

Third Enga Development Forum, Wabag

**Address by HE Bruce Davis
Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea**

“Security and Development - Charting the way for Enga”

11 December 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sir Peter Ipatas, Governor, Enga Province
Attorney General
Minister for Police
Minister for Civil Aviation
Member for Wabag
MAJGEN Jerry Singirok (Rtd)

It is with great pleasure that I am here today with you at the third Enga Development Forum Conference. A particular thank you to the Governor for the invitation – it is always easy to come back.

Such conferences are useful ways to bring together leaders and the community to discuss issues of importance to you all.

And, importantly, to take action collectively to find ways to advance public policy and development.

This year’s theme of *‘The price of democracy in Enga and the nation – dissecting the post national election ‘crisis’ and charting a way forward for Enga’* is both fitting and timely.

Looking back is a useful starting point when it comes to making plans for the future.

Looking back helps us to draw lessons and learn from the experiences of a wide range of people.

Doing so gives us the best chance to improve and create excellent solutions to the challenges facing us.

Experience brings wisdom. This wisdom – which I see plenty of here today – is critical in underpinning and guiding the work to developing plans and policies for the future.

I am honoured to be with such an esteemed group of Engans and national leaders to offer my thoughts on the recent elections, its aftermath, and offer some observations as you look to strengthen democracy and to chart a way forward for this terrific province.

The experience of the elections shows us that security will be one of the major issues that you will focus on.

The elections

First, my thoughts on the elections.

The recent elections once again showed the commitment of every citizen to participate in democracy.

We were pleased to provide support to the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission in delivering the election, including through the Australian Electoral Commission, and the Australian Defence Force who provided substantial logistics assistance across the country in the week before polling.

I was fortunate enough to observe voting across three districts in Enga – Lagaip-Porgera, Wabag and Wapenamanda.

And, like my staff who observed the elections in every province, was heartened to see many Papua New Guineans participating in the election process.

Australia's observer mission involved 67 staff from the High Commission and four Australian Members of Parliament. They covered the polling and counting periods of the election. Our observer mission covered every province and over half of Papua New Guinea's electorates.

Importantly, across Papua New Guinea, women lined up in great numbers to cast a vote.

While women participated in the election process, both casting votes and standing as candidates, it is disappointing there are now no female parliamentarians.

Australia welcomes Prime Minister O'Neill's commitment that the Papua New Guinea Government will look into this situation, to find ways to allow women to participate in Papua New Guinea's National Parliament.

This may require some creative solutions, and we will be with Papua New Guinea every step of the way as you work towards achieving this important goal.

Australia is already supporting Papua New Guinea in this area.

We are co-funding a PGK8.3million program through *Pacific Women* to the Women in Leadership Support Program.

This program provides training and mentoring to potential women candidates in Papua New Guinea, including training for women candidates to mount a credible campaign and opportunities for networking, skills development and mentoring.

Australia is also supporting the Papua New Guinea Government to enhance women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peace-building by assisting the Government implement a national Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy.

Women's participation equals better economic and social outcomes overall.

Nevertheless, what is clear is that the vast majority of Papua New Guineans are strong believers in democracy.

From what I saw, your fellow citizens were keen to participate. They were keen to have their voices heard.

Having said that, the elections did face challenges. This can't be ignored.

Others have canvassed these challenges, such as concerns with the electoral roll and the mean logistical challenges election officials faced to reach very remote polling places.

However, in the spirit of the Forum's theme, I want to focus on one very important challenge.

That challenge is security.

Sadly, these elections were marred by some violence. The positive security environment that I saw here in Enga during the campaign and polling periods unwound as the counting period progressed.

Tragically people lost their lives.

Police lost their lives.

Properties and public infrastructure were damaged.

Access to services were disrupted and businesses were affected.

Poor security has long-lasting and negative impacts.

It takes a toll – on families, communities, economic growth, democracy, and broader human development.

Women and children suffer from violence in disproportionate ways. This takes a terrible toll and as a result holds back the entire community's chance of advancing.

In this context, I welcome in particular the governor's recent comments condemning in strong terms sorcery accusation related violence, which overwhelmingly effects women.

