

*Report to the  
Australian Political Exchange Council*

*From The  
Sixth APEC Delegation to Papua New Guinea*

*12 November to 19 November 2004*



*Delegation with His Excellency, Mr Renagi R. Lohia. CBE, Papua New Guinea High Commissioner to Australia.  
From Left: David Wilson, H.E. Mr Renagi R. Lohia. CBE, Evan Langdon, Wendy Lovell, Nick Park, Ashley Wells.*

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Bill Bill Village, Madang Province



## ***Introduction***

The sixth APEC Delegation to visit Papua New Guinea was a highly successful and enjoyable visit.

The timing of the 6th delegation's visit coincided with the Papua New Guinea National Budget session and also the implementation of the Enhanced Co-operation Program (ECP) between Australia and Papua New Guinea. These two events made it an exciting and informative time for the delegation to visit Papua New Guinea.

The program, put together for the delegation, provided an overview of the main issues facing Papua New Guinea and also an excellent insight into the Political system. The program provided access to many Senior Ministers in the Somare Government and also a visit to the Province of Madang to observe both the Provincial and Local Government structure.

Prior to the delegation departing for Papua New Guinea, we were given an extensive briefing that provided us with an understanding of the Social and economic challenges faced by the young nation.

On behalf of the delegation I would like to thank the Papua New Guinea Parliament for their hospitality and generosity during our visit and make a special mention of the courtesy shown to us by Ware Guma, the Protocol Officer who accompanied us for the entire visit.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby, who accompanied us for the duration of the exchange. In particular I would like to mention Jim Taylor, Second Secretary and Jo Woodbury, Third Secretary at the High Commission who were accompanied and assisted us for most of the visit.

The delegation would also like to thank APEC for the opportunity to be part of the exchange program and acknowledge Pandora Livanes and the staff of the Australian Political Exchange Council, for their hard work and professionalism in putting the program together.

It was decided by the delegation that this report would be a joint effort, with each delegation member covering areas of particular interest to them and each member also providing a short interpretation of their initial impressions of Papua New Guinea.



Bomana War Cemetery

## ***Initial Impressions***

### **The Hon Wendy Lovell – Delegation Leader**

On arrival in Port Moresby some of the more significant challenges that face Papua New Guinea are immediately evident.

The lack of adequate infrastructure is obvious, as is the lack of maintenance carried out on roads and buildings. Razor wire and barred windows, together with the obvious number of displaced people living in inadequate and mostly illegal settlements, hint at the law and order and substantial unemployment problems in Port Moresby; and the significant number of advertising bill boards dedicated to HIV Aids indicate the extent of the HIV epidemic.

The other obvious presence in PNG is the Australian connection; our High Commission has a noticeable and respected presence in the nation's capitol and throughout the provinces. AusAid was referred to in nearly every meeting we attended but the bond between our two nations is far stronger than just political. The Bomana War Cemetery with its 3819 commonwealth graves stands as a silent and peaceful memorial to the bond that was forged in the jungles of New Guinea during World War II.

Papua New Guinea is a relatively young nation that faces a myriad of significant and complex problems but it is not a nation without hope. The Enhanced Co-operation Program between PNG and Australia will assist in addressing many of these problems. Hopefully the people of PNG will build on those results to deliver a brighter outlook for future generations.

### **Nick Park**

Although closely based around the political and administrative systems enshrined in Australia's democracy, PNG has endured uncertain times since independence, nearly 30 years ago.

PNG faces a massive array of very complex challenges and in order to achieve its full potential needs to overcome significant problems such as lawlessness, health / HIV AIDS, lack of public

infrastructure, poverty and an extremely youthful population that can not access adequate education.

While PNG boasts beautiful unspoilt regional areas, islands and waterways, to the delegation it also presented a painful façade through its capital – Port Moresby, a city of decaying infrastructure compounded by a complete lack of public services.

The delegation did however leave with an impression that PNG boasts a very friendly population that is unfairly tarnished because of a small minority who have taken advantage of a lack of law and order.

### **Evan Langdon**

The APEC experience in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an invaluable and important one. I feel honoured and privileged to be able to be a part of this trip. Particularly useful was the opportunity to experience first hand the current situation in PNG and how the government of one of our closest neighbours sees bilateral relations with Australia in both a past and future context.

