



Submission No 25

Inquiry into Australia's aid program and its impact on human rights and security in the Pacific

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**Inquiry into Australia's aid programme
in the Pacific.**

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WRITER'S BACKGROUND.

I can still recall being made to attend the 16 Sept 1975 Independence Day handover ceremony in Lae's beautiful Botanical Gardens with Dad and 6 of my other brothers, my 3 sisters stayed back at home assisting Mum's preparation for a feast.

Yes and what a feast, this was Papua New Guinea's (PNG) biggest day and what an occasion.

As Administrator David Hay took down the Australian flag for the last time in Port Moresby and the independent flag of the State of PNG was raised we all cheered with mixed feelings, something akin to a teenager saying good bye to parents for the last time. Emotions ran high, the Country was now in the hand of its own people, including myself, localisation was the buzz word, all my Australian school friends were leaving with their parents taking the "Golden handshake" and departing forever and I was only 19 years old.

Celebrations ran on for days and why not. The Australian Government & its people gave PNG the best possible chance in the hand over and can always hold their heads up high.. This included:

- 1) Health: Well established Infrastructure, well resourced
- 2) Education: Well establish Infrastructure, well resourced
- 3) Law & Order, Army: Well established Infrastructure, well resourced
- 4) Economic, Business opportunity: The Jewel in the Pacific Crown.

I know this as **fact**. I was born in PNG, my cousin John Natera was the first PNG to attend Oxford University in England and later held positions in the Asian Development bank in Manila. Other cousins Rose Kekedo was Secretary of PNG Immigration Dept, Jean Kekedo, Secretary of Trade & Industries. .

" Six Sept 82, it's a girl, now there's two of you."

"In our home, laughter & song, little thinking anything could go wrong."

This was part of the poem I wrote to my daughter when she underwent numerous hospital visits that the health system in PNG just could not diagnosis.

Yes, 7 years later all services started to stall, living standards started to decline but even worst was to come as corruption and nepotism took hold and increased because of self-servicing politicians.

I know this as **fact**, we lived through this destabilising period and departed PNG in 1987 with many of our Indigenous PNG friends, disgusted at the way the Country was being govern.

Needless to say my submission will centre on the usage of aid (or shall we say mis-use of aid) to Papua New Guinea (PNG), a country so very full of promise at Independence but now a failed State and who should take the full blame.....its so called "leaders" from Somare to Skate and now full circle again to Somare.

STRENGTHENING LAW & JUSTICE.

Pre- Independence (1974).

Each Province Police Station (PPS) was supervised by an Australian with the Second in charge (Local) trained to take over. Each PPS was well resourced, disciplined and accountability was enforced, morals were high. The Police had good & strong support of community. The Australian flag was hosted with pride daily.

Post- Independence (1982).

Each PPS now fully localised by the well trained 2IC . It is no longer well resourced, discipline within the force is lacking, accountability & moral low & sinking lower. The Papua New Guinea flag is in tatters & is intermittingly hosted.

To have Police attend to a problem, there are times that one had to drive to the station to pick an officer up or better still fill up a vehicle.

Community at large no longer respect Police and the authority it represent.

The missing ingredient: **good governance, strong & ethical leadership.**

Recommendations.

Throw away the “Cultural Sensitivity/ Colonial Imperialism” hand book that the Papua New Guinea (PNG) government & politicians (especially Provincial Governors) will shove in our face when we try to assist. There will be no peace while self-serving “Leaders” look after their own interest.

Decent law abiding community members, especially women are crying out for Law & Order to be a priority address to enable the economic (small scale) to start to develop again.

If we are to assist PNG and pull the country out of the brink we must address the following with regards to Law & Justice:

- Implement Guidance on Governance and Accountability with strong & ethical leadership training.
- Resource the Police to operational readiness.
- Recall fire arms from all political “Leaders”
- Introduce National Service to assist the Youth of PNG secure a trade and become contributing members of the country.
- Selection of a group of former indigenous PNG now residing in Australia who have Law & Justice background to actual work on short term basic to mentor , oversee recovery program.
- Channel all funds through Ausaid Organisations.

IMPROVING ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTIONS.

Pre-Independence (1974).

Primary producers were maintaining their field and crops, Tourism was welcome and the Mining sector was booming albeit the World commodity prices were very good. PNG had workers trained to eventually take over after Independence.

“Leaders” were more focused then, elected with the whole Country progress, Peace and Welfare in mind.

Sect 47 of PNG Constitution states this. Localisation was fast-tracked.

I can still recall Tei Abau (United Party Leader) statements to former Australian Prime Minister Whitlam that Independence was prematurely pencilled for 16 September 1975.

Post-Independence (1982).

Well, history has proved the old man’s vision totally correct.

“Leaders”, again from Somare to Chan and now, full circle back to Somare were just short of readiness to be able to display good governance and total accountability.

The good credit and foreign reserve built up to pre-Independence were depleted within 10 years.

Recommendations.

The 3 priority areas that will address , improve and maintain Economic management and Public accountability:

- Have a mentor to guide, train AND discipline trainees in the various key dept of Finance, Trade, Primary Industries
- Have a qualified Australian as one of the advisors attached to the self-serving Ministers in the PNG Government to ensure good governance.
- Ensure the Justice dept in PNG is well resourced to enforce and get convictions, especially for “Leaders” who continually, consistently and blatantly abuse their political “rights”.

