



**Australian Government**

## **HE Ian Kemish AM**

# **Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea**

## **Australia Day Message 2012**



**T**he 26th of January is Australia's national day. It is an important day for all Australians including the many citizens living, working, and travelling overseas. This includes the thousands of Australians that will call Papua New Guinea home in 2012. It is a time to reflect upon our Australian identity and the democratic, diverse, country Australia has become.

I hope that Papua New Guineans will also reflect today on their close links with Australia. The personal, business, and sporting connections between our two countries are extremely strong. And at the government level, the bilateral relationship with Papua New Guinea is, and always has been, one of our most important and most valued. We are near neighbours and old friends.

Australia's relationship with Papua New Guinea is based on mutual respect. We share PNG's determination to maximise the benefits of its promising economic outlook, and are committed to helping Papua New Guineans achieve this critical goal. Papua New Guinea's resource wealth, if used wisely, will have a hugely positive and transformative effect over the coming decade.

Beyond this, we continue to prioritise the need to help improve development outcomes, particularly in education and health. We wholeheartedly welcome the PNG Government's recent focus on these sectors. Together, as partners, we will work towards universal basic education and improving access to, and the quality of, basic, secondary, technical and tertiary education. We have already funded the construction of hundreds of school buildings and will build a further 2,000 between now and 2015. Over the next four years, AusAID will deliver another 2.5 million textbooks to schools throughout PNG. And we will support PNG's efforts to train up to 15,000 teachers between 2011 and 2015.

Despite Papua New Guinea's challenging landscape, we delivered 16,000 medical kits to aid posts and health centres throughout the country in 2011. In 2012, we will purchase and deliver new kits to every medical centre. We will remain staunchly committed to maternal health. Our efforts to train rural health workers in places like Bougainville, for example, have already helped reduce the number of maternal deaths by 11 per cent (to 123 per 100,000 from 225 per 100,000). We know that much more remains to be done.

The staff at the Australian High Commission and I look forward to working closely with our Papua New Guinean counterparts in 2012 to achieve results and to further strengthen the relationship between the Australian and Papua New Guinean Governments, and our people.

**Happy Australia Day!**