PNG faces a number of difficult economic and social development challenges, with a continuing role for Australia in providing assistance for the PNG government and people. High priority issues are the impending HIV/AIDS pandemic, homelessness, crime, resource management and language and communication barriers within the country. The PNG politicians seemed optimistic that the Australia – Papua New Guinea Enhanced Cooperation Program would help to deliver better outcomes for PNG in these and other areas of concern.

The wide-ranging program for the delegates provided a broad experience of PNG politics, life and culture; from the humbling experience of visiting the Australian War Cemetery in Port Moresby, to discussions with politicians and visiting various communities in both Port Moresby and Madang.

It is always an eye-opening experience to visit a country so different to your own. One can only imagine the logistical difficulties a country would face with over 700 different languages and over 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas with limited means of communication.

My personal connection with PNG is a strong one and I am grateful that I have had the chance to visit the country in which my ancestors fought in during WW2.

I would like to thank the APEC team at DOFA, especially Pandora Livanes and David Wilson, for their organisation and patience, the staff at the Australian High Commission for their support and advice and the other participants Wendy, Nick and Ashley.

### **Ashley Wells**

It's a cliché to say it, but Papua New Guinea perhaps more than any other is a land of contrasts. It is a country at once aspiring and desperate. It is an aspiring country by virtue of its people and its location. Rich in language, culture and resources, it has every reason to aspire to be more than it currently is. And yet, it is almost for these same reasons that Papua New Guinea is today a country desperate – desperate because it struggles to meet even the basic needs required of government. Desperate because its greatest asset – its people – are daily confronted with the cumulative challenges posed by the Raskols of Port Moresby, an emerging HIV/AIDS pandemic, and a society being torn in two directions – one towards modernity, the other harking back to its village roots – the likely result being the fragmentation of the country.

Arriving in Moresby for the first time is akin to watching a scene from *Mad Max* in 3 dimensions. Unsure of what to anticipate (the DFAT travel advisory warning of law and order problems being my only guide) I was struck as we drove toward the centre of the city by the sheer number of people on the streets. A city approximately the size of Canberra, Port Moresby is the melting pot of PNG. Different tribal groups, their *wantoks*, and a sprawling string of shanty-towns throughout the valleys that enclose and isolate Port Moresby from the country it tries to be the capital of, mean that Moresby is the embodiment of all that is wrong with PNG today. Spiralling unemployment rates, HIV/AIDS rapidly spreading, and a law and order situation characterised by crimes of opportunity that would rival anything else in the world.

Moresby's law and order problems are the tale of legend. Citing examples of Raskol gang members overwhelming US marines and landing helicopters on the roofs of banks, the High Commission sagely advised against leaving the hotel compound without a police or armed escort. Equipped with these and other disturbing stories, I was disarmed by the overwhelming friendliness of the people we continued to meet, and of the hospitality extended to us. Such friendliness was not an isolated incident – over the week we were there a theme that ran through the meetings we held and the people we met was the hand of friendship extended to us. Again, PNG demonstrated why it had earned – in my mind at least – the 'land of contrasts' tag. How do you reconcile such displays of such individual hospitality with one of the most violent environments outside a war zone?

As opening impressions go, these were stimulating and disturbing in equal measure. And it was these themes that continued to stay with us through the rest of our stay in PNG – both in Port Moresby and later, in Madang province in the country's north. Just as it is these overlapping themes that the Australian Government's Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) will be required to work with when fully operational.



Children Bill Bill Village, Madang Province



Visiting Madang Provincial Government

### ***Political Structure – Wendy Lovell***

Since gaining independence on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1975, Papua New Guinea has operated as a constitutional monarchy, recognising the Queen of England as head of state. The Queen is represented by a Governor General who is elected by the Parliament and Papua New Guinea has three levels of government – National, Provincial and Local.

The National Government is a 109 seat unicameral Parliament. The 109 members are elected from the 19 Provinces and the capitol district of Port Moresby. The 109 seats in the PNG National Parliament are made up of 89 single member electorates and 20 regional electorates, known as open electorates. The 20 open electorate members also serve as Governor of the Province they represent. The current Parliament consists of 108 male members and 1 female member, Lady Carol Kidu.