We will continue to work closely with Papua New Guinea authorities to support programs and organisations seeking to reduce gender based violence and to assist victims.

Improving security and law and order is a complex undertaking.

The root causes of security challenges, such as proliferation of weapons, guns, unemployment, social service issues and human development need to be addressed in order to improve law and order.

Tackling the security challenges faced across Papua New Guinea, is a long-term endeavour. As a solid partner of Papua New Guinea, and your neighbour, it is an endeavour that Australia remains strongly committed to working together with Papua New Guinea to address.

Australia has recently released a Foreign Policy White Paper which articulates that supporting a stable and prosperous Papua New Guinea is one of Australia's most important foreign policy objectives.

We will continue to pursue close defence cooperation and build capacity in policing and law and justice.

For example, working together, Australia and Papua New Guinea tackle transnational crime issues such as weapons trafficking. We do this in the region through police cooperation.

We also work together in the UN on international peace and security, for example, the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, which regulates the international trade in conventional weapons to contribute to peace and the reduction of human suffering.

Law and order

Improving the security environment needs a hard edge. It requires a capable and effective police force.

Tackling Law and order challenges and building strong police capabilities remain important issues for Papua New Guinea.

A 2012 survey by Papua New Guinea's Institute for National Affairs showed a key concern for private sector investment in Papua New Guinea is still law and order.

With this research in mind, together with the recent experience during the elections, law and order problems have broad

implications. From individual's security and wellbeing through to economic growth and inward investment.

Tribal fighting is one law and order challenge, which has a wide-ranging impact. Normal economic and social activity can come to a standstill and people become displaced in their own communities.

Safeguarding individual's safety and security is the job of police.

A dynamic and effective police force is vital for public order, peace and security. Australia is pleased that the national government, through its Alotau II Accord, has made modernising the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary a priority.

Policing

Australia has a long-standing and positive relationship with the RPNGC.

Our police work closely to the benefit of both of our nations.

For example our police:

- work with Papua New Guinea to combat transnational crime;
- support all Papua New Guinea law enforcement bodies;
- assist the RPNGC to be prepared for APEC, when the entire nation will be at the centre of the world's stage;
- help to strengthen the RPNGC's middle management, and leadership across the force;
- deliver programs that lift professional standards; and
- help the RPNGC to improve the management of human resources, finances and governance.

Police working in Enga have had some benefits from this support. But I acknowledge more could be done. As I mentioned, we are currently heavily engaged in APEC support. But we need to be

planning for the future and we need your input on the best way forward for policing support in coming years.

I know, Governor and Minister, you both have very firm views on the need for Australian policing to play a stronger role outside of Port Moresby and I look forward to discussing how this option for support can be further developed as we examine longer-term options.

Addressing security requires a multifaceted approach.

Indeed, tackling security requires effective people and institutions across the law and justice sector, from the courts to policing to corrections.

Dealing with security also requires a broad view. Physical development, strong institutions and building human capacity – and leading by example - make a substantial contribution to addressing security and law and order issues.

Quality education and healthcare, which I know are important to the national and the provincial government, also make a significant impact on security. As we saw yesterday, opportunities to make income from agriculture is also important.

These elements help deliver a more prosperous and secure community.

A strong, healthy and educated population will contribute towards delivering tangible – and positive - security outcomes.

Education

In partnership with Papua New Guinea, Australia takes a holistic approach to building the future of Papua New Guinea through the education sector.

Australia recognises that education can be transformative and is a critical pillar to development and future prosperity.

For this reason, supporting Papua New Guinea's education system remains a key priority for us.

Australia is the largest donor in the education sector, supporting early childhood, basic, technical and higher education.

In 2017-18, Australia will invest around PGK150million in education [*AUD60.5million*].

Achieving strong education outcomes needs strong and effective teachers. They are integral to building the next generation. Excellent teachers are vital to any country's future.

We are pleased to be working with the Engan Government to support the Enga Teachers College.

And, I'm delighted to confirm that Australia will be providing a grant of up to PGK10 million to deliver a four-story building, which will include 18 classrooms, 6 multipurpose spaces, amenities, and ramps to ensure disability inclusiveness.

