



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wednesday 21 October.

On Tuesday 20 October, Oaktree hosted a panel discussion on the **future of development in Papua New Guinea**. Themes of discussion included the relationship between Papua New Guinea and Australia, governance and the role of young people in development.

The panel included **His Excellency, Charles W Lepani**, Papua New Guinea's High Commissioner to Australia, **Ms Trudi Sieland**, Masters student at RMIT and Secretary of the RMIT PNG Students Club, **Ms Melissa Wells**, Senior Economist at Save The Children, and **Professor John Langmore**, University of Melbourne professor and former politician.

These esteemed panelists drafted a joint statement directed to the Australian Government, which highlights four priorities the panelists would like to see guide Australia's engagement with Papua New Guinea. These priorities are:

- 1) **Align the Australian aid program with Papua New Guinea's development priorities.** In particular, that there should be continued support for service delivery in education and health, as well as the equitable distribution of economic benefits.
- 2) **Ensure that young people are included in the design and implementation of development initiatives, particularly young Papua New Guineans.** Resourcing young people to engage in development and policy discussions is crucial to the long-term prosperity of PNG.
- 3) **Acknowledge an understanding and appreciation of poverty in the cultural context of Papua New Guinea.** Utilising a definition that is in line with cultural context and emphasises creation of more opportunities. This should acknowledge the importance of land and family in PNG culture.
- 4) **Leverage on the unique strengths of local communities.** Leveraging the positive opportunities that the traditions of communities can present in supporting human development.

Oaktree is one of Australia's largest youth-led organisations, and supports locally-based partners in Papua New Guinea to strengthen the capacity of young people to create positive social change.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Matthew Guy – Media Manager, Oaktree | 0416 797 741 | m.guy@oaktree.org

Geordie Fung – Head of International Engagement, Oaktree | 0437 128 154 | g.fung@oaktree.org