Following an election, the Governor General appoints a Prime Minister; usually the Leader of the Party that has won the most seats or a Leader who has formed a majority coalition. The Prime Minister then appoints cabinet members from the members of his party or coalition. There are 43 registered Political Parties in PNG. Although a number of these parties are represented in the Parliament, no one party has ever won enough seats to govern in their own right. Therefore, to govern a coalition of several parties needs to be formed. In the past allegiance to political parties has not been strong and members have drifted from one party to another between elections. In order to bring more stability to the Parliament the “Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates” was introduced in 2002. Under the Organic Law a member must remain a member of the same party as they were when elected for the full term of the government, unless they are expelled by the Political Party. With less focus on the Political Party, members are elected not because of the party they represent but by what the local constituents believe they will deliver, this has led to a large turnover of members at each election. In the 2002 elections, only 24 sitting members were returned and 79 new members were elected. In the past members have been elected by the first past the post system, this has regularly led to candidates who have gained less than 15% of the vote being elected. As part of the reforms introduced through the Organic Law, future National Elections will be conducted using limited preferential voting.

Governments are elected for a term of 5 years, although no Government has ever managed to serve out their full term since Independence. PNG has a history of governments falling due to a motion of no-confidence. Under PNG law Governments are protected from a motion of no-confidence in the first 18 months of a five year term and also in the last 12 months but are susceptible to a no-confidence motion for the two and a half years in between (half of the full parliamentary term). The current Somare Government entered the period where a no-confidence motion can be moved in February 2004, the result has been a reluctance to allow the Parliament to sit. However the current government appears to be in a strong position and there is speculation that it could be the first PNG National Government to complete a full term.

Provincial Government has strong links with both the National Parliament and Local Level Government as the members consist of the National Parliament members elected within the province and the Presidents of each Local Level Government or Council. Madang Provincial Government also has four Community Representatives. One of the community representatives is Catherine Mal who represents the women of Madang province. Catherine is the only female member of the Provincial Government. The open electorate member of the National Parliament serves as the Governor of the State except in the case where the open member is a Minister of the Crown; in that case the Governor is elected from the remaining national members by the Provincial Government.

Local Level Government assists with identifying needs and delivering programs in their local areas. We visited the Sumgilbar Local Level Government (LLG) and were told of the five year plan they have in place for delivery of services in the Sumkar district. We also viewed several of their projects, a Health Centre, a Women's Centre (under construction) and the Cocoa Coconut Extension Agency. Sumgilbar LLG were frustrated by a lack of funds to deliver projects, particularly as only about 5% of the central government taxes that fund local projects had been forthcoming in the current year. The Sumgilbar LLG is made up of 31 elected members and 2 appointed women's representatives.



Visiting Sumgilbar Local Level Government

## ***Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) – Nick Park***

Although Australia currently contributes close to AUD \$300 million to PNG as tied aid every year (AusAID), the nation's economy and social systems have further declined, placing the country closer to 'failed state' status.

As a result, an aid program designed to '*address the core economic and development challenges facing Papua New Guinea*' has been implemented at a cost of around AUD \$1 billion over five years.

The ECP will encompass policing, law and justice, economic management, public sector management and border and transport security – and will include:

- Approximately 230 Australian police officers working with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC);
- 36 economic and public administration specialists working in the central economic agencies;
- Up to 10 officials to work in border protection and transport security agencies (Immigration, Customs and Civil Aviation).

The ECP will be focused on the geographic centres of Port Moresby, Bougainville, Lae, Mt Hagen and the Highlands Highway. The first Australian police officers will begin duties in Port Moresby by the first week of December 2004.

The most common consensus among high-level Government representatives in PNG that the delegation met with over the course of the trip is that the ECP represents a positive effort to reform, and is a much needed realisation of the country's current difficulties.



Our police escort vehicle

## ***Law and Order – Nick Park***

Central to the nation's ability to attract investment is a crippling law and order problem, particularly in Port Moresby and highlands areas. Through an economy that struggles to maintain growth and restrict inflationary pressures, public sector spending remains low and is often misdirected – with average levels of salary and administration spending in Government departments reaching around 90%.

The RPNGC remains poorly funded with rationing of fuel, ammunition, aged vehicles and inadequate communications systems, coupled with a lack of proper training and manpower. Police corruption is also prevalent, further preventing an effective use of resources.

