

**Talking Points for High Commissioner Bruce Davis**  
**International Day of Persons with Disabilities event**  
**Friday, 8 December 2017 @ 11am**

---

**Acknowledgements**

- Distinguished Guests
- Representatives of the Government of Papua New Guinea
- Disability Services and Disabled Persons Organisations
  - PNG Assembly of Disabled Persons
  - Members of the National Board for Disabled Persons
- Representatives from Churches and Civil Society Organisations and the Private Sector
- Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

**Introduction**

Welcome to the Australian High Commission and thank you for joining us to mark this important event – as we celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Each year we hold an event on or around the 3<sup>rd</sup> December, and take time to reflect on how we can work together to raise awareness about disability inclusive development and highlight the benefits of an inclusive and accessible society for all.

[Pause]

The theme for this year's event – 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all' – is inspired by the disability inclusive 2030 agenda for sustainable development that pledges to leave no-one behind.

The principle of 'leaving no-one behind', enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, compels all nations to create more inclusive and equitable opportunities to empower people with disabilities to be active contributors of society.

The Australian Government is committed to this task. We recognise this means re-defining disability in different terms and changing perceptions of 'ability'.

[Pause]

People with disabilities make up the largest and most disadvantaged minority in the world. Around twenty two per cent of the world's poorest people have some form of disability.

The barriers to disability inclusion are multiple - they include lack of access to education, healthcare, employment, income, justice, social support and civic involvement. Lack of access to transport can be a key barrier to accessing services, especially for those living in rural and remote areas.

Stigma and discrimination compound the challenges experienced by people with disabilities, contributing to vulnerability. In fact, attitudinal barriers are one of the greatest obstacles to achieving equality of opportunity and social integration.

For development efforts to be sustainable, women, men and children with disabilities must be able to participate in those efforts as active and equal citizens.

[Pause]

### **Australia's contribution to disability inclusiveness**

The Australian Government is committed to play a leadership role internationally in support of disability inclusive development – to advocate for, and empower, people with disability.

Australia's Disability Inclusive Development strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in partner countries and address the barriers which hinder their access and participation.

[Pause]

Under the Papua New Guinea-Australia Partnership, our assistance takes many forms.

We work in partnership with government, churches and civil society in Papua New Guinea to tackle the stigma that surrounds disability.

Under the Church Partnership Program, for example, the seven mainline Papua New Guinea churches are working together to mainstream disability inclusiveness under the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In 2016-2017, the Churches trained more than 207 volunteers to implement Community Based Rehabilitation and Inclusive Development advocacy in their local communities.

In Lae Urban and Ahi Local Level Government, more than 300 people attended advocacy and awareness workshops. Participants included students of a special education school in Lae, Callan Services, Lutheran staff and volunteers, local government service providers and representatives from the Morobae Deaf Association. This work led to three local congregations establishing Disabled Peoples Organisations.

[Pause]

We continue to promote equitable access to quality education and skills training which forms the foundation for inclusion in so many other facets of life. Australia's current work in Papua New Guinea includes the *Education*

*Opportunities for all of Papua New Guinea's Children*  
partnership with Callan Services.

And we continue to promote opportunities for people with disability to participate in sport and apply for Australia Awards scholarships.

Australia has also supported the National Board for Disabled Persons and the Department of Health to deliver assistive devices to the most remote parts of the country. And we have supported the Papua New Guinea Assembly of Disabled Persons to establish a network of Disabled Persons Organisations across the country and to strengthen their advocacy role.

With the Papua New Guinea government, Australia is proud to have supported the Department for Community Development and Religion, in their efforts to ratify the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to strengthen disability policy and improve disability data.

We are pleased to support the Department in the review of the Integrated Community Development Policy to reflect the Strategic Priorities of the National Policy on Disability. And we are working with the Department to identify opportunities to further support their disability inclusive development efforts.

[Pause]

Before I close, I want to highlight that this event forms part of the 20 Days of Activism, aimed at creating community momentum towards ending violence against women in Papua New Guinea.

I urge you all to support the principle at the heart of this year's campaign – 'Leave no-one behind. Together for Justice' – and be part of the momentum for change.

[Pause]

### **Cheshire DisAbility Services**

And finally, I want to acknowledge the fantastic work of Papua New Guinea's disability service providers. In particular, the Cheshire DisAbility Services in Port Moresby. Cheshire provides interventions which increase access to inclusive education, health and rehabilitation and promotes disability inclusive development in all facets of community life.

As part of the 20 Days of Human Rights Activism campaign, and to mark International Day for Persons with Disabilities, the Australian High Commission staff have collected gifts for the Cheshire DisAbility Services community. I now call upon Cheshire's Communication Officer, Sonia Becks, to accept the donations from staff of the High Commission.

**HE Bruce Davis hands over donations from AHC staff**  
ENDS//