



## AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PORT MORESBY

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# MEDIA RELEASE

### **Improving health and education for Kokoda region communities**

Twenty-five tonnes of building materials for a new classroom, teacher and health worker accommodation, water supply system and toilets have been flown to the Kokoda Track by the PNG Defence Force as part of the PNG-Australian Government Kokoda Initiative.

More than 100 students will benefit from the new elementary school at Naoro 2 and teacher accommodation at Menari. The facilities will provide access to safe drinking water with new a water supply from 2500 litre tanks, as well as pit toilets for boys and girls. A house will also be constructed at Menari health post to provide accommodation for a community health worker.

Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea Ms Deborah Stokes said the partnership with the PNG Defence Force to deliver supplies has saved the Kokoda Initiative time and more than K300,000.

"The Kokoda Initiative partnership with the PNG Defence Force and the close collaboration with the Hiri District health and education coordinators have been instrumental in the success of this operation. The value of a health worker or teacher in the community cannot be underestimated. These new facilities will have a significant impact on student learning and health services in the region," Ms Stokes said.

Central Provincial Administrator Mr Gei Raga thanked the PNG Defence Force for its support to the Kokoda Initiative. "Upgrading and installing new facilities is extremely difficult due to the rugged terrain," he said.

Koairi LLG President Hon Ogi David praised the partnership: "This operation is the equivalent to over a thousand porter trips or 15,000 hours walking in material from Owers Corner."

The PNG Defence Force will support the Kokoda Initiative with major logistical support over three days, delivering materials to the remote communities of Menari and Naoro 2 which are only accessible by air or by foot along the Kokoda Track.

Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel John Matagarakikai said the exercise was an excellent training scenario for PNG Defence Force aircrew and would build the capacity of the Air Transport Wing.

Construction of the new facilities is expected to be completed by September 2015 as part of a range of health, education and infrastructure projects funded by the Australian Government through the Kokoda Initiative.

The Kokoda Initiative includes the Department of Environment, Kokoda Track Authority, Tourism Promotion Authority and the Australian Government. It is a bilateral agreement to protect the Kokoda Track, Brown River Catchment and Owen Stanley Ranges while improving the lives of the people living along the Track.

**ENDS/**

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