While in PNG, the delegation saw very little evidence of proactive policing or even police presence, particularly on the streets of Port Moresby.

The delegation was fortunate enough to meet with and hear first hand from the Metropolitan Superintendent, (NCD and Central Command in Port Moresby) with around 20 serving members of the RPNGC based in Boroko (Port Moresby) who outlined the challenges that exists for police officers to carry out their role as a law enforcement agency with any effectiveness. While the ECP is viewed as a proactive and positive step for law enforcement, there is concern that the police service may revert to status quo (reactionary policing) post ECP, unless the country's economic and fiscal management is adequately improved.

From an operational perspective, the issue of cultural awareness and understanding was identified as the biggest challenge that will face Australian law enforcement officers while working in PNG.



Charter flight from Madang to Port Moresby

### ***Infrastructure and Resource Development - Nick Park***

The delegation's meeting with Sir Moi Avei (Minister for Petroleum and Energy) demonstrated PNG's continued reliance on the further development of its natural resources, such as the PNG Gas Project and proposed Ramu Nickel Mine in Madang Province.

Since the closure of the Bougainville Copper Mine, and the nearing closure of Ok Tedi, PNG has not successfully brought any major resource projects to fruition, including the PNG Gas Project.

This project now forms the centre of the nation's resource strategy and is being relied upon to deliver the revenue streams to the National Government needed to fund a return from economic depression.

As PNG's largest company, Oil Search Ltd is intent on delivering the project and fulfilling the commitments of supply to major industrial customers in central Queensland. These customers have permitted the project to enter the FEED (Front End Engineering and Design) stage, that will cost around AUD \$100 million.

The project, which will see gas piped from the southern highlands (Hides Gas Fields) of PNG to Australia via the Torres Strait, has a potential life of around 30-40 years – representing a major economic opportunity for the nation.

According to Minister Avei, the major challenges associated with this project are the protection of PNG's sovereign rights and the building of a suitably large customer base in Australia to ensure the project's viability.

Although 'land ownership' in PNG is non-existent, other than by a community or tribe style grouping, the project will need to provide a level of equity and ownership (compensation) to those communities immediately affected by the development of the pipeline.

To further encourage mining exploration in PNG, tax concessions have been increased to provide greater incentives for the development of resources.

Minister Avei is also committed to the development of a locally based petrochemical industry (methanol or LNG) around Port Moresby.

### ***Community Development – Ashley Wells***

**Overview** - PNG stands alone as Australia's single largest recipient of development assistance funding. Receiving an estimated total in 2004-05 of AUD\$435.6 million, a prosperous, stable and secure PNG is a central priority for Australia.

PNG faces a myriad of development challenges. Over 85 per cent of PNG's people live in rural villages and hamlets and are still at least partially dependent on subsistence agriculture, a factor complicated by the country's rugged topography which has limited the available transport infrastructure. As well, PNG is faced with high population growth (around 2.5 per cent per year), a range of social and cultural divisions, including a cultural system characterised by a *wantok* system of personal networks, a public service characterised by poor governance, and the burgeoning threat of HIV/AIDS.

Compounding this, PNG is ranked 133<sup>rd</sup> of 173 countries in the 2002 UNDP Human Development Index. Per capita GDP was around US\$531 in 2002, and economic growth has largely been driven by mineral and petroleum exports (accounting for 60 per cent of overall exports and around 20 per cent of government revenue). Subsistence farming accounts for the bulk of employment and economic activity.

**Effective Governance** - AusAID advise that the decline in quality and effectiveness of governance in PNG has been amongst the most noticeable problems confronting PNG today. Declining governance quality can be partly attributed to the fact that the PNG Government supports an array of programs that within existing budgetary parameters are unrealistic. This is compounded by the inadequacy of the budgetary appropriations for the wide range of programs the PNG Government attempt to support, and the fact that agencies frequently receive only a portion of those appropriations pledged. Based on our discussions with the range of agencies we met, it was clear that the majority of appropriated funds were directed towards administrative

and salary functions. In some instances the administrative and salary costs of the agencies consulted amounted to approximately 90 per cent of the budget appropriation.

