

# THE PRINCIPALITY OF HUTT RIVER

## A Territory Marooned in the Western Australian Outback

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**ABSTRACT:** This article recounts the story of Hutt River Province, later established as the Principality of Hutt River (PHR), under the administration of Leonard George Casley (1970-2017). We highlight the international relations of the principality, its reliance on tourism, and its relationship with Australian taxation authorities. Casley created his own principality within the Western Australian outback and gladly marooned himself in his very own creation. We thus extend the notion of *aislamiento* to remote geographically isolated environments, illustrating the deeply social and political nature of *aislamiento*.

**KEYWORDS:** *Aislamiento*, Hutt River Province, Islandness, Micronations, Western Australia.

### Introduction

*No man is an island  
Entire of itself  
Every man is a piece of the continent*

(John Donne, 1624)

While Donne noted that no man is an island, in this article we explore whether a man can create a (virtual) island and remove himself from his surrounding continent. This article recounts the story of Hutt River Province, later established as the Principality of Hutt River (PHR), under the administration of Leonard George Casley. The objective of this article is to provide a concise record of the creation of the principality in 1970, and what has happened since its inception until Casley abdicated in favour of his youngest son in 2017. Using the concept of *aislamiento*, a Spanish term that extends the notional of geographical islandness to that of socio-psychological isolation (Andersen, 2016: 33)(Anderson, 2016: 33), the principality is portrayed as a place marooned in the Western Australian outback, desiring to become isolated from the Australian Commonwealth. It is important to note that a secession is a rather complex legal issue (eg Musgrave, 2003; Rossman, 2016), and it is not within the scope of this article to discuss whether the PHR has succeeded, or not, in seceding from Western Australia, and its current legal status. It can be argued that due to its isolation in the Western Australian outback, the principality has developed an “islandish” identity (Hayward, 2016). Therefore, this article contributes to discussions

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concerning islandness and secessionists claims and expands on Hayward's (2014b) investigation as it encompasses places established through *aislamiento*. It is noteworthy that the state of Western Australia has its very own idiosyncrasies, which place it apart from the other members of the Commonwealth of Australia. For example, in 1932 the theatre of the so-called 'Emu War' played out in the Western Australia outback,<sup>1</sup> and in 1933, in a state referendum, the state's residents voted to secede from the Australian Commonwealth (Musgrave, 2003). This secessionist desire is still apparent in Western Australia today, as evidenced by the fact that in September 2017 the Western Australian Liberal Party (the conservative party in Australian politics) voted in favour of a motion to investigate the state seceding from the rest of the Australian Commonwealth (Unattributed, 2017). The principality can be interpreted as a personification of the secessionist desires in Western Australia, and the PHR has entered this pantheon of Western Australian tales and now belongs to the popular culture of Western Australians. As the then Western Australian Minister for Lands Brendon Grylls stated in 2010, "You wouldn't be able to mention Hutt River Province without anyone knowing" (Murphy, 2010: online). Recently, the official website of the PHR was selected for preservation by the State Library of Western Australia (PANDORA) and the Shire of Northampton has listed the principality as a place of high historic and social significance to Western Australia (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2017: online).

The principality is located approximately 500 km north of Perth (Figure 1) and is 75 square km in size. The area is mainly flat or undulating farmland with a small local resident population of 20-25 people (Macbeth, 2010; Ryan et al., 2006; Onishi, 2011). The small main town site is Nain, which contains buildings for tourism and administration such as a post office, government offices, an inter-denominational chapel and a five-foot tall sculpture of Casley's head. Hutt River itself has been described as "a stretch of water which flowed like a torrent during the brief winter and hardly at all during the endless summer, which produced flies the size of Honda 50s" (a type of motorbike) (Ackman, 1982: online).

For this article, a qualitative research method was employed using publicly available data, including but not limited to data obtained through media outlets, the official home site of the PHR, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Freedom of Information (FOI) disclosure documents. The current official website of the PHR and the older versions available in PANDORA (Australia's web archive used by the State Library of Western Australia) were examined (and such sources are referred as PHR Historic Archives and PHR Royal Rhetoric Archives). Several media outlets containing interviews with Casley, family members, and people involved with the principality were used and referred as such (eg Joffe, 1995; Murphy, 2010; Ackman, 1982; Onishi, 2011; Pash, 2016; National Geographic, 2016; Korda, 2016). The documents from the Foreign Affairs and Trade released via Freedom of Information (FOI) were document 13/6473 (DFAT, 2013a)

