



**PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGH COMMISSION**

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**STATEMENT BY MR SAKIAS TAMEO, ACTING HIGH COMMISSIONER AT  
THE FUND RAISING LUNCH FOR GEORGE AND JOSIE PALMER FUND TO  
SUPPORT COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA IN BRISBANE  
ON 18 MAY 2017**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, I would like to thank you for the kind invitation to attend this important "Fund Raising Lunch to raise money for the George & Josie Palmer Fund to support life changing projects for children and communities in Papua New Guinea.

I am pleased to attend this event in the midst of very important and distinguished friends of Papua New Guinea in the likes of George Palmer, Josie Palmer, representatives of Kokoda Track Foundation and others.

Mr Chairman,

I was part of a huge delegation of Ambassadors and High Commissioners that visited Cairns for the last 2 days at the invitation of FM Bishop. The visit provided the opportunity for FM Bishop and the Queensland Premier, Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, Cairns Major and other Government as well as business leaders to showcase the business potential and opportunities of Cairns and Queensland to the outside world.

The visit was well organised and it was a great success for Australia, Cairns and Queensland.

Mr Chairman,

Canberra is the host city to 108 foreign diplomatic missions and it is like the United Nations in New York where all countries are represented.

This is a clear testament to the influential and important role Australia is playing globally. It is also a reflective of the contributions great Australians are making in the areas of humanitarian and relief assistance, combating poverty, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and other issues facing humanity.

Many of those Ambassadors and High Commissioners in Canberra always say "PNG has a very special relations with Australia"

When talking about the special relationship between Papua New Guinea and Australia, Kokoda always comes to mind:

- Because of Kokoda, we enjoy the freedom and prosperity here in Australia (and PNG).
- Kokoda is where the brave and great Australians and Papua New Guineans stood side by side and fought the Japanese
- Because of Kokoda, it changed the history of Australia and PNG. As PM Turnbull says "Kokoda is hinge of fate" where the future of the two countries were decided there and then.
- Because of Kokoda, it forged the enduring bond and friendship between the two countries.

Mr Chairman,

I was pleased when I got the invitation to attend this event because of the important work that the Kokoda Track Foundation is doing to deliver vital education, health and other vital services to my people in the Kokoda area and other places in Milne Bay, Popondetta, Gulf and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

PNG is just next door to this great country but yet many Australians do not know where Papua New Guinea is, some think it's in Africa. They have no idea about the special relationship between the two countries. And they have no idea about Kokoda.

Mr Chairman

Many good Australians going out to help the impoverished and needy people in Africa, Middle East and other parts of the world.

But, I am forever grateful to the George & Josie Palmer Fund and Kokoda Track Foundation and others who are committed to helping the next door neighbour that is in need of much support and assistance.

As Acting High Commissioner, I am searching for answers to address the development challenges facing my country. And I know that strong partnership and support of good Australians are vital to pursue my work programs for:

- strengthening people to people links

- Forge Sister City relations between Papua New Guinea and Australian towns and cities
- Increase the export of PNG products and commodities to the Australian market
- And to realise the full potential of the massive Australian Aid Program that has the capacity and potential change the development landscape of my country. Since independence, the massive aid program has gone into thin air and there is not much to show for it on the ground.

Mr Chairman,

In Dr Elizabeth Durack's book titled SEEING THROUGH PAPUA NEW GUINEA, she says " The best part of ANGAU may lie, not in the past, when Australian soldiers and Papua New Guinean loyalists stood shoulder to shoulder in the battlefield, but in the future?"

Kokoda is the legacy of the generations of Australians and Papua New Guineans of the past that we need to treasure and remember.

But what did Durack mean when she said the best days are ahead, when will that best day come? What legacy can we create in response to challenges Durack's is posing?

What Durack is referring to not another War that the two countries will stand by side and fight a common enemy.

To me, it is a call to Australia and Papua New Guinea build on the bonds and friendship forged at Kokoda to support each other to address contemporary development challenges.

Mr Chairman,

It is common knowledge to all Australians of the development challenges facing Papua New Guinea with serious health and education issues, poor state of the infrastructure developments in the country, we need to grow a broad-based economy to benefit the rural poor, eradicate poverty, and improve the living standard of our people. We need to get our products and commodities to the Australian market.

To me, this is the best moment that Dr Durack was talking about, to create our own history and legacy for the two countries to work together to make Papua New Guinea a better and prosperous country.

This is a challenge to all of us. And I will count on the support of all good Australians in this endeavour and I commend the George Palmer & Josie Fund, Kokoda Track Foundations for coming on board to make your very important contributions towards the development of my country.

I thank you Mr Chairman