



PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGH COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSION

Tribute to late Mr Mataio Rabura, ISO, OBE Chief Migration Officer of Papua New Guinea by His Excellency Mr Charles W Lepani, Papua New Guinea High Commissioner to Australia.

Late Rabura also served as Deputy High Commissioner to Australia and Consul General in Papua New Guinea Consulate Office in Sydney.

Late Rabura passed away on Saturday, 14 January 2017.

Farewell Mataio and May your Soul REST In PEACE.

PNG HIGH COMMISSION
CANBERRA

TRIBUTE TO LATE MATAIO RABURA, CHIEF MIGRTION OFFICER.

29TH JANUARY 2017

I AM MOST GRATEFUL TO PATRICIA AND THE CHILDREN AND RELATIVES OF MY FRIEND, BROTHER AND COLLEAGUE, THE LATE MATAIO RABURA FOR AGREEING TO MY REQUEST TO SAY A FEW WORDS IN TRIBUTE AND TO HONOUR MATT AS WE MOURN HIS PASSING.

MATT COMES FROM THE OLD TRADITION OF PUBLIC SERVICE. HE BEGAN HIS LIFE WITH AN AMBITION OF BECOMING A VETERINARY SCIENTIST WHICH WAS UNDERSTABLE, BECAUSE KILA KILA IN THE COLONIAL TIMES, HAD A VETERINARY CLINIC ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE VILLAGE. HE MENTIONED TO ME THAT, HE DID NOT HAVE THE PATIENCE TO TAKE 4 OR FIVE YEARS STUDYING TO BE A VET, SO HE BECAME A DIDIMAN OR AN AGRICULTURAL EXTENTION OFFICER INSTEAD.

HE BECAME A LEGEND IN WESTERN PROVINCE IN THE 70S. I FIRST MET MATT WHEN I WAS HEAD OF PLANNING OFFICE WHEN THE AGENCY WAS LOOKING AFTER NEW FUNDING FOR PROJECTS IN PRIORITY AREAS AND AGRICUTURE SECTOR WAS A TOP DEVELOPMENT POLICY PRIORITY. MATT CAME TO ADVOCATE FOR FUNDING OF RUBBER SEEDLINGS IN RURAL FLY RIVER AREA. I LATER MET HIM AGAIN IN WESTERN PROVINCE WHEN I WENT TO INSPECT HOW THE PROJECTS WERE DOING IN THE BORDER PROVNCES OF WESTERN AND WEST SEPIK. WE TOURED SUCH REMOTE PLACES AS SUKI IN WESTERN PROVINCE, AND IMONDA AND GREEN RIVER IN WEST SEPIK.

MATT CONTINUED HIS WORK IN CENTRAL PROVINCE WHERE HE USED TO BE A DROVER MUSTERING CATTLE FROM KOITAKI TO GOILALA. HE USED TO REMINISCE AND RELATE HIS EXPERIENCES OF

THOSE DAYS TO ME WITH FOND MEMORIES PARTICULARLY WHEN HE ARRIVED WITH HIS CATTLE AT A REMOTE CATHOLIC RUN VILLAGE IN GOILALA STARVING AND THIRSTY, AND BEING WELCOMED BY THE PRIESTS SHARING THEIR FOOD WITH HIM AND EXCHANGING STORIES OF THEIR ADVENTURES.

HE WAS, AS I SAID, FROM THE OLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE, STEEPED IN THAT TRADITION OF DEDICATION, COMMITMENT, OFTEN MAKING DO WITH WHAT IS AVAILABLE TO DELIVER QUALITY SERVICE TO RURAL PAPUA NEW GUINEANS.

I MENTIONED MATT WAS A LEGEND BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT WHEN HE DID NOT HAVE TRANSPORT TO DO HIS JOB, HE USED TO TRAIN CROCODILES TO TAKE HIM UP AND DOWN THE FLY RIVER.

WHEN OUR PATHS LATER CROSSED IN CANBERRA, AS MY DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER, AND LATER AS CONSUL GENERAL IN SYDNEY AND UP TO HIS PASSING LAST WEEK, AS CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER, HE REMAINED THE CONSUMMATE PUBLIC SERVANT, PROFESSIONAL, FEARING NOR FAVOURING NONE, IN PROVIDING THE BEST TECHNICAL AND POLICY ADVICE TO THOSE TO WHOM HE WAS RESPONSIBLE. HE WAS HUMOROUS AND I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED SHARING QUITE A FEW GEMS WITH HIM IN CANBERRA, SYDNEY AND IN PNG WHEN HE RETURNED.

DEALING WITH THE ASYLUM SEEKER ISSUE REMAINS THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS DISTINGUISHED CAREER CHALLENGING AS IT REMAINS. IT HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE, ONE OF THE MOST VEXING ISSUES PNG HAS EVER UNDERTAKEN IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND INDEED IN OUR ASIA -PACIFIC REGION TO SHOW THE WORLD PNG CAN PULL ITS WEIGHT AS A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD. MATT, ABLY SUPPORTED BY HIS DEPUTIES IN SOLOMON AND ESTHER, NAVIGATED THE ROUGH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL

RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS POLICY ISSUE WITH ADMIRABLE SKILL AND ACUMEN OFTEN UNKNOWN TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE AMBIT OF THIS ISSUE. I KNOW BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN A VERY CLOSE OBSERVER AND OFTEN CO-ADVOCATE WITH MATT ON MANAGING THE ASYLUM SEEKER ISSUE TO ANSWER TO MEDIA IN PNG AND INTERNATIONALLY. I HOPE SOME DAY, SOMEONE SHOULD UNDERTAKE A CASE STUDY OF THIS ISSUE AND I KNOW MATT'S CONTRIBUTION IN MANAGING IT, WILL SHINE THROUGH IN POSTERITY FOR THE BENEFIT OUR YOUNG GENERATION OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

WE SAY FAREWELL TO MATT TODAY, AND SHARE THE GRIEF AND SORROW WITH HIS FAMILY AND RELATIVES AND STAFF OF PNGICSA. WE CELEBRATE AND WITH GRATITUDE, ACKNOWLEDGE THE ENORMOUS WEALTH OF BENEFITS IN HIS DEDICATION AND OFTEN SACRIFICE THAT HE HAS BEQUETHED TO US AND OUR NATION OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

THANK YOU MATT, AND MAY GOD GIVE YOU PEACE AND EVERLASTING REST IN HIS KINGDOM.

CHARLES W LEPANI