



2016 GE Australia – Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue

Outcomes Report



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Executive summary

The Lowy Institute hosted the fourth annual Australia – Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue on 22 – 23 November 2016 in Brisbane at the Queensland Art Gallery to coincide with the exhibition, [Number 1 Neighbour: Art in Papua New Guinea 1966-2016](#).

The Dialogue is the flagship event of the [Australia-Papua New Guinea Network](#), an initiative designed to expand people-to-people relations between Australia and Papua New Guinea. The Dialogue reflects the significance of the Australia-Papua New Guinea relationship, and brings together 20 dynamic emerging leaders from both countries to discuss common challenges and form enduring professional connections. The 2016 Dialogue focused on four key issues; the role of young people in leadership, alternative routes to economic empowerment, art and advocacy, and contemporary PNG-Australia relations. The young leaders used the Dialogue to make new professional connections and find opportunities for collaboration.

The Dialogue was chaired by Sisa Kini, Community Development Support Manager and Coordinator the Global Women in Management Program, ExxonMobil PNG Limited; and Jonathan Pryke, Director of the Aus-PNG Network and Research Fellow in the Melanesia Program at the Lowy Institute.

The Dialogue participants developed a number of proposals, summarised in the next section and expanded on in the sections to follow, to grow links between the two countries and expand the understanding of Papua New Guinea in Australia.

Recommendations

Fostering connections

1. Encouraging cross-cultural exchange between young people in both countries, focusing on youth in regional centres, with the intent of fostering shared culture, and a *wantok* or neighbourly understanding.
2. Increasing engagement within and between Indigenous Australians and Papua New Guinea. For example, through establishing a joint First Nations Australian and Papua New Guinea art exhibition, and creating a Dialogue for the artists similar to the Australia-Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue.
3. Incorporation of Melanesian culture and shared history into the Australian school syllabus, and the creation of a materials package to enable teachers across Australia to easily teach this new topic.
4. Within Australia, promoting greater diversity of media coverage on Papua New Guinean and Melanesian issues in new forms of media, particularly social media, in order to reduce the reliance on a disinterested mainstream media. On the Papua New Guinean side, promoting a positive national image and national branding to support tourism, particularly at the Ministerial level.
5. Continuing the Australia-Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue, with the location alternating between Australia and Papua New Guinea.

6. Highlighting and promoting the importance of sport and agricultural relationships across the two countries.

Economic and Social Empowerment

1. Supporting entrepreneurship in Papua New Guinea through the creation of incubation spaces and alternative sources of funding for Small and Medium Enterprises.
2. Creating industry-specific networking opportunities for Australians and Papua New Guineans, and better engaging the emerging middle class in Papua New Guinea.
3. Expanding health partnerships between both countries, through avenues including business, education, and student/professional exchanges.
4. Expanding opportunities for professional exchanges between Australia and Papua New Guinea across all sectors, while respecting employment needs.
5. Revisiting the 2009 World Bank-recommended and NEC-approved tourism, arts and culture sector reforms to promote Papua New Guinea's tourism industry, with a particular focus on increasing the number of Australian tourists.
6. Increasing funding for the arts and culture in Papua New Guinea and promoting artist residencies for Australians and Papua New Guineans in each other's countries.
7. Revisiting scholarship funding between Australia and Papua New Guinea, and encouraging the Papua New Guinean government to reassess the skills the country most needs.

Introduction

The bilateral relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea is of continuing relevance and importance to both nations. The ties between the two nations span economic, historical, political, cultural and interpersonal spheres.

The history between Australia and Papua New Guinea and the significance of the bilateral relationship was explored in Sean Dorney's 2016 Lowy Institute Paper, [*The Embarrassed Colonialist*](#), the title of which alludes to how much our countries' colonial pasts still colour the bilateral relationship. The Dialogue participants emphasised that to have a positive relationship we cannot shy away from these kinds of complex themes. This may lead to uncomfortable conversations, but will enable a stronger and more honest relationship between our two nations. These dynamics demonstrate the importance of fostering and maintaining strong people-to-people links to ensure a mutual understanding of each nation, in particular Papua New Guinea in Australia, does not deteriorate in the years ahead.

The 2016 Dialogue participants seized the opportunity to tackle tough questions of how relationships and understanding between Australia and PNG can be built, as well as form new connections, all while maintaining an enthusiastic spirit of optimism. The format of the Dialogue allows for the creation of meaningful connections and discussions, as well as thoughtful listening and learning, in a manner that transcends digital means of communication. Although new technologies have changed the contours of the people-to-people links across our two countries, there is no substitute for meeting people face-to-face.

The following gives a summary of discussions from the Dialogue, written on a non-attributable basis. A list of the participants and observers is provided as an Annex.

Session 1: The role of young people in leadership

It is important to understand the challenges facing people in both Papua New Guinea and Australia through the lens of leadership, and what role young people play in tackling these issues. Young leaders from both nations are concerned about similar issues, including substance abuse, education access, employment opportunities, climate change, the refugee crisis, and confusion around national identity.