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<sup>1</sup> Similarities can be drawn between the PHR story and the 1932 'Emu War'. First, there are the settlers struggling to etch out a living by farming wheat in the Western Australian outback. Second, as with the scenario detailed in this article, the government intervened in the wheat market. On this occasion farmers were encouraged to increase wheat crops and promised subsidies. However, due to dire financial circumstances associated with the Great Depression, the government could not pay the promised subsidies. As such farmers were faced with not receiving promised subsidies and plummeting wheat prices, which combined threatened their livelihoods. This situation was exacerbated with the arrival of over 20,000 emus. The final similarity is the unconventional solution that was decided upon, which was to call on the military to cull the emus. See Johnson (2006) for further discussion.



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*sense of particular places, locations, and states of being. Islands are geographic facts yet also cultural, historical, and imaginative experiences. (Anderson, 2016: 45)*

*The idea of shima, in this regard, becomes a key for exploring the idea of islands embedded in cultural formations. Islands are, in this regard, 'cultural landscapes' where imagination takes the form of reality... Islands as works of imagination and as geographical features become a mirror to each other. Islands are an event. (Suwa, 2007: 6)*

As Hayward (2016) discusses, some of the theory developed for studying islands can also be applied to other regions that are somehow islanded by geo-physical features, including arid environments. The “islandish” identity of such places, which are not necessarily islands, can be created by its isolation (Hayward, 2016; Anderson, 2016). Examples of such phenomena are Gibraltar (Gold, 2016), Baja California (Anderson, 2016), and the Otago Peninsula (Potiki, 2016). When discussing the effects of isolation, Anderson (2016) presents the concept of *aislamiento* to talk about the production of islandness, stating that:

*In the linguistic sense, what interests me most here is the dual nature of meanings associated with *aislamiento*, which can refer more concretely to the effects of being on a landform surrounded by water, on the one hand, or the more social effects of being/feeling isolated on the other. (Anderson, 2016: 35)*

It should be emphasised that not all islands are subject to *aislamiento*. Examples of islands which are deeply integrated with their surroundings are the islands of Long Island and Manhattan in New York (Anderson, 2016). On the other hand, not all places subject to *aislamiento* are islands (eg Baja California). In addition to peninsulas, this article extends the idea of *aislamiento* to demonstrate how this can occur in a geographically isolated location, such as the Western Australian outback. This extension of the concept of *aislamiento* is consistent with Anderson (2016), who argues that the process of *aislamiento* is deeply social and political.

An analogy can be traced between the PHR and Anderson's experience in travelling through Baja California. The principality is in the Western Australian outback, which is well known for its reputation of desolation (Gill, 2005). The local shire, Northhampton, in which the principality is located, has 358 kilometres in sealed roads and 949 kilometres in unsealed roads (Shire of Northampton, 2017), including the winding road which leads to Hutt River (Korda, 2016). The principality is reportedly “a long way from anywhere in particular” (Ryan et al., 2006: 27) and the traveller experiences “nothing but red earth and blue sky” (Macbeth, 2010: online). The principality is approximately 500 kilometres from Perth and 40 kilometres from the town of Northampton. The Shire of Northampton has a population of less than 4,000 people spread across 12,499 square kilometres (Shire of Northampton, 2017). While Casley's wheat farm might not be an island or a peninsula, it can be regarded as ‘marooned’ in the Western Australian outback.

### 2. Secession

Wheat farming was common business in the Western Australian outback in the 20th Century (Johnson, 2006). It is reported that the Casley family bought the farm at the Hutt

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River in the late 1960s (Ackman, 1982: online), acquiring 18,500 acres in land (see Figure 2), with the intention of establishing a wheat farm:

*By 1969, stretched to their fiscal limit, the Casleys had sown thousands of acres of the golden grain and were laying plans to harvest around 40,000 bushels. (ibid)*

However, to keep the wheat price elevated, the Western Australian Government issued wheat quotas for farms (Heaton, 2013; Ryan et al., 2006). Farmers were notified of the