More broadly in Papua New Guinea, Australia's education assistance focuses on:

- providing children with the foundations around literacy and numeracy;
- producing skilled workers; and
- developing future leaders.

Education doesn't start at primary school.

It starts much earlier.

Allocating funding and resources into early childhood education programs has a twofold benefit. It reduces future crime rates and provides children with the best chance of future success.

Early childhood education and development is integral to ensuring positive development of children and to help prevent crime at later ages.

Basic Education

In the basic education area, Australia is working with Papua New Guinea partners to improve teaching and learning in the elementary sector, in line with national, provincial and local level administrations.

This includes Australia supporting the Papua New Guinea Government to develop a Teacher Support English Kit for elementary teachers.

Teachers in Enga are benefitting from this Kit, which will help them to support young children improve literacy outcomes.

Basic education is paramount. Getting the foundations right, and making sure its quality, is critical. Like building a house, with poor foundations, the rest of the structure doesn't stand a chance.

Education also has a greater chance of success in positive learning environments.

Australia has built classrooms across Papua New Guinea, including Enga.

In 2015-16, 10 primary schools received infrastructure support through furnished double classroom, offices, teacher's house and ablution blocks.

Skills and productivity support to Enga

Some say education is a life-long endeavour.

Learning doesn't stop at the completion of secondary school.

Australia is supporting Papua New Guinea in its goal to increase skills and productivity of Papua New Guinea's labour force and future leaders.

Economic growth depends on a skilled workforce. Australia is supporting Papua New Guinea to lift the quality and quantity of skills training in Tertiary and Vocational (TVET) institutions. This forms a part of an overall strategy of increasing the skills capacity of the Papua New Guinea workforce.

TVET schools and colleges are important because they provide businesses and industries with skilled workforce needed to develop and grow the economy of a country.

Technical skills are vital to development and future prosperity.

As is specialised and expert knowledge gained by learning at tertiary institutions.

Since 2011, 11 recipients of the prestigious Australia Awards scholarships to study in Australia have come from Enga [*four women/seven men*].

There are currently two awardees studying in the science and engineering fields. Through their study, these Engans will be set to become future leaders of Papua New Guinea.

Since 2011, 94 Engans [*70 women/24 men*] have been a part of the Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships Program here in Papua New Guinea.

There are currently 30 Engans [*17 women/13 men*] studying midwifery, nursing and education at various Papua New Guinean institutions.

And many more awardees from other provinces are studying in Engan institutions.

Leadership/Role models

Of course, those numbers are nothing compared to your own investment in education and the opportunity for many of your people to gain higher qualifications. Just last Friday, I had the privilege to listen to one of your own inspiring Engan students, Peterson Mathius. Peterson, who is wheelchair bound, is now studying law at UPNG and was a guest speaker at an event we hosted marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Leaders and role models are important to show the community that turning to violence to resolve disputes and criminality are simply going to set the province back.

For example, strong secondary education has played a role in fostering leaders and nation building.

Many graduates from National High Schools have gone on to become Papua New Guinea's leaders. National High Schools shaped many Papua New Guineans who enjoyed high quality education as well as the opportunity to mix with individuals from other provinces.

Enga Province has also produced many visionary leaders through its own secondary school system. This includes my good friend Governor Ipatas, who graduated like many others, from Pausa Lutheran High School.

Australian universities contribute to Papua New Guinea's future.

Right here in Enga, Southern Cross University works with the Institute of Business Studies.

Education is a tool that promotes peace, justice and equality. It has a major role to play in shaping values, building collective consciousness, reshaping societal preferences and imparting the necessary skills to enact these values.

Through the Pacific Leadership and Governance Precinct, we support building capacity in public sector leaders. The courses offered through this precinct will be increasingly offered at the provincial level.

This work helps build stronger institutions to develop policy and deliver services.

Decentralisation

It also has tangible benefits for Papua New Guinea's decentralisation reforms.

Australia is supporting Papua New Guinea in this area

Recently, I signed, with the Ministers for Planning, Intergovernmental Relations and Community Development, the Papua New Guinea-Australia Partnership Arrangement for Improved Decentralisation and Service Delivery. The Partnership

establishes the priorities for our cooperation with Papua New Guinea in support of its decentralisation reforms.