Faced with this reality, it is understandable that the relevant agencies have little capacity to implement the programs they are charged with.

While not openly admitted in our discussions with the agencies consulted, it became clear through our contact with Australian Government officials and members of PNG civil society that the PNG public sector is afflicted with the broader social phenomenon associated with the *wantok* system, namely providing for those of the same groupings. As a consequence, the PNG public service has become a bloated and ineffective institution, unable to provide the services for the PNG population it is meant to be providing.

**Regional responses** - Madang Province provided a useful counterpoint to the central government and red tape of Port Moresby.

Meeting with a range of officials from both the provincial government and the local level government illustrated some of the development challenges faced by broader PNG society. One of the wealthier provinces in PNG, discussions with provincial administrators revealed that while the central government in Port Moresby during its budget deliberations may allocate funding to the provinces, rarely is it delivered in full. This is a significant hindrance to effective economic development.

While under the organic law provincial governments are able to raise revenue at the provincial and local level, it became apparent that in Madang at any rate, this was not yet done. Funding of programs was also regarded by our meetings with the local level government in Sumgilbar as a significant problem for the province. This was demonstrated by a breakdown of Sumgilbar's local level government budget:

Of a total of 775 000 kina allocation, 250 000 kina was received from the provincial government and 75 000 kina from grants. The outstanding amount was to be sourced from internal revenue such as central government taxation collected locally. At the time we were meeting the local level government, a matter of days prior to the central government bringing down its annual budget, we were advised that only around 5 per cent of total taxes had been collected.

During our consultations it became clear that development of existing infrastructure and the development of new infrastructure, such as access roads, paved arterial roads, water and power supply posed as the highest development priority for the province.

Situated at the northern edge of the mainland, Madang is currently inaccessible from Port Moresby by road. All transportation to and from the main commercial and political centres across the country must be done via air, or by time intensive coastal travel. This is an expensive and ultimately resource-diverting exercise.

During our consultations we were advised that a donor funding proposal for road construction had been submitted to the national government for consideration, noting that AusAID is already active across the province in road and related infrastructure development. As an indication of the priority Madang provincial government placed on roads and infrastructure development, they indicated that in their submission the provincial government had offered to provide a share of funding, which would be deposited in a trust account.

It became apparent during our consultations that a number of other development challenges faced the province. While accepting the fundamental importance of infrastructure development,

we noted that overall economic development remained ad hoc and sporadic. A notable exception to this was the extensive coconut plantations in the province and ongoing research into ways of adding value to the raw product.

Similarly, health and education remain ongoing areas of concern.

An ongoing problem remains delivering basic health services to rural areas. When asked what the principal health concerns in the province were, the delegation was advised that Malaria, diabetes and heart disease were considerable problems. No mention was made of HIV/AIDS although this was discussed more freely during a meeting with the health administrator at the local level government meeting in Sumgilbar. While unable to provide numbers of infections, he confirmed that it was an ongoing concern. Education and counselling were regarded as essential, but he stressed that given the conservative nature of PNG society, such education was difficult and that significant cultural barriers remained to the issue being discussed openly.

**Conclusions** - It is clear that PNG today faces a myriad of development challenges. While foreign donors remain essential to the PNG central government to provide services and programs to the broader population, it is clear that the problems of corruption, the *wantok* system and a failure to account for or collect revenue limit the ability of the central government to sustain the country by and of itself. This is an essential prerequisite if PNG is to be viable as a nation into the future.

Reform of the public sector system is clearly needed if the PNG government is to increase its ability to service the basic needs of its people. The Australian-sponsored Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) is a positive step forward in this regard, and appears to be largely welcomed by those PNG officials consulted. A reduction in the overall size of the public service, in conjunction with an increased emphasis on accountability for budgetary appropriations and a re-focus on service delivery beyond the immediate confines of the relatively small urban centres needs to occur if the PNG public service is to implement the agenda and services of the PNG national government.

Similarly, reform is needed in the area of revenue collection. Consideration in this area could be given to the development of a framework that provides incentives to provinces for the effective and timely collection of taxes and other relevant surcharges.

Reform in these areas will not be of themselves sufficient to ensure PNG's viability but they are necessary foundation stones for the country's forward development. It is only by addressing these problems that the PNG central will be better equipped to then focus its attention on the myriad of development challenges facing the country today.

