

High Commissioner's Official Trip Report for the period 15th to 21st November 2005.

I received an invitation from the President of PNG Soccer Association, (PNGFA), Mr. David Chung to attend the return leg of the World Cup qualifying game between Australia and Uruguay, in Sydney on the 16th November. As usual on such trips, I arranged to have meetings with representatives of organizations whose activities are important to the work of the Mission.

I arranged for a meeting with Lowy Foundation and Australian Gas Light Company, (AGL) partners for PNG Gas Project with Kutubu Landowners. Sports promotion and training for PNG elite sportsmen and women, and sports administrators are important aspects of the Mission's activities. I met with Ms. Martine Letts of the Lowy Foundation and explored some of the issues with her but because of the hectic schedule of the World Cup qualifying game, we agreed to postpone the meeting to a future date to discuss the substantial issues of funding support and training for our athletes in general and soccer in particular. I then had brief discussions with the Kutubu landowner representatives as AGL representatives were delayed but I did brief them on the meeting at their Brisbane Office on 17th November when I flew to Brisbane.

I left Sydney by air on 17th November to Brisbane to attend the annual meeting of Australia-PNG Business Council, formally meet the staff of Brisbane Consulate, meet with head of AGL Office in Brisbane Mr. Ross Gersbach, Group Manager, Infrastructure Investments and his counterpart from Canberra, Mr. Dean Russell and the Minister for Energy for Queensland, Hon Michel Johnson and staff.

On my arrival in Brisbane, I was met by the Consul General, Mr. Paul Nerau, and we drove to the Consulate for the meeting with the staff. I discussed how the Brisbane Office is doing a fine job and complemented the Consul General and staff for their efforts. The Consul general accompanied me to the Australia-PNG Business Council meeting where we were invited to lunch. I was asked to briefly speak on the "PNG Books Project" and seek their sponsorship support. After Lunch I was invited to stay for the meeting and on one of the Agenda items, "A Report on PNG" I was invited to say a few words on Canberra Mission's focus of activities, including working with Business sector and NGOs as well as to briefly discuss the Budget recently tabled in Parliament by the Treasurer, Hon. Bart Philemon. A significant aspect is the commitment by GoPNG to fund its equity uptake on the PNG-Australia Gas Pipeline Project. We also discussed a proposed pilot project for temporary apprenticeship scheme where PNG Nationals could be brought down to Kilkoy, a rural town near Brisbane for skills training and apprenticeships in Carpentry and later they could be sent to work in rural farms in Australia. This has potential for meeting some aspects of PNG and Pacific Islands requests for our citizens to be employed in Australia.

On Friday 18th November, I met with Mr. Ross Gersbach, the AGL's Group Manager, Infrastructure Investments, and Mr. Dean Russell, AGL's General Manager for External Affairs. I intended to discuss the progress of the FEED and other related issues on the Gas Pipeline Project.

I flew back to Canberra in the evening.

Charles W Lepani
High Commissioner