

**Celebration Ceremony – Graduate Certificates in
International Trade and International Relations
Address by HE Mr Bruce Davis
Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea
Tuesday, 21 November 2017**

- The Honourable Mr Peter O’Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea
- The Honourable Mr Justin Tkatchenko Minister for Lands and Planning and Minister for APEC
- The Honourable Mr Pila Niningi, Minister for Higher Education, Science, Research and Technology
- The Honourable Mr Elias Kapavore, Minister for Public Service
- Secretaries and Heads of Department, too many to name individually
- Members of the Diplomatic Corp
- Mr Roy Trivedy, UN Resident Coordinator
- Distinguished guests; colleagues; ladies and gentlemen;
- and those Australia Awards Fellows whose study completion we are gathered here to celebrate.

I am delighted to be here to be a part of this ceremony celebrating two Australia Awards courses that hold great significance for Papua New Guinea and its APEC role in 2018.

Many of those gathered in the room tonight would be direct recipients of our long-term Australia Awards program. Tonight we are celebrating a newer addition to this program, shorter courses that address immediate PNG Government policy priorities, and of course, APEC is a priority.

Thanks to Prime Minister O'Neill for your thought-provoking words. We are proud to be supporting PNG in its preparations for hosting APEC as outlined this evening.

We acknowledge that hosting APEC is an important responsibility, and at the same time an enormous opportunity to influence APEC member economies including some of the big players in global trade and economic development.

As you know, APEC is an important forum for Australia and Papua New Guinea. One that prioritises cooperation and habits of coordination amongst economies.

APEC is a body that is remarkably effective, often in a low-key way, at driving forward structural, economic, trade and investment policy reform.

Papua New Guinea has been an active participant in APEC since joining in 1993, and to be assuming this major role in the forum is an important deal.

APEC provides a platform to formulate carefully-considered responses to the core economic and trade challenges confronting the 21 member economies.

It is a chance to explore the challenges faced by the region and share ideas for innovative approaches, develop best practices and agree on frameworks for more effective cooperation and prosperity across the APEC group.

As host, PNG is shaping APEC 2018 by defining the year's theme – “creating inclusive opportunities: embracing the digital future”.

PNG is also able to nominate the chairs to preside over APEC's most important meetings, including the Economic Leaders' Meeting, Ministerial Meetings and Senior Officials Meetings.

The important host role reflects PNG's growing strength and importance in the Asia Pacific region.

Congratulations.

Australia's support to PNG through these two Australia Awards shorts courses is a reflection of the long-term partnership between our two countries. It illustrates the profound shift of our maturing relationship towards economic partners.

As I look upon the group of Australia Awards Fellows, I see a high calibre resource for Papua New Guinea. Could I say to the Graduates, you are amongst PNG's best and brightest.

You are 53 Fellows in total. Public servants from 24 different government departments and organisations, 13 of which are provincial administrations.

The graduate certificates that you have just completed attracted a great deal of interest from many hopeful applicants.

So, now that you have finished your studies, it is clear that you are each part of an influential group of Papua New Guinean public servants with skills that are particularly relevant to your country and its needs. You are set to become major influencers next year.

Being a host nation for APEC presents major challenges to any country, and APEC officers must therefore embody personal commitment, dedication, and a high level of professional development.

And I commend you for the dedication you have already shown by taking on these postgraduate studies in addition to your busy work loads. I understand it involved many early starts and late nights – and learning how to function with little sleep may be particularly useful training for next year!

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope these two Fellowship courses have been a valuable and timely shot in the arm for Papua New Guinea as it faces the significant tasks involved in APEC 2018. I am delighted that the Australian Government working with the Government of Papua New Guinea, has been able to facilitate these courses to help to make next year's APEC activities a success.

I would like to mention the Universities of Adelaide and Queensland, and acknowledge the great work done by each in delivering these postgraduate courses. These Australian institutions are experts in the fields of international trade and international relations. It is highly appropriate for PNG to draw upon this expertise in preparations for APEC 2018.

I am told that both institutions did an exceptional job. The faculty staff have forged strong relationships with participants and together they have made these Fellowships a great success.

Indeed, at the centre of all partnerships are relationships between individuals – this is the heartbeat of our bilateral relationship.

So to return to the participants, I hope that this course of study has helped strengthen your preparations for a challenging yet rewarding year in 2018.

I know that you have already forged strong links with your fellow participants and built networks that will assist you throughout the year ahead and for the rest of your careers.

I also urge you to become active in the Papua New Guinea Australia Alumni Association, which will support your ongoing career beyond 2018.

PNGAAA brings together a wealth of highly experienced and prestigious former Australia Awards alumni who can play a valuable part in your networking.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me once again congratulate the graduating Fellows assembled here today for your wonderful achievements.

I look forward to witnessing the great leadership and capacity you will bring to Papua New Guinea and wish you all the best in the future.

And from the Australian Government, we also wish the PNG Government all the best as hosts of APEC 2018.

Thank you.