



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PORT MORESBY

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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian High Commissioner helps launch Panguna Peace Strategy during farewell Bougainville visit

In a sign of how far the Autonomous Region of Bougainville has come, Australia's High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, Ian Kemish, helped launch the Panguna Peace Building Strategy at the mine site on Tuesday. It was his second visit to Panguna as High Commissioner and, once again, he was made to feel very welcome.

Through dialogue, reconciliation and development, the Peace Building Strategy is designed to enable the people of Panguna and surrounds to resolve outstanding grievances and reunite. It is an Autonomous Bougainville Government initiative, co-funded by the ABG and AusAID's *Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen* program.

"It was a privilege to witness such a significant occasion for the people of Panguna. The commitment of a diverse mix of stakeholders to work together for a brighter future was very clear", Mr Kemish said. "The successful implementation of the Strategy is now in their hands."

Mr Kemish acknowledged that Australia has been and will always be a part of the Bougainville story. Australia has an interest in a peaceful and prosperous Bougainville and in an ongoing dialogue with the people of Panguna.

"There are many reasons to be optimistic about Bougainville's future", Mr Kemish said. During his posting to Papua New Guinea, freedom of movement had improved, localised conflict in the south had ended, and there was an active conversation about the possible eventual reopening of the Panguna mine.

In 2011-12, Australia will provide almost K50 million in development assistance to Bougainville for roads, schools, health centres and the law and justice sector. Significant support is also provided to the ABG to help implement autonomy, a pillar of the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

During the visit, five new radios were gifted by Australia Federal Police Superintendent Stephen Mullins to the Bougainville Police Service to improve communications. Mr Kemish also opened K1 million worth of new infrastructure funded by Australia and New Zealand at the Nazareth Rehabilitation Centre run by Sister Lorraine Garasu CSN OAM at Chabai.

At a farewell dinner hosted by Acting President Patrick Nisira, Mr Kemish affirmed that "Australia will always remain a friend to Bougainville and Papua New Guinea. High Commissioners change, but Australia's affection and commitment to the region will always remain strong."

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