

**Speech by Deputy High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea
Ms Bronte Moules
Lae Panel Discussion: Women as drivers of indigenous development in PNG
11 November 2016**

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for that warm welcome.

It's wonderful to be in Lae – the business heart of PNG. As many of you know we'll shortly be opening a new consulate in Lae to support business engagement and two-way trade between Australia and PNG.

So you'll be seeing a lot more of us in the future!

Thank you to our panellists for today's discussion, who we'll hear from shortly.

- Amanda Donigi
- Maria Linibi
- Bonita Solomon, and
- Sir Nagora Bogan

A special thanks to Sir Nagora Bogan, who's been a passionate advocate for the role that small and medium sized enterprises – including indigenous businesses – can play in creating jobs and contributing to GDP.

This event, which looks at women as drivers of indigenous business, is one of a series of events hosted by the Pacific Leadership and Governance Precinct.

The Precinct is a bilateral initiative of the Governments of PNG and Australia to support the development of the next generation of PNG leaders in the public service and business.

The Precinct's implementing partners --UPNG and the PNG Institute of Public Administration – are working hard to develop new courses that will provide capable and ethical graduates to help PNG meet the challenges of the future.

Another important element of the Precinct is the Precinct Leadership Program, which offers intensive short courses to public sector executives, to help them reach their full potential and to manage public resources for the good of all Papua New Guineans.

There's also the Precinct's *Conversations Series* – events like this one - which are really about building networks and consensus around particular policy priorities.

One of those priorities is economic growth, and how to ensure that the benefits of that growth flow right through society.

Of course, women face a particular set of economic challenges. They find it harder to access land and finance, and they typically spend more time caring for children and doing household chores.

The Precinct has a strong focus on supporting women to take on leadership roles, in business and government, and ensuring that institutional barriers to women's participation in the economy are addressed.

But we don't only want focus on the challenges – as significant as they are.

We also want to look at the opportunities that are available to women, at all levels, to participate in the economy.

I think most of us would agree that the indigenous business sector offers some very real economic opportunities for Papua New Guinea, and particularly PNG women.

[PAUSE]

As an Australian living in Papua New Guinea, I'm constantly struck by the diversity of this magnificent country.

PNG is also blessed with a wonderfully lush and fertile natural environment.

These are incredible assets - cultural, natural and economic.

There are so many people around the world who'd be willing to pay to experience the stories, sounds, dances, arts and crafts that PNG has to offer.

That's not to say they should be crassly exploited. Far from it.

I think the key to the success of indigenous business enterprises is in ensuring their integrity and their respect for the very culture that sustains them.

Consumers don't want cheap, dumbed down, mass market versions of PNG culture. They want to share in its authenticity; learn its stories; and connect with the people who safeguard its traditions.

[PAUSE]

Australia's bilateral relationship with Papua New Guinea is increasingly one that is centred around economic growth and trade.

We're no longer aid donor and recipient, but true economic and strategic partners.

Where we do provide aid, it's increasingly being directed at measures that support PNG to deal with its economic challenges and make the most of emerging opportunities.

The Australian Government also supports PNG's private sector, working with business to highlight regulatory issues, and connect firms with markets in PNG and abroad.

Our work with the Market Development Facility, for example, has led to a partnership with the Central Highlands Feed Mill, in Jiwaka.

This project will enable farmers move towards locally-produced feed for their livestock – particularly pigs – rather than expensive imports.

The MDF is also working with families in rural and urban areas as part of a 'Pathways out of Poverty' analysis. This study will help to identify support

that can be provided to women to build businesses and become economically empowered.

[PAUSE]

The Australian Government recently supported two entrepreneurial Papua New Guinean women to attend the seventh annual World Indigenous Business Forum in Canada.

One of them is here in this room today – thanks Amanda Donigi!

It's the first time Papua New Guinea has been represented at the forum, and I think we're all really looking forward to hearing what it was like, and what insights Amanda has brought back.

There is so much to be learned in this space, and so much to be shared.

So without further ado, let's hear from the panel.

//ENDS