The Partnership establishes three priorities for Australia's support:

- first - local solutions for local challenges – improving frontline service delivery and economic opportunity in the provinces and districts;
- second - support for Papua New Guinea's citizens to engage and participate in the development of their communities; and
- third - support to ensure Papua New Guinea's policies for decentralised service delivery are well developed and well understood.

Health

A productive, educated and engaged community must also be a healthy one.

Improving healthcare is another area where Australia is supporting Papua New Guinea to guarantee its future prosperity and by extension, security.

Australia is currently building four Community Health Posts in Enga under the Rural Primary Health Service Delivery Program.

These Community Health Posts will deliver increased services to their local community, which will include better quality maternal health services.

This program is being delivered through co-funding from Papua New Guinea, Australia and the Asian Development Bank.

The four Community Health Posts are due to be finished by April 2018.

This means, when established, these Community Health Centres will provide improved services to around 32,000 people.

Facilities are important, but so too are the skilled healthcare workers needed to help people recover from illness.

Australia is providing targeted support to help Papua New Guinea build a cadre of nurses.

We have been a strong supporter of the Enga College of Nursing.

Australia provides scholarships to students studying the three-year Diploma of Nursing program at Enga College of Nursing.

Since 2014, Australia has provided around 51 scholarships to students at the Enga College of Nursing.

There are currently 34 recipients of an Australia Awards Pacific Scholarship at the Enga College of Nursing.

The scholarships not only cover tuition, accommodation and stipends for students, but also provide an amount to each school to improve the teaching experience of students, through improved infrastructure, purchase of teaching and learning resources and teacher quality.

Receiving a quality education needs the right setting.

Australia supported the Enga College of Nursing with PGK 4.3 million for the construction of the female dormitory, the mess and a kitchen.

In partnership with the Enga Provincial Government, Australia provided a further PGK 2.2 million for a male dormitory.

Australia believes that the improved health and well-being of Papua New Guinea citizens is critical to Papua New Guinea's intermediate and long-term development, and investing in people is the surest way of achieving economic prosperity.

Labour mobility

Economic prosperity places downward pressure on poor security.

It helps to build resilience.

The new Australian Foreign Policy White Paper outlines the critical importance of a resilient Pacific.

Regional economic cooperation and integration is important in that regard.

Australia will work to improve opportunities for growth and jobs and to strengthen the economic resilience of the region.

We are already supporting Papua New Guinea on many fronts and through a range of programs to promote economic growth.

As part of our stepping up engagement in the Pacific, we are increasing opportunities for labour mobility from the Pacific region to satisfy unmet demand in our labour market.

This has direct benefit for Enga and its economic prosperity.

Let me give you an example of the impacts of a worker from the Pacific participating in our labour mobility schemes. For every six month placement, workers on average send home \$5,000.

Already, the Australian High Commission is discussing with the Enga Provincial Government to explore ways for Engans to take advantage of the labour mobility program.

It will provide Engans with opportunities to develop skills and experiences which they can bring back to the benefit of the community.

Conclusion

The Australia – Papua New Guinea partnership is critically important to Australia.

Australia, as a solid and reliable partner, will continue supporting Papua New Guinea as it strives to strengthen its public sector institutions, boost the economy and works cooperatively within the region to tackle international issues.

All of this plays an integral part in delivering progress for Papua New Guinea, our closest neighbour, and advancing its spirited democracy.

As Papua New Guinea works to overcome challenges developing its capability, Australia is strongly motivated to remain its partner of choice, adding value where we can to institutions and national assets.

Happily, we do so from a position of experience.

Our connection with Papua New Guinea spans many decades and generations, across different periods of history and geostrategic competition.

Our cooperation must work for everyone. The bonds between our people and institutions are strong and enduring, and will continue to stand the test of time. But we need to renew the bond, including institutional links and people-to-people links.

Again, thank you for inviting me to this important Forum.

I look forward to hearing some of the fruitful, passionate and thoughtful discussion that will no doubt ensue and help chart a positive course for Enga.

Thank you