

**National Law and Order Summit**  
**“Building Safer Communities through Crime Prevention**  
**Partnerships”**

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

**8 August 2018**

I am very pleased to be invited to attend this summit.

Seeing so many of you here today is testament to the importance of the discussion on law and order in Papua New Guinea.

I often refer to the closeness and connectedness of our two countries, and nowhere is this more important, or evident, than in our security and law and justice partnerships.

Papua New Guinea’s geostrategic location and growing economy underpins its ever increasing role in our region.

Already, Papua New Guinea and Australia tackle security challenges jointly, and we have many shared interests. Our borders are vulnerable, and leaving them unchecked will present serious economic, security and health risks to people in both our countries.

Papua New Guinea is also our largest Defence Cooperation Program partner. This partnership is steeped in shared history, and reflects the trust, common interests and shared regional perspectives of both nations. Dynamic and effective defence and law enforcement forces are vital for peace, public order and keeping our communities safe. However, they are just the ‘front line’.

Papua New Guinea-Australian collaboration in the law and justice sector has been longstanding and is ongoing, but I think it is particularly timely that this Summit has been called now to examine Papua New Guinea’s approaches to *proactively* tackling law and order. In particular “building safer communities through crime prevention partnerships”.

We support each other through a range of other institutional links. For example, two sitting Australian Federal Court judges – Berna Collier and John Logan – sit for a number of weeks each year on the PNG Supreme Court. They were both appointed for a third term in 2017. And our justice departments work closely together on the delivery of government legal services and a range of policy issues under the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretaries of both departments last year. As part of this partnership, we also have prosecution advisers embedded within the Office of the Public Prosecutor, working with PNG prosecutors on case preparation, tactics and advocacy in court. They concentrate on key areas such as family and sexual offences and financial crime. Just last week we saw the results of this work when the OPP achieved a conviction of misappropriation in a high profile case against a public official.

I hope the theme for this Summit will open up discussions on innovative solutions to crime prevention and diverting people away from criminal behaviour.

One of the biggest challenges and opportunities facing Papua New Guinean policymakers is the high number of youth and the growing population. Around 50 per cent of Papua New Guineans are younger than 24 years of age.

As in every country, these young people have great potential and are a huge pool of energy and talent. The challenge is to provide them with meaningful opportunities to contribute positively to Papua New Guinea's future prosperity.

One model where we are working together to address this challenge is the establishment of Youth Development Councils in Northern Province. The Councils are designed to bring attention to issues affecting youth, and to support young people to play an active role in decision making at all levels of government.

I know this is an initiative that has drawn interest from around the country, and is being observed closely.

There are many other interesting approaches to crime prevention being implemented, and the Australian Government is pleased to be supporting some of these.

Valuable work has been undertaken to increase the capacity of village courts and land mediators to negotiate and settle disputes at the community level, before violence escalates. Village courts directly affect more Papua New Guineans than any other judicial body.

It is important for Australia to change with the times and to rethink where we are investing our resources and efforts. And to make sure we do it in lockstep with our Papua New Guinean colleagues.

One of our other very close partnerships is the Papua New Guinea-Australia Policing Partnership. For now, the partnership is focusing on the immense challenge of safety and security during PNG's hosting of the upcoming APEC Leaders' summit.

However, our two governments are already thinking hard about ways we can reshape the partnership after APEC, to ensure it achieves the most important outcomes for both Papua New

Guinea and Australia. We hear loudly the interest in a broader, more diverse and practical role for our police.

To understand priorities, we must genuinely and openly engage with all stakeholders, from your elected leaders and government officials, to churches, business and people in remote communities. Forums such as this one are a perfect opportunity to do that.

I have been fortunate in my time in Papua New Guinea to travel to many different parts of the country. In fact, I recently travelled the Western border with the Minister for Police, the Minister for Immigration and Border Security and the Minister for Defence. The stark message emerging from this visit was the importance of ensuring all agencies of government, including security agencies, combine their efforts to work in the service of communities.

On my travels, the Papua New Guinean people – whether they are political leaders, people working in the law and justice sector, or members of the community – consistently raise with me their

concerns about the current law and order situation in the country.

We acknowledge that the task of working towards PNG's law and justice goals, in pursuit of *Vision 2050* is a challenging one. It cannot be left to the 'law and justice sector' alone.

Jointly, we have achieved a great deal of positive progress:

- Training of more than 3000 legal officers
- Constructing the Manus Police Headquarters
- Issuing of 1542 'interim protection orders' (under the Family Protection Act)
- Training over 1200 Village Court and Land Mediator officials, and
- Establishing 24 family and sexual violence units, resulting in almost 55,000 Papua New Guineans reporting cases of violence.

We are working with local organisations, such as *Femili PNG* based here in Lae, who are helping survivors of family and sexual

violence to access services such as safe transport, food, police assistance, medical care and legal support.

The underlying social issues contributing to 'law and order' are many and complex. Tackling these issues is a long-term, community-wide endeavour, and one for which Australia is a committed partner.

This is an excellent opportunity to think differently and creatively about the future direction of the law and justice sector in Papua New Guinea.

I commend the Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Sector's National Coordinating Mechanism for their initiative in organising this summit, and wish you well in your deliberations over the next three days.

Thank you