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From Field to Museum—Studies from Melanesia in Honour of Robin Torrence. Preface

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This collection of 16 papers by 32 authors covers a diverse range of topics on archaeological materials and museum collections. The papers range in geographical coverage from Sarawak in Malaysia to Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, but their main focus is on Papua New Guinea (PNG). Their time frame covers 6000 or so years down to the present. These wide geographical and temporal spreads are held together by a common thread: the varied relationships of the authors to Dr Robin Torrence, who retired from the position of Senior Principle Research Scientist at the Australian Museum in 2020. Over the last 35 years in Australian studies Robin has taught, supervised, examined, mentored, conducted fieldwork and museum research, or been a co-author with all of the first authors and most of the others.

Robin's association with Australia began through encounters with Australian archaeologists at conferences while she was teaching Archaeology at Sheffield University in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Several visits to Australia resulted from these encounters, and Robin's European experience in the production and exchange of obsidian tools was quickly matched to Richard Fullagar's study of obsidian artefacts from Manus Province in Papua New Guinea recovered during the Lapita Homeland Project of 1985 (Fullagar and Torrence, 1991). In 1988 and 1989 she joined Specht's Australian Museum project in the Talasea area of West New Britain Province, PNG. By 1991 she had moved permanently to Australia and began her own project on the obsidian sources of West New Britain's Willaumez Peninsula and Garua Island. A flow of significant papers resulted dealing with the sources and their geochemical characterisation, the production, value and exchange of obsidian stemmed tools in Middle Holocene times (Torrence *et al*., 1996; Torrence and Summerhayes, 1997; Araho *et al*., 2002; Torrence, 2004; Torrence, Swadling *et al*., 2009) and the social and economic significance of obsidian in general (Torrence, 2005, 2011, 2016; Torrence, Kelloway and White, 2013; Torrence *et al.,* 2018).

Robin's focus on stemmed obsidian tools of the Middle Holocene involved the geochemical characterisation of New Britain obsidians to aid the plotting of past artefact movements that could cast light on social relationships and trade routes (Torrence and Swadling, 2008). She initially worked with Wallace Ambrose of the Australian National University and the late Roger Bird at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) using the PIXE-PIGME technique to analyse obsidian source materials and artefacts (Bird *et al*., 1997). With the development of portable XRF (pXRF) equipment, she rapidly adopted this new technique and with her partner Peter White visited museums in Australia, the United Kingdom and Europe to analyse obsidian collections from the Papua New Guinea region. This resulted in an extensive corpus of data indicating significant transport of obsidian artefacts from the Willaumez Peninsula sources to locations throughout the PNG islands and mainland during the Middle Holocene (Torrence, Kelloway, and White, 2013). This theme is taken up in this

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