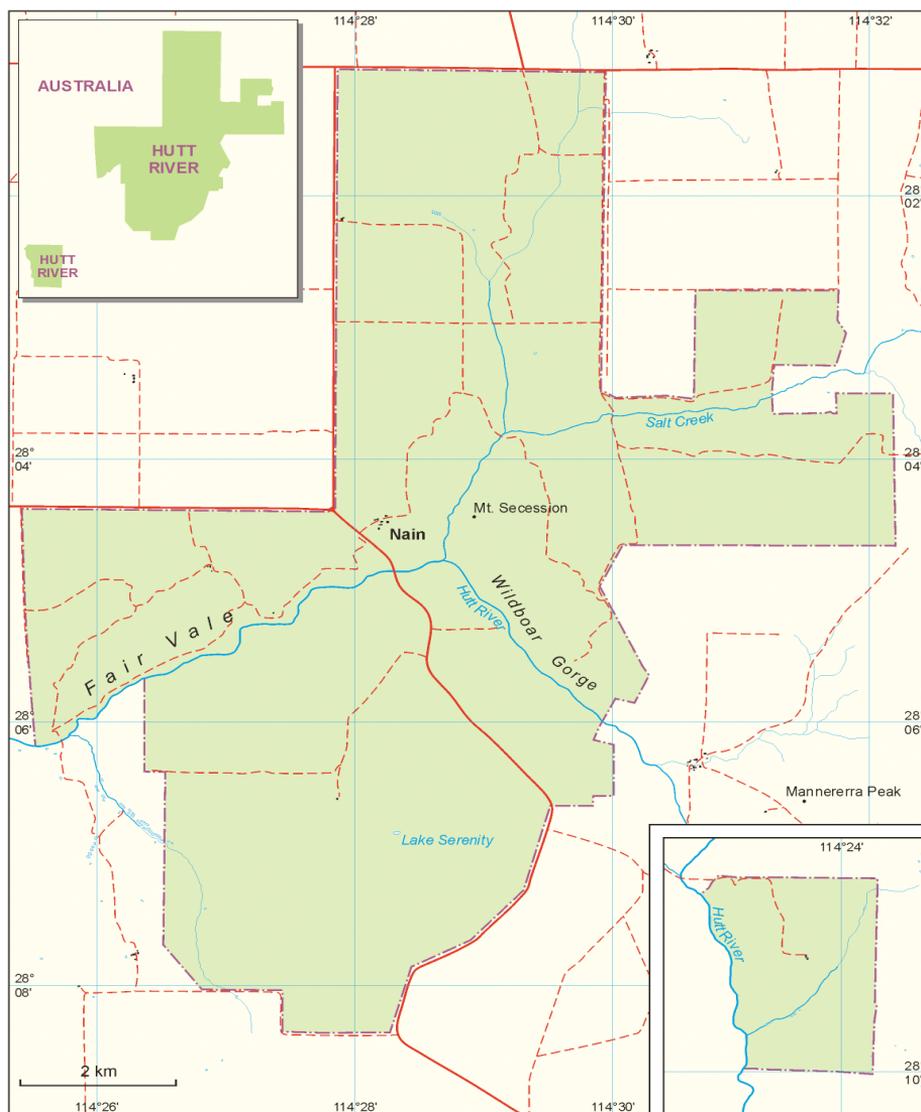


Figure 2 – Land area of PHR (source: Aotearoa, via Wikimedia Commons)

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maximum amount of wheat they could sell from their harvest. In November, 1969, Casley was notified that the total amount of wheat he could sell from his harvest was 1,647 bushels (PHR Historic Archives). As recorded in the historical archives of the PHR, the quota was inappropriate for the farm:

*Under this new quota, it would have taken five hundred years to crop the same average amount of wheat that had been harvested in the previous twenty years. The gross proceeds would not have even paid the interest on the hire purchase on two four-wheel drive tractors that were in use. This did not allow any return for maintenance of their homes and families, no income on which to survive let alone profit. (The Formation of the Principality of Hutt River, PHR Historic Archives)*

Casley filed complaints with the Wheat Quota Board, the Premier of Western Australia, and the Governor of Western Australia. However, the Governor of Western Australia passed down the Ministerial advice that there would be no change to the wheat quota (Ackman, 1982; PHR Historic Archives). Wheat farmers in Western Australia had their fair share of difficulties with the government during the first half of the 20th Century (Johnson, 2006). Consequently, Casley decided to claim compensation for his potential crop losses:

*The wheat quota ratio was used to calculate the damage. Under this quota it would be necessary to purchase an additional 1,800,000 acres of land to be able to crop wheat to the total acreage that could otherwise have been done without the quota. This additional vast acreage would have cost approximately \$52,000,000. (The Formation of the Principality of Hutt River, PHR Historic Archives)*

Further, Casley became concerned that the Western Australian Government could resume his property (Ackman, 1982; Joffe, 1995). To circumvent these threats, Casley decided to secede his farm from Western Australia. As the story goes, the matter was discussed during a family meeting:

*At this meeting a law was discussed which states that if the economy has been taken and a threat to the loss of the lands exists, a self-preservation Government may be formed. It was decided to exercise this entitlement and serve a formal secession notice. (The Formation of the Principality of Hutt River, PHR Historic Archives)*

Consequently, due to the risk of having his economic livelihood taken away and the threat of loss of land, Casley argued that under international law he was entitled to form a self-preservation government (Ackman, 1982). A formal notice of secession was served on 21 April 1970 to the Western Australian State Premier, the Governor of Western Australia, the Acting Prime Minister of Australia, and the Governor General of Australia (Murphy, 2010). Under Australian law, the government had two years in which to object. Given that no objection was received, Hutt River Province (as it was then known) claims to have become a new country on 21 April 1972 (Ryan et al., 2006; Heaton, 2013). It is significant that Casley chose to secede from Western Australia but remain part of the Commonwealth of Nations:

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*The principle of the Ratification is principlly [sic] the retention of the Western Australian Governments concession of newly conceded area to be still a sovereign part of the British Commonwealth where in also the Queen is the Sovereign ruler of the newly conceded area as is her Royal right, and her lawfull [sic] right under the Western Australian Constitution. ('Fate Accompli', PHR Historic Archives)*

Following the secession, formal procedures were undertaken for the naming of the territory, adopting a flag and forming a government with names of ministers and ministerial positions. According to the records from the PHR Historic Archives, a board of four administrations was established, with Casley as Administrator elected to govern the seceded territory. Hutt River Province was the name given to the territory. A recognition of Casley as the administrator came through an exchange of correspondence with the Governor General's Department.

*Two exchanges of correspondence were made with the Governor General's Department with the data as required. Following the second exchange Mr. Leonard Casley was then cordially addressed as the Administrator of the Hutt River Province. The Royal Prerogative states that once this recognition is given it is binding on all Courts. (The Formation of the Principality of Hutt River, PHR Historic Archives)*

After establishing himself as administrator of Hutt River Province, the next change was to become a prince. The argument for such endowment was that Casley wanted to protect his peers:

*But although he [Casley] was confident of his own position, he decided he needed to shore up the positions of those people who had helped him. He perceived the law as a bit murky on the subject, but there was a possibility the Commonwealth could move against his helpers by charging them with treason. Out came the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Leonard [Casley] found a fascinating law which held that anyone assisting a de facto Prince to attain his office could not be charged with treason. So if he became a Prince and his family helped him attain that office then they would be treason-proof. (Ackman, 1982: online)*

When interviewed in 1972, Casley stated that “the next few steps I take I'm going to be leaving Australia” (Murphy, 2010: online), but there is no evidence that such steps were taken. It is noteworthy that in 1980 the PHR was briefly morphed into a kingdom (Singleton, 1980; Ryan et al., 2006), however, it has reverted to its original status later on. The next change came only in 2006, when it was decided to change the name from Hutt River Province to Principality of Hutt River (PHR Royal Rhetoric, 2006).

After the decision of seceding from Western Australia and creating a principality in the outback in 1970, the next move for trying to consolidate the sovereignty of the PHR came seven years later with a declaration of war on Australia (Murphy, 2010). On 2 December 1977, Casley sent a telegram to the Governor-General of Australia declaring war, and a few days later, on 4 December 1977, Casley sent another telegram ceasing hostilities (PHR Historic Archives). As discussed in the taxes section of this article, it may be more than coincidence that this declaration of war came in December 1977, just a few months after a court decision where Casley was fined for failing to furnish the Australian Taxation Office

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(ATO) with certain documents (McIlroy, 2017). The short state of war between the principality and Australia was a scheme where Casley's purpose was to argue that, under the Geneva Treaty Convention of 12 August 1949, a government should show full respect to a nation undefeated from a state of war (Unattributed, 2016; Macbeth, 2010; Heaton, 2013). The Australian Government ignored these harmless acts of defiance towards it. However, it seems that Casley did not subject himself to the wheat quotas. As recorded in an interview:

*In the early days from 1973 to its peak in 1980 it was sensational. Australians wouldn't believe that anybody could get away with it and they came to see what sort of bloke could put it over the Commonwealth Government. (Joffe, 1995: online)*

The next three sections address the international relations of the principality, its reliance on tourism, and its relationship with Australian taxation authorities.