### ***Health (HIV/AIDS) – Evan Langdon***

A large proportion of the Enhanced Cooperation Program is targets at improving health outcomes for the people of PNG, in particular the challenge of the HIV/AIDS issue in PNG.

HIV/AIDS has been flagged in a number of the delegates meetings and by a number of world bodies as an emerging pandemic. Estimates of the number of Papua New Guineans already affected with HIV/AIDS are from 25,000 to 50,000 and the number is growing at an alarming rate. Annual increases are estimated to be between 15 to 30 per cent of the PNG population (figures from AusAID). This pandemic will have a significant effect on both the health of the people and the country's social and economic development.

The significance of this problem is highlighted by the establishment of a Special Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS led by the Hon. Dr Banare Bun MP. The delegation had the privilege of meeting with Dr Bun and discussing the measures the PNG Government is taking to meet this significant challenge.

In a meeting with the delegation The National Youth Commission of PNG raised the issue of HIV/AIDS as a significant hurdle for the youth of PNG to overcome. A serious claim made during this meeting was that if left unchecked it could claim an entire generation of Papua New Guineans.

The major challenge of the HIV/AIDS issue is further impacted by sensitivity surrounding the issue of sex in PNG culture. This leads to a number of levels of PNG society refuse to recognise the importance of dealing with this issue now, in many cases HIV/AIDS being seen as a myth.

The PNG Government, in conjunction with AusAID, has set out to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on the population of PNG using a number of tools. These include education programs to try to change sexual behaviours, improving medical services and community support services throughout the country as well as monitoring the spread of the disease.

In my view this will be one of the most significant challenges that PNG faces in its future. HIV/AIDS has recently overshadowed other health concerns for the population of PNG including tuberculosis and malaria. Other programs AusAID are involved in include delivery of health services to rural communities and upgrading health facilities. While the delegation did not get to view these firsthand it was raised as a high priority issue by Australian officials.



Waduwin Community School, Sumkar District, Madang Province

### ***Education – Evan Langdon***

The provision of education to PNG population is another significant challenge facing the PNG Government. Similarly to health issues, due to the large proportion of the PNG population living in rural areas the delivery of education services is a logistical challenge. According to AusAID it is an area that has had significant improvement in recent times, but one with still a way to go.

The delegation met with Secretary for Education and officials from the PNG Education Department to discuss educational reform, challenges, services, Australian aid and literacy levels.

Much of the Australian aid goes to educational infrastructure through the Department of Education. Alongside this program has been an important program in assisting and funding the training of teachers throughout PNG, including in many rural provinces.

Delegates were also guests of Waduwin Community School in Madang Province. To see first-hand the difference between schooling in Australia and PNG was, to be frank, an upsetting experience. It is my view that education is the cornerstone of a society's development, and to see the lack of resources and to have the children begging the group for help was overwhelming.



Local women perform welcome dance Sumgilbar Local Level Government Offices

### ***Women – Wendy Lovell***

In a country where the groom's family pay a 'Bride Price' to the family of the bride rather than the tradition of a 'Dowry' being paid to the groom by the brides father, you would think that even in the traditional tribal way of life that females would be protected and valued. Unfortunately, this is not so.

***Bride Price*** - A 'Bride Price' is paid by the family of the groom to the family of the bride; payment of the 'Bride Price' is not normally made in cash but in more traditionally valuable commodities such as pigs and beadle nut.

The payment of a 'Bride Price' ensures that if the couple separate the groom will retain custody of all children and joint possessions, if a bride refuses to accept the payment of a 'Bride Price' then she will retain custody of the children in the event of a separation occurring.

The 'Bride Price' disempowers PNG women as, due to the payment of a 'Bride Price', males will often consider their wife and children to be their personal possessions. A bride is limited in her options of whether to accept a 'Bride Price' as refusal to accept a 'Bride Price' is often met with hostility by her family as the 'Bride Price' is seen as a source of wealth for the family.

***Violence towards women*** - PNG suffers the second highest incidence of domestic violence in the world with a World Health Organisation report identifying that 56.1% of all PNG women

experience violence at the hand of an intimate male partner. As alarming as this statistic is, the level of violence towards women is actually far higher than 56.1% as this statistic does not include sexual abuse or rape. Of particular concern was a comment made in one of our briefings that it is estimated that very few women in PNG would reach adulthood without being raped and in some areas without being pack raped.

