time in a single book. Resorting to personal attacks and name-calling is no substitute for the work of seriously considering *South Pacific Futures*, the first book which presents a full range of alternative views of the future of the Pacific Islands.

Hughes criticises the sparseness of the consideration of ‘past economic, social and political trends’. The book’s focus on the future is intentional. It is to avoid the common problem of getting bogged down in the past, which is already treated in many other publications. As stated on the second page *South Pacific Futures* ‘this book concerns Pacific Islands futures—not the past or the present. The focus is squarely on the future itself.’

Hughes comments that ‘indigenous Pacific writers and others who have contributed analytical articles to the *Pacific Economic Bulletin* that are contestable because they are related to actual developments are thus ill-represented in the material surveyed’. This statement is extremely misleading. In contrast to this inaccurate statement by Hughes, the *Pacific Economic Bulletin* is tied for first place among journals in terms of the degree to which its articles are cited in *South Pacific Futures*. Twelve articles from the *Pacific Economic Bulletin* (the same number as the twelve articles cited from the *Development Bulletin*) are considered in the book.

Although Hughes did not attend the Foundation for Development Cooperation conference on ‘South Pacific Futures’, she begins a pattern of unfounded and
slanderous stereotyping of people, which will recur in her book review, personally attacking those who attended the conferences, castigating them as ‘academic beachcombers’. She apparently suspects them of presenting views other than her own at conferences that she did not attend. This style of personal attack has no place in enlightened intellectual debates.

In fact, the Foundation for Development Cooperation deserves credit for its unique role in bringing together a wide variety of expert views on the South Pacific for the first time (both at its conferences and in the book on South Pacific Futures). Resorting to name-calling damages the reputations of the Foundation for Development Cooperation, its director Beris Gwynne, those who attended the Foundation for Development Cooperation conferences, and me, Anthony van Fossen, the author of the book (South Pacific Futures) which partly draws on their discussions and background papers.

Hughes claims that ‘the book is fact free.’ Exactly what ‘facts’ about the future does Hughes have access to? It is interesting that the only statements she makes in this book review about ‘facts’ concerning the future are related to three very large tables which can be located easily by someone scanning through the book. Does Hughes know of other tables where people developing the five scenarios have provided numerical projections? If so, I would greatly appreciate her letting me know about them.

Hughes maintains that ‘the dates for 20 per cent of the population having access to “basic voice telecommunications” are even more curious. For Nauru, for example, Van Fossen claims in a technology-defying forecast that such an outcome is “unattainable”’. These figures are from an unpublished consultancy report by Cutler & Company, not me, as clearly indicated on page 106. Hughes chooses to ignore this.

Hughes contends that ‘the book lacks any connection with the reality of the South Pacific’. In this sentence and elsewhere reality is supposed to be what Hughes says it is. Concerning the realities that she claims the book ignores, unemployment is specifically addressed in South Pacific Futures on pages 28, 44, 88, 92. Low incomes, poverty and population issues are covered throughout the book, but particularly in Chapters 2 (‘Population’) and 6 (‘Aid’). HIV/AIDS is considered on pages 10 and 27. Pages 10, 24, 27, 60, and 68 concern crime.

Hughes complains that ‘There is no indication of long-term economic stagnation, underlined by continuing excess of population growth over GNP growth.’ This is inaccurate. The book, particularly Chapter 4 (‘Economies’) and Chapter 2 (‘Population’), considers in depth the globalists’ and others’ concern with these issues. Even a superficial scanning of the balloons in the book would come across emphasised, large print statements such as ‘advocates of globalisation forecast that either markets will determine the positive development of the Pacific Islands, or they will fall into a doomsday nightmare of overpopulation, poverty, and social breakdown’ (p. 8) and ‘Globalists stress the grave threats of future overpopulation in the Pacific islands’ (p. 26).

Hughes contends that ‘notably, he ignores the 1990s debate about the likely outcomes of economic and social policies then in place. Rowan Callick and the other authors of the “2010” project predicted stagnation with all its miseries if policies did not change (Callick 1993).’ This is completely mistaken. For Callick alone, there are references to his predictions on pages 4, 9, 13, 27, 30, 52, 68, 88, 103, 104 and 120. In addition a long summary of the chapter that Hughes cites (Callick 1993) appears on pages 10 to 12 of South Pacific Futures.
Hughes asserts that ‘Van Fossen is a true postmodernist, giving equal value to all forecast texts. Clearly, in his view, all is opinion and there is no way of distinguishing among opinions’. I have never been described as a postmodernist. Those who know me would find this inaccurate characterisation very amusing. As Hughes should know, postmodernists emphasise deconstruction. On the contrary, my book is a synthesis—centring on five types of paradigms for understanding the future in a number of domains. As stated in South Pacific Futures ‘the author merely seeks to be a plain dealer or honest broker in presenting, comparing, and analysing the perspectives of others’ (page 2). Hughes obviously has a problem with this role, making unwarranted statements about me because I have assumed it.

Hughes attacks Beris Gwynne, the Foundation for Development Cooperation, and me for conferences and a book which present alternative views of the future of the region. For some reason, Hughes finds it ‘strange’ that Gwynne would see the first comprehensive survey of alternative scenarios in South Pacific Futures as contributing ‘to broader and better understanding of the issues facing our South Pacific neighbours’. Someone might find this ‘strange’ if this person did not want any challenging alternatives to his or her globalist orthodoxy to be published or more widely known and discussed.

The forecasts of Hughes were considered extensively (on pages 4, 29, 41, 51, 54, 55, 68, 87, 88, 89) in the globalisation and doomsday sections of the book. I am happy that, in her book review, she does not find any problems with the way that South Pacific Futures presents her views.

The validity of the predictions that have been made by Hughes and others will be measured by their competitions with rival interpretations in relation to emerging empirical evidence of what actually happens in the future. South Pacific Futures attempts to present the scenarios that experts have presented, so that readers can make up their own minds about what will or could happen, with much fuller information about alternatives than they had previously and hopefully respond appropriately. Beris Gwynne and the Foundation for Development Cooperation deserve credit for this pioneering effort to invite an examination of alternative scenarios based on the views of outside observers as well as Pacific experts.

References