### 3. International Relations

Small territories declaring secession without external support certainly struggle to achieve international recognition, and the PHR is no exception (Grydehøj, 2014; Rossman, 2016). During Casley's administration there is evidence of people using the PHR passports while travelling internationally, perhaps even diplomatic passports. The principality has also tried to establish diplomatic missions in a number of countries. It is worth noting that the PHR fulfils the four basic criteria for nationhood established by the Montevideo Convention of 1933 on the Rights and Duties of States 1933, having a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and a capacity to enter into relations with other states (Macbeth, 2010; Ryan et al, 2006). The use of the PHR diplomatic passports is an interesting case, as in the early years of the formation of the PHR immigration authorities in other countries were unaware of what was occurring, and timely exchange of information with Australian authorities was impossible. This is illustrated in the following report of an experience at Orly Airport, Paris immigration;

*Ericksen stood politely in the queue while the officer conferred with his superior. Presently the two men returned to the counter. "Yes, excuse me, Your Excellency," said the more senior man, ushering Ericksen through the desk and slapping his underling at the same time. "Right this way, Your Excellency," he said as he led Victoria's ambassador to Hutt River Province into France, pausing only to stamp his passport on the way through. (Ackman, 1982: online)*

As the principality pursued international recognition, several people bore diplomatic passports issued by the PHR and tried to use them during international travel. Besides diplomatic passports, the principality has reportedly issued normal passports for its approximately 13,000 citizens during Casley's administration (Unattributed, 2016; Macbeth, 2010; Onishi, 2011). Based on evidence from diplomatic cables from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it seems that the Australian Government took a stand in 1985 with Cable CH252073. This diplomatic cable is a response for clarification requests from diplomatic missions concerning the status of the principality (DFAT, 2013b: 188-194).

Cable CH252073 reinforces that "the Australian Government does not recognise the Hutt River Province and any assertions to the contrary are false". The report from 1985

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discredits the PHR by arguing that Casley “has built his wheat-growing property in WA into a thriving tourist attraction” and that he “pays Australian taxes and his activities generally remain within the limits permitted by Australian law”. The report states that the PHR has increased its activities overseas, listing an application in Hong Kong for a trade mark in the name of “The Embassy of the Hutt River Province Limited”, and the registration of a vessel under the principality *ibid*). It is noteworthy that this vessel was seized by the US in 1984 (*ibid*: 167-168). After Cable CH252073, Australian diplomatic missions start to report PHR activities in other countries. As a response, Cable LB8737 from Lisbon, Portugal, reveals that Portuguese authorities have located in Algarve a person travelling on passport issued by the principality (*ibid*: 187). From 1984 to 2010, Australian diplomatic missions in 28 countries exchanged 120 diplomatic cables with Australia concerning activities relating to the PHR. These diplomatic missions were located in countries from all corners of the globe covering all continents. The specific Australian diplomatic missions being those located in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, England, Fiji, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritius, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Solomon Islands, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, UAE, and US. Table 1 highlights the level of activity by country (Panel A) and year (Panel B).

**Panel A – Cables per country**

<u>Country</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>%</u>
Australia	30	25%
Philippines	18	15%
US	11	9%
Lebanon	7	6%
Germany	6	5%
UAE	5	4%
Canada	4	3%
France	4	3%
Hungary	4	3%
England	3	3%
Netherlands	3	3%
Poland	3	3%
Switzerland	3	3%
Austria	2	2%
Croatia	2	2%
Sweden	2	2%
Others	13	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Panel B – Cables per year**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>%</u>
1984	1	1%
1985	3	3%
1986	5	4%
1987	12	10%
1988	8	7%
1989	7	6%
1990	1	1%
1991	8	7%
1992	7	6%
1993	2	2%
1994	3	3%
1995	5	4%
1996	11	9%
1997	7	6%
1998	1	1%
1999	0	0%
2000	2	2%
2001	2	2%
2002	4	3%
2003	1	1%
2004	1	1%
2005	3	3%
2006	13	11%
2007	7	6%
2008	3	3%
2009	2	2%
2010	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

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**Table 1** – The Principality of Hutt River international activity as reported by number of DFAT diplomatic cables

The high frequency of diplomatic cables about the PHR in 1987 was because a person in the Philippines attempted to have an embassy accredited (eg DFAT, 2013b: 175-176). Another year with a lot of activity, 1996, was due to the arrest in Germany of a person claiming to represent the PHR in Europe (DFAT, 2013b: 77-79). It appears this event led to Administrative Circular P0044, issued on 20 February 1997 (ibid 72-73), which states that;