Women's safety is of particular concern in Port Moresby where in August 2002 a woman was chopped to death by her de-facto partner on a Public Motor Vehicle (PMV) and no-one went to her assistance. We also heard stories of women being raped on crowded PMV's and no-one intervening, an incident where a policeman travelling on the PMV intervened in a rape and was killed by the perpetrator and of problems within the Police Force where police leave their assigned duties and take the police vehicle and pick up their daughters from school to avoid the daughters having to travel on the PMV's. A PMV is a local bus and vehicles are the equivalent of what we would refer to as a mini bus. All PMV's we saw during our visit were overcrowded and it was hard to imagine how on a crowded PMV the rest of the passengers could allow these violent crimes to occur.

In a meeting with Lady Carol Kidu the only female member of the PNG Parliament we were told that in many ways women were worse off now than in traditional times because they now faced the problems of both societies. Lady Carol also told us that although the PNG Parliament had introduced laws to combat rape and sexual assault there had been a problem educating the people. This is due to the remoteness of many tribes, the more than 800 languages spoken in PNG and because there is no word for rape in the traditional languages.

**Health** - With 60% of all mothers in PNG delivering their babies without any medical care or supervision, PNG has one of the highest rates of women dying from pregnancy and childbirth related complications in the world. Statistics show that Maternal Mortality in PNG is 370/100,000 compared to 9/100,000 in Australia.

Statistics also show that highest infection of HIV Aids in PNG occurs amongst young women aged 15 – 24.

Again the remoteness of many villages and language barriers has made it difficult for the Government to deliver women's health programs and to educate women about their health.

**Education** - In PNG education is not compulsory and many villages in rural areas and poor families in the urban settlements do not have access to educational opportunities resulting in a relatively low level of literacy. Statistics show that in 2002, 71.1% of the male population were literate but only 57.7% of the female population were literate.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the low level of female participation in the education system including the attitude that girls are needed for labour in the home, fears about girl's security outside the home and a lack of resources to pay for education. Of the females who do have the opportunity to gain an education very few are likely to complete their schooling. Most will drop out early because of an early marriage, unwanted pregnancy or because they are forced to leave due to lack of finances or the attitude that it is not worth females completing an education.

**Status of Women (inc Politics)** - After nearly 30 years of independence the women of PNG continue to negotiate their way through what is actually a tough and narrow path towards a shared role in decision making in a supposedly democratic system of governance.

Although about 70 females put up their hands as candidates in the last PNG National Election, only one female, Lady Carol Kidu, was actually elected to the Parliament. Unfortunately there has been a similar trend in all national elections since independence.

In our briefing with Lady Carol Kidu we were told that professional women in PNG are still facing the same problems that Australian women faced in the 1970's and that it is rare for a woman's name to come before a Minister for a Ministerial appointment.

In a country like PNG where many women are still living a traditional tribal lifestyle it is hard to measure the overall status of women. Although more women are taking up professions such as doctors, lawyers and businesswomen and some women have become more liberated and self sufficient, others are no better off today than they were at independence.



With students at the Waduwin Community School, Sumkar District, Madang Province

## **Conclusion**

It was a great honour for each one of us to be a member of the Sixth APEC Delegation to visit PNG. Our delegation brought together a diverse group from both sides of politics and consisted of a Member of Parliament, a Parliamentary Advisor, a Campaign Strategist and an Organisational Leader. As each of us had different interests and perspectives we were all able to benefit more broadly from the diverse discussions that took place in our meetings.

The Exchange gave us a chance to observe first hand the challenges facing PNG and the operation of the PNG political system, as well as the opportunity to interact with Ministers, Members of Parliament, Bureaucrats, and Advisors at a senior political level. As a group we met with several very impressive members of the PNG Parliament who all shared a vision for a brighter and stronger future for PNG and who were able to convey to us the message that although PNG faces many challenges it is not a country without hope.

We were extremely privileged to have access to so many of PNG's political leaders and wish to express our gratitude for the courtesy they extended to us. Our gratitude is also extended to Pandora Levanes and the staff of the Australian Political Exchange Council.