MAINTAINING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES (ESPECIALLY HEALTH).

Pre-Independence (1974).

Aid Posts (Health Centres) were operating and well stocked. Nurses looked forward to their days work and the Aid Posts were clean. At least delivery of essential drugs and supplies were being despatched from the main Provincial Hospital.

Within the main Provincial Hospitals itself we still had dedicated Australian Nurses who mentored and trained their local counter-part, passing on skills. Doctors visited from other Province & from overseas. One even received a simple 3 course meal if unfortunate to be in Hospital. I know this for a **fact**. One of my friends Bruce Sheldrick, father was the Superintendent of the Angau Hospital in Lae.

At hand-over this Hospital was well established, well resourced and well maintained thanks to the Australian government and its generous people.

The *Highlands Highway*, the lifeline road which brought much of the coffee, tea, fresh produce and other primary industry goods down to the coastal town of Lae for overseas buyers and from which trade goods were sent back up was in very good conditions being constantly maintained by the old Australian Government “*Commworks*”.

Post-Independence (1982).

Aid Posts, almost non-functional and now faced with the AIDS problem.

Angau Hospital Lae, barely operational, nurses daily harassed, doctors unable to cope. The general opinion was that should one require hospitalisation, even for maternity, one headed for Cairns. A “white elephant Hospital” complex gifted from China stands half utilised.

As a member of the Lions Club of Lae, supporting the Hospital, Handicapped Children’s Association and disadvantaged I was always frustrated by the lack of tolerance displayed by the government of PNG to the sick and disabled.

The *Highlands Highway*, shamefully unfunded to the stage now that at several precarious over-passes one has to bring their own timber to act as bailey bridges. Yet this is the very Highway that supports the Primary Industry of the Country.

Recommendations.

Despatch the Australian Army 21st Construction Squadron out of Enoggera, Brisbane to do priority work:

- Up- grade the Highlands Highway (There is a top-class engineering company at Igam Barracks headed by a Capt Henry Fabila).
- Up-grade barracks for the Police

- Establish the National Service, train and utilise eligible youths, (male & females) securing a life-long trade.
- Up-grade the Aid –Posts thereby giving the grass-rooted (they have been rooted by their own government) a hope that at least the sick, elderly and disadvantaged can secure medical assistance.

I have worked with the 21 st Construction at Injinoo, Cape York under the AACAP program. I was CEO at Injinoo Council and found their service delivery second to none.

ANTI-CORRUPTION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE MEASURES.

Pre-Independence (1974).

Checks & balances were part of routine daily duties. Documents pertaining to requisitions for supplies were counter-signed, even in Dept of Treasury.

Stocks were monitored to ensure adequate levels were maintained, especially medical stocks and delivery of the medical supplies to Aid-Posts were a priority to ensure the grass-roots people were not disadvantaged.

The Police & PNG Defence Force were accountable for weapons and equipments.

Workers arrived & clocked off under strict guide-lines.

Post-Independence (1982).

What about checks & balance. This is our Country. We will do as we please, thank you. Have you heard that before? Yes, of course in our own back yards, in remote Australian Indigenous communities.

Why did the system deteriorate? Simply put, there was no independent umpire to stop the nepotism and instil good ethical practises. We now have positions with local persons in charge and we will look after our own family clan groups.

Recommendations.

Fortunately there are a few well meaning politicians in PNG who are willing to partake in a serious, no hold address to stop the self destruction ways, among them, Mrs Carol Kidu, Mr Bart Philimon, Mr Peter Barter and retired Chief Justice Sir Arnold Amet..

If we are to assist them we must, as a minimum, have a drawn up draft MOU which specifically states that **Good Governance, Accountability & Milestones reporting** are not negotiable. Each key government department must have as a minimum an Australian mentor in efforts to go back to basics re-establish checks & balance and good governance, again **not negotiable**.

The women and ordinary people of PNG are at their limits crying out for this.

Without doubt the “Leaders” will cry neo-colonialism but sit with the above- mentioned persons and the common community women and you will find the truth, difficult and hard as it is.

SUPPORTING PEACE-BUILDING & COMMUNITY & CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT.

Pre-Independence (1974).

We actually had student ex-changes so that the youth of tomorrow could experience and appreciate other cultures. This was done with the Rotary & Lions International clubs.

Volunteers from abroad were willing to come out to PNG, paying their own ways to assist Community organisations.

Most business houses were re-investing revenue back into their business.

Life was care-free, relaxing and so very rewarding.

Post-Independence (1982).

We had to, unfortunately, close down the student exchange as we could not guarantee the students safety.

Volunteers were becoming difficult to secure, it was becoming a burden to run any sort of Community based projects.

While most business houses were pulling back, Security firms & companies that traded in security products, lighting, fencing etc were flourishing.

Sadly, even the Community members were losing faith in the “Leaders”.

Recommendations.

As per Anti-corruption recommendations.

CONCLUSION.

Regardless of what is say, especially by so called “experts, Dr Bill Hamblin being one, Australia, like on other country on earth has done its very, very best for PNG.

The grass-rooted people of PNG are aware and very appreciative of the role and support given and we should not abandon them.

Australia has very strong ties with the PNG Attorney-General, Auditor-General, Governor-General etc. There will be no Peace, Good Governance and Welfare in PNG unless their own “Leaders” become more committed & accountable and agree to address these 3 simple issues.

EDWARD A NATERA.