For many young people, these issues lead to a sense of frustration and disempowerment. The participants considered how these social issues are interconnected and cyclical, and how effective leadership is central to addressing these problems. Both the Australian and Papua New Guinean participants felt that successful leadership requires an understanding of how to provide empowerment, agency, and be strong role models.

For younger Papua New Guineans, there are limited pathways to formal employment, and an entrepreneurial mindset is needed, especially in the post-resources boom period. A focus on sustainable industries like tourism and agriculture, rather than mining and resources, will be essential to creating opportunities. The vast majority of Papua New Guineans belong to agriculture-based communities; as well as living culturally rich, deeply tradition-bound lifestyles. Agriculture and tourism, with its associated cultural and arts industries, are sectors with potential for every person in Papua New Guinea. Many Australian students find themselves in similar positions, needing to find creative ways to approach the changing job market.

In the Torres Strait Islands and other remote communities in Australia youth are facing similar challenges, such as barriers to education, lack of employment opportunities, substance abuse, and an absence of role models for leadership. Geography is also a major challenge, and even if there was significant funding invested to help create opportunities for young people, it would remain difficult to accomplish due to the remoteness. Land disputes are another point of contention, especially around housing and new developments, where there is a lot of distrust despite progress with native title.

In both nations, youth from rural areas are leaving for urban centres seeking education or employment. While this creates challenges, it can also have benefits. Assisting young leaders and entrepreneurs in Papua New Guinea will have constructive outcomes for not just the individual, but their family and community as well, this is especially true with women. Education is crucial to this, but not only formal education – passing on traditional knowledge will strengthen leadership qualities in youth.

National leaders don't always set a good example for young people, who then come to see power and money rewarded, instead of strength of character and responsibility. True leadership is not about gaining power, but about empowering others. The passion for change that many young people have needs to focus on collaboration. Again, the importance of role

models is relevant here – participants emphasised that you cannot be what you cannot see. Having diversity in leadership, and strong examples to follow, is crucial for youth in both countries. Embracing and valuing their rich diversity, while also building a sense of national identity, is a challenge in PNG, one of the most ethno-linguistically diverse countries in the world. Although it is difficult, it is vitally important for PNG to tackle this issue so it can also deal with the development challenges it faces.

Sport can be used to give young people positive role models and is also an avenue through which they can connect with each other and build a broader sense of national identity and community. Young people often admire and relate to successful athletes and these well-known figures can promote strong values to their young fans. They encourage doing your best, the importance of respect, and the value of friendship.

Discussion around maintaining cultural identity and intergenerational values highlighted the importance of storytelling. For Papua New Guinea, the oral nature of society means knowledge is lost when there is no space for telling stories. Ownership of land, key to Papua New Guinea's developmental needs, is primarily determined through oral accounts. It is also a huge source of youth empowerment and engagement, and providing space for young people to tell their own stories helps them own the conversation and connect to their identities. Art and creative industries are another way for people to connect with their traditional culture, something recognised by both Papua New Guineans and First Nation Australians.

Session 2: Alternative routes to economic empowerment

For both young Australians and Papua New Guineans, creativity is often necessary to find a viable means of employment. In Papua New Guinea, finding alternative routes to economic empowerment is essential because the formal economy is so small and traditional subsistence farming methods are no longer accessible for the growing urban populations. Participants noted that taking a creative and flexible approach to your work is also relevant in Australia, particularly for people who do not wish to pursue a mainstream career; for example, artists and entrepreneurs.

The importance of partnerships was emphasised in the discussion. Success in the changing job market may require approaching many partners, some unconventional, for support. In Papua New Guinea and rural Australia there is space for entrepreneurship and engagement with the informal economy in the sectors of tourism, technology, and agriculture. Social entrepreneurship can benefit from tools such as microfinance and crowdfunding, which has particular potential to expand Papua New Guinea's tourism sector. There are also risks associated with an expanding tourism industry, such as the appropriation of cultural and historical artefacts to sell to tourists, cultural products developed for tourists failing to sell, or the undeveloped state of vital transport and communication infrastructure increasing costs and discouraging investment. If there is no benefit to the host country from tourism and no value in the cultural exchange between tourists and local communities, the sector can become exploitative.

Technology can be both helpful and restrictive. For Papua New Guineans, there are many barriers to accessing information and challenges to employing technology for business and education, including the cost of the internet and digital literacy. There are also issues around technology and the arts. In Australia, copyright breaches are one of the greatest risks of the internet, and cultural items are susceptible to being appropriated by brands. In Papua New Guinea, the absence of any real legislative protection for artistic and cultural works exposes arts and culture entrepreneurs to exploitation. Culturally-inspired works are at present not sufficiently protected under PNG's copyright legislations due to the difficulties associated with confirming ownership of traditional intellectual property that is communally practiced and orally transferred.