*Some of these "Principalities", notably the "Hutt River Province" have been connected with schemes offering "royal titles", "diplomatic" or "consular" appointments, "passports" or "legal tender coins". The Australian Government's position is that none of these "titles", "appointments", "passports" or "currency" are recognised as valid. (ibid: 72)*

In the following years, diplomatic cables often followed the guidelines from Administrative Circular P0044 when dealing with issues related to the PHR. In 2001 it was reported that fraudulent PHR passports were being sold in Lebanon (DFAT, 2013b: 60-62). The matter continued throughout 2002, until the local authorities shut down the activity. However, in 2005 the Australian diplomatic mission in Lebanon had to again act.

*The Lebanese French daily, L'Orient Le Jour, published an article on Hutt River Province featuring an interview with the province's "Ambassador" to Lebanon in the lead up to "independence day". The article implied Australian Government acceptance of the province's self-declared independence. The Embassy wrote to both the paper and the Foreign Ministry explaining the Government's policy. This clarification was subsequently published in the paper. (ibid: 42)*

The high frequency of diplomatic cables in 2006 happened because in February notes based on Administrative Circular P0044 were distributed throughout the foreign ministries of Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovakia, Slovenia; Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia, Albania, and Bulgaria (ibid: 25-32). Such action demonstrates the concern the Australian Government had with misconceptions other European countries might have about the PHR. This could be viewed as a move from the Australian Government to further discredit the principality and prevent the PHR from achieving international recognition.

Similar to the Lebanon case in 2001-2002, local authorities had to deal with fraudulent sales of PHR passports in Dubai in 2007-2008 (ibid: 1-2; DFAT, 2013a: 13-19). Consequently, in 2009, Administrative Circular P0044 was replaced by Administrative Circular P0958 (ibid: 10-12). The documents are similar, except that the new administrative circular requests diplomatic missions to act swiftly when identifying any international activity related to the principality;

*Should a post or state office encounter a situation in which individuals purporting to be "representatives" of such entities seek to gain recognition, status or privileges from local authorities, the post or state office should promptly notify the local authorities of the Australian Government's*

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*position, and raise the matter with DFAT Canberra (Administrative and Domestic Law Section, Domestic Legal Branch; copied to Corporate Planning, Section, Executive, Planning and Evaluation Branch). (ibid: 10)*

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the principality expanded its activities within Australia, establishing an office in Queensland (Cadzow, 1993; Ryan et al., 2006). However, apparently the office in Queensland was selling titles and undergoing activities which were not recognised by the PHR (Cabinet, 2005; Ryan et al, 2006). These activities ended in 1995 and are considered part of the principality's hidden history (Ryan et al., 2006).

The data suggests that during Casley's administration the principality has tried a number of times to establish diplomatic missions in other countries and achieve international recognition. However, evidence suggests that when enquiries are made by local authorities regarding the principality, Australian authorities promptly dismiss the sovereignty of the PHR and discredit its activities. Due to the ability to engage in the timely exchange of information between local and Australian authorities, it can be argued that the sensational days of the principality are in the past – at least regarding its international enterprises.

### 4. Tourism

The concept of small territories declaring independence unilaterally often attracts mainstream media attention (Giuffre, 2015), though such initiatives are not usually taken seriously (Grydehøj, 2014). Although Australian mainstream media does not take the principality seriously, it is evident that the PHR does attract media attention, and Casley has been regarded as a good showman (Onishi, 2011; Macbeth, 2010). Casley has been able to use the media as an efficient vehicle to attract tourists to the principality. In a 1972 interview, he has stated his intent to invest more in tourism (Murphy, 2010). In 1973 a post office was opened (PHR Historic Archives) and by 1985 the DFAT has noted that Casley “has built his wheat-growing property in Western Australia into a thriving tourist attraction” (DFAT, 2013b: 193). By the end of Casley's administration, the PHR was equipped with buildings for tourism and administration, a post office, an inter-denominational chapel, and a five-foot tall sculpture of Casley's head (Korda, 2016; Ryan et al., 2006; Ackman, 1982; National Geographic, 2016; Borrello, 2017), with chartered buses bringing tourists to visit the PHR (Macbeth, 2010; Onishi, 2011; Ryan et al., 2006).

