



CHIEF MINISTER



Parliament House  
State Square  
Darwin  
Northern Territory 0800  
Australia  
chief.minister@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 3146  
Darwin NT 0801  
Telephone: +61 8 8901 4000  
Facsimile: +61 8 8901 4099

Senator Mark Bishop  
Chair  
Standing Committee Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator <sup>Mark</sup>Bishop

Thank you for your letter of 25 June 2008 in which you invited the Northern Territory to make a submission to the 'Inquiry into the main economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the island states of the southwest Pacific'.

The Northern Territory Government supports the Australian Government's efforts in Papua New Guinea and the island states of the south west Pacific including the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands, and commitments through AusAID and other agencies to assist their development.

Furthermore, the Northern Territory Government supports Australia's role in bodies such as the Pacific Islands Forum.

The Northern Territory itself has limited involvement with the region. Over the past decade trade between Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory has been volatile and is marked by a steady decline. Two-way trade between Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory now stands at \$29 million and between the island states of the southwest Pacific and the Northern Territory is very low at only \$200,000.

There are, however, some cultural links. Papua New Guinea has been a regular participant at the biennial Arafura Games, with large delegations of up to 300 participants competing in a range of sports. Papua New Guinea is also regularly represented in the annual Darwin Festival. Currently there are some 634 Papua New Guineans and 315 southwest Pacific Islanders residing in the Northern Territory. They constitute less than 0.5 percent of the total population but more would be welcome, particularly those with skills that are in short supply here.

We have contacted a number of local community associations and informed them of the inquiry and encouraged them to contribute if they have issues to raise. These groups include:

Papua New Guinea–Australia Social and Cultural Group;  
Samoan Community Group;  
Fiji Association NT;  
Kiribati Multicultural Association; and  
Chamber of Commerce NT.

Once again I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry, and look forward to reading the report in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.H.' followed by a long horizontal line.

PAUL HENDERSON

8/4/08