In both Papua New Guinea and Australia, rural centres are being drained as people move to urban areas in search of economic opportunities. This urban drift also makes it difficult for people to maintain their traditional culture and connection to homeland. In Papua New Guinea, agriculture is seen as having potential to allow people to earn a living while remaining in their community. There are a number of examples of programs which have successfully assisted farmers to build viable businesses in agriculture. For example, a post-conflict project in Bougainville which gave ex-combatants a [new career as cocoa farmers](#). However, these programs often still have social issues attached, such as women undertaking the majority of the work but not seeing the financial benefits.

With an entrepreneurial mindset turning passions into careers is possible, especially in the arts. In regions without well-established arts infrastructure, there are often artist collectives employing creative means to keep people motivated, share skills, and sustain practice, like running art classes or other small businesses to fund their artistic work. Most artists in both countries have day jobs, especially in the Pacific as there is less funding available for the arts. In both nations, the value of the arts is not always fully understood and appreciated, leading to the loss of support and funding for the arts. As a consequence, traditional artistic practices and links to cultural heritage are at risk. Partnerships between Australians and Papua New Guineans could help strengthen the arts in both countries. Finding new avenues to facilitate connections between First Nations Australian and Papua New Guinean artists should also be seriously explored. Despite identifying these challenges to the sector, participants determined that drive and passion for the arts is still strong in their countries, especially among the younger generations.

Session 3: Art and Advocacy

Social campaigns often employ artistic and creative means to spread their message and advance their objectives. The arts provide an important platform to drive conversations about change and progress advocacy campaigns. Advocacy is all about the art of persuasion, and the importance of storytelling. Creativity, knowing your topic, and knowing your audience, all contribute to successful social campaigns.

To capture the attention of young people advocates must be innovative and relatable. Personal stories are always interesting, as is targeted storytelling through mixed media, where advocates and artists can collaborate to great effect. Visual campaigns are very

powerful, and relatability helps to break through the stigmas associated with some complex social issues. Collaboration can be an incredibly powerful tool for advocates, artists and those in creative industries, and the value of people-to-people links in these ventures cannot be underestimated.

Advocacy can also take the form of social entrepreneurship. It is an integral part of businesses aiming to help others and address social issues. Social entrepreneurship could create great positive change in Papua New Guinea. Through social enterprise young people with energy, ability, and capacity, can earn a living while also driving change. In both countries, the sustainability and management of social enterprise projects has to come from a sense of ownership, coupled with economic viability.

Participants also discussed the importance of ensuring artists are not exploited and receive economic benefits from their work. Both nations need to develop effective means of tracking artists' work so that counterfeits or unauthorised reproductions can be discovered. This is an area where collaboration between Australians and Papua New Guineans could be useful. As was the partnership between [APRA AMCOS](#), the Australian body which protects musicians' intellectual property, and Papua New Guinean musicians. This partnership allows Papua New Guinean artists to use existing Australian frameworks to ensure their work is appropriately copyrighted and they obtain royalties when their work is used for commercial gains.

Session 4: Contemporary PNG-Australia relations

Participants were joined by guest speaker Geoff Tooth, Assistant Secretary of the Papua New Guinea Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They discussed a variety of topics, including Australia's perception of Papua New Guinea and the changing nature of the bilateral relationship.

Contemporary relations between Papua New Guinea and Australia have been influenced by a number of different factors. Today the majority of Australians have very little knowledge of their closest neighbour, while Papua New Guineans are often exposed to Australian culture, through sport and the media, and generally have a strong understanding of Australia. The portrayal of Papua New Guinea in the mainstream Australian media is also highly problematic, and perpetuates the misinformation and stereotypes that many Australians hold.

However, there is a high level of diplomatic and political engagement across the two countries, especially at the ministerial level. There are also many important business and trade ties. For example, the majority of Australian trade goes through Papua New Guinean waters, and the majority of flights that leave Australia fly through Papua New Guinean airspace.

Papua New Guinea is also Australia's largest development partner, and encompasses around 12.5% of Australia's aid program. However, Australian aid is only a small percentage of Papua New Guinea's budget. Papua New Guinea's economy has done exceptionally well compared to other developing countries in the past decade, largely thanks to its resource-focused economy. But this newfound wealth has not been reflected in improved outcomes on the

ground. Despite the recent economic downturn, the bilateral relationship has moved away from the aid dynamic towards a focus on economic and strategic partnership.

The Torres Strait Treaty is another important part of the relationship. It allows islanders to travel across the border without passports for the purpose of continuing cultural exchange and traditional ceremonies. It is an affordable border management solution and is an example of how closely our two countries are intertwined.

While empowerment and self-reliance is essential for development, both nations exist within the global system, and maintenance of the bilateral relationship is essential. Greater cooperation is needed to mitigate the decline in people-to-people links. Informal relationships and friendships between the two nations are essential to the success of the official relationships and formal policies.

Participants discussed a number of ways that new links could be fostered and existing relationships enhanced, including;

- Educational exchanges, public servant training programs and scholarships.
- Small to medium enterprise engagement.
- Enhancing existing sports linkages, for example the Papua New Guinean NRL team, The Hunters, playing in the Queensland league.
- Building links between Indigenous Australians and Papua New Guineans.
- Partnerships within the health sector because of the similar difficulties both countries face engaging with regional and remote communities.

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Annex

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