The principality exports wildflowers and agricultural produce (Ryan et al., 2006) and sells souvenirs such as its own stamps and money (Ewin, 1994; Strauss, 1999) and caps and stubby holders (Borrello, 2017), and has natural attractions such as the Hutt River and Hutt River Valley, Wild Boar Gorge, Mt. Nebo, Mt. Secession, and the Biblical Gateway (Timothy, 2003). Reportedly, Casley has established about 5,000 acres reserve for flora and fauna in the principality (Joffe, 1995). Based on feedback posted in TripAdvisor, the main attraction in the principality is having your passport stamped for visiting the principality, followed by posting something to yourself from the PHR post office. The self-reported number of tourists visiting the PHR has been as high as 60,000 per year during the early years of the principality (Ackman, 1982; Singleton, 1980). The self-reported number has since declined to approximately 9,000 per year (ie about 25 people per day) (Taillier and Neuweiler, 2017) consisting mostly of “curious backpackers” (Murphy, 2010: online).

Although Casley has successfully used the media for attracting visitors to the PHR and has developed infrastructure for tourism to flourish, the principality remains an isolated place.

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The isolation from centres of socio-economic development contributes to the conservation of the principality's social structure. However, such isolation deprives the principality from opportunities to engage in modern development, and maintains the PHR under the status of an isolated place (George, 2009). Nonetheless, as the then Western Australian Minister for Lands Brendon Grylls stated in 2010, Casley was doing quite well "attracting people to the principality" (Murphy, 2010: online).

### 5. Taxes

Taxes and the principality is a recurring topic as it is the pivotal matter regarding the secession of the PHR becoming a *cause célèbre*. Given that the original reason for the secession was a dispute around wheat quota, it is somewhat ironic that the principality no longer grows wheat (Murphy, 2010). As tourism flourished in the principality, attention moved from wheat quotas to the taxation of the income generated inside the principality. Therefore, the issue of having to pay Australian taxes has become to the principality a matter of questioning the independence of the state itself.

It should be noted that the issues surrounding the payment of taxes by the principality do not pertain to the local shire rates. It has been reported a number of times that Casley pays his shire rates, with the payment being variously reported as an annual gift (Unattributed, 2016; Johanson, 2017; Onishi, 2011), a goodwill gesture to the local community (Ackman, 1982), international courtesy (Strauss, 1999), or a donation (Ewin, 1994). Further, it is reported that Casley pays taxes relating to commercial ventures in Western Australia located outside the principality (McIlroy, 2017).

While the principality is willing to register foreign companies through its Registrar of Companies (Heaton, 2013), the ATO has warned Australian citizens not to purchase any foreign companies registered in the PHR as part of a tax avoidance scheme (Murphy, 2010). It appears that the opinion of the Australian Government about the principality and taxes has changed over time. In 1985, a diplomatic cable about Casley stated that "he pays Australian taxes and his activities generally remain within the limits permitted by Australian law" (DFAT, 2013b: 193). However, this statement about Casley paying Australian taxes had disappeared from Administrative Circular P0044 from 1997 (DFAT, 2013b: 72-73) and Administrative Circular P0958 from 2009 (DFAT, 2013a: 10-12). Currently there is a disagreement between Casley and the Australian Tax Office (ATO) over the non-collection of goods and services tax (GST) from tourists who bought souvenirs within the PHR (Borrello, 2017).

Casley states that he has never paid taxes on business conducted inside the principality (Onishi, 2011). There are records of three court cases between the ATO and Casley during the period of his administration of the PHR. The first recorded case occurred during the 1970s and related to Casley failing to furnish the ATO with certain documents. Casley was fined \$4 and ordered to pay \$50 costs (Casley v Commonwealth [1980] WASC 3). Casley was given an ultimatum to pay the fine and costs by 11 December 1977, otherwise "legal action by the way of warrants of commitment and execution will issue without further notice" (ibid: 7). It is interesting to note that a few days after the deadline, Casley declared a brief state of war on Australia (ie 2-4 December 1977) (McIlroy, 2017). Not surprisingly, when Casley came to the Northampton police station on the 18 January 1978, he was taken to the regional prison in Geraldton for not paying his \$4 fine, and he spent the night from 18 to 19 January 1978 in jail (Ackman, 1982). However, as reported on the court files, one of

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Casley's sons "acted without delay and almost immediately set off for Geraldton with the \$4.00" (ibid: 12).

