

World TB Day Commemoration
March 23, 2018: Sir John Guise Stadium Indoor Complex
Address by Will Robinson, Counsellor, Public Policy and Health Security
Australian High Commission

- The Health Minister Hon Sir Dr Puka Temu,
- NCD Governor Hon Powes Parkop,
- Ambassador Catherine Ebert-Gray,
- UN Resident Coordinator Mr Gianluca Rampola,
- World Bank Country Manager Ms Patricia Veevers- Carter,
- Dr Luo Dapeng, Secretary Kase, Dr Wautai

Good morning

On behalf of DFAT, I am very happy to be here to commemorate the World Tuberculosis Day

The National Department of Health 2018 World TB Day theme “Leaders for ending Tuberculosis in Papua New Guinea is derived from the global theme “Wanted: Leaders for TB-Free World. You can make history. End TB.”

It is fitting for PNG because PNG has one of the highest TB burdens in the world with over 30 000 new cases a year.

It was recently included on the WHO list of countries with a high overall TB burden; large numbers of patients coinfecting with HIV and TB, and high number of multi-drug resistant (MDR) patients.

The emergence of drug-resistant TB poses a major health threat and could put at risk the gains made in efforts to end TB.

In addition to the terrible human cost of TB, there is a strong economic argument for investing in effective health systems. The cost of treating MDRTB can be up to 200 times greater than for drug sensitive TB, adding further to economic hardship.

The situation is serious and needs a clear and prolonged response, but it can be turned around. There has been considerable success in Western Province in stabilising its epidemic and now working to permanently reduce the illness to manageable levels.

In PNG, the National Capital District (NCD) contributes to 22 percent of all TB cases in PNG although it is home to only 5 percent PNG’s population and it is appropriate that NCD has been chosen to host 2018 World TB Day

The success in Daru is a result of leadership shown by NDoH, Provincial Health and Daru General Hospital in partnership and coordination with all stakeholders and this is achievable in NCD and the rest of PNG.

We are pleased to say that the Australian Government is supporting the Government of PNG in the implementation of NCD Community TB Project – through funding three (Child Fund, FHI360, World Vision) of the four NGOs with AUD 3 million – which will address TB in NCD through improving diagnosis and subsequent community based TB treatment.

We would like to acknowledge the Government of PNG and the National Department of Health for creating the enabling environment for the partners to participate and contribute in the response to TB in PNG.

This shows the leadership and commitment of the NDoH to treat and stop further transmission of TB in the NCD and PNG. As a result, new players such as the World Bank are coming to partner with us to address and end TB in PNG.

We also recognise that this occasion has been made possible through the strong leadership, partnership and collaborative efforts by all partners

NDoH, NCD Health, FHI360, MSF, World Vision, the WHO and DFAT and as demonstrated here by representation by national MPs, national and provincial officials, clinicians, public health officials, broader civil society and non-government partners and stakeholders

Especially NCD Health, we would like to acknowledge and commend Dr Wutai and your team for the leadership you have shown in coordinating and making this event a success. We wish you all the best in your TB response work in NCD and we are committed to support your efforts in collaboration with all the partners gathered here today

Let me conclude by saying that as partner in the response to TB in PNG we are committed to supporting PNG's leadership in innovative initiatives to end TB in PNG.

Thank you very much.