The second recorded court case is from the 2000s. In 2007, the High Court of Australia dismissed an application by Casley for leave to appeal against a judgment against him relating to Casley's failure to file tax returns (Casley v Commissioner of Taxation [2007] HCATrans 590). Based on the records, Casley argued that the principality is not part of Australia, hence not subject to Australian taxation laws, whereas the judge classified the arguments as "fatuous, frivolous and vexatious" (ibid). The third and final recorded court case was still ongoing during Casley abdication in February 2017 (Deputy Commissioner of Taxation v Casley [2017] WASC 161). The ATO claims Casley owes approximately \$2.8 million in income tax, interest and penalties in respect of taxes payable for the financial years ended 30 June 2006 to 30 June 2013 (McIlroy, 2017).

Due to the substantial amount of money involved in the latest court case the PHR has asked for public assistance and pro bono legal support (McIlroy, 2017). It appears that through the ATO, the Australian Government has found a way to clamp down on the activities of the PHR by constraining the financial resources of the principality.

### 6. Abdication and Discussion

Casley was born in 1925, and established the PHR during his forties. After more than forty years at the helm of his principality, his health has started to fail and he is currently battling emphysema (Borrello, 2017). During the celebrations of the 46th birthday of the principality in 2016, Casley was regaled with a letter from Buckingham Palace with a message of good wishes from HM Queen Elizabeth II (Pash, 2016; Unattributed, 2016). Perhaps a nod from the monarch after almost half a century of hard work that the time had come for a change in the principality. In 26 January 2017, Casley announced that he would step down, abdicating in favour of his youngest son Graeme. As Casley states;

*Having attained the age of 91 years and being in declining health for some time, I have decided that the time is right to do it now... Having been the Sovereign of our small nation for more than half of my life, a position that has been most rewarding at times and most difficult at others, I feel that it is time to hand over at a time when I am still around and thus able to offer help and support to my successor as he settles in to the position. (PHR Royal Rhetoric, 2017).*

About 100 people attended the abdication ceremony on 11 February 2017. However, not all invitees were able to attend with some notable dignitaries, such as Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett, sending their apologies (Taillier and Neuweiler, 2017; Unattributed, 2016).

Casley has created a unique place in the Western Australian outback, where an isolated wheat farm has become the "second largest country in Australia" (Ackman, 1982: online). Based on the evidence, it seems that the attempted international enterprises of the principality are over with the Australian Government having successfully clamped down on the use of the PHR passports and discrediting the principality's international missions. However, the principality has experienced a constant flow of tourism, thanks to a uniqueness associated with Casley's isolation of the PHR from the rest of the Commonwealth of Australia. While isolation may prevent innovations in the principality,

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it is the very same isolation that acts as an “immune system” for the principality (George, 2009: online). Although the isolation helps in preserving the identity of the principality, it also limits the success in developing the tourist potential of the place. Another hindrance being the lack of official relationship with the state of Western Australia and the Australian Government (Timothy, 2003).

It can be argued that the PHR will remain a tourist destination in Western Australia for the time being. Especially as it appears that both the Shire of Northampton and the Government of Western Australia are willing to trade off the tourism associated with the PHR. Moreover, the principality is still a working farm and the family now leases its best cropping lands to a neighbour (Murphy, 2010). With a steady income stream from tourism and the leasing of cropping lands, the main challenge the principality faced at the end of Casley’s administration was the dispute with the ATO regarding taxing income generated within the principality.

### 7. Conclusion

Casley established Hutt River Province, later renamed the PHR in 1970 to circumvent the wheat quota imposed by the Western Australian Government. It is plausible that Casley found inspiration in the Western Australian history of flirtation with secession for his acts. By proclaiming his principality, Casley created his own ‘island’ within the Western Australian outback and gladly marooned himself in his very own creation, perhaps seeking a more authentic version of statehood. The desolated nature of the outback and the challenging distance through unsealed roads ensured the isolation of the principality.

Australian authorities have done their best to ensure that the landlocked principality did not gain recognition from other countries. Nonetheless, tourism flourished under Casley’s administration. The PHR developed its own islandish identity, with the story of the man who defied the government by creating his own principality is now ingrained in the mythology of the Australian outback (Gill, 2005). As such, the story of the PHR provides an example of *aislamiento* occurring for a landlocked principality that is geographically isolated - i.e. marooned - in the Western Australian outback, that has also intentionally further isolated itself to develop its own islandish identity. We thus extend the notion of *aislamiento* beyond peninsulas (eg Anderson, 2016; Potiki, 2016) to remote geographically isolated environments. Illustrating the deeply social and political nature of *aislamiento*, and that in regards to *shima*, islands “are more than landmasses, bodies of waters, and fact. They are products of human cultures, histories, desires, and prejudices.” (Anderson, 2016: 45).

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