



PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, Inc.

Incorporated in New South Wales - ABN 35 027 362 171

Incorporating the former Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society

www.pngaa.org

www.memorial.org.au

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1 MAY 2021

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

COVID Has Not Been Kind to This Fine Association

Yes, there are really positive things happening behind the scenes, especially in collections. The gathering and storing of historical objects and artefacts, documents and photographs that chronicle the extraordinary shared relationship of PNG and Australia continues.

However, to explain my COVID reference:

COVID restrictions have stopped us growing. Stopped us even replenishing our membership. The virus put a stop to many plans by the committee to hold events, which we felt would grow and diversify our membership. And, therefore, our relevance, our survival.

We had grand plans to stage big shared events ... with Sydney Wantoks for example. In the form of barbecues, preferably *mumus*, music and perhaps even a Pacific battle of the bands. Events to bring the generations together. Have some fun ... while at the same time growing awareness of what we do and why.

If not for COVID, we would also have held an historic meeting in Port Moresby. There are so many people in PNG itself with strong Australian connections: an Australian parent, an Australian schooling, Australian friends or just an interest in our country, our relationship, the region and the world. They just do not know enough about the PNGAA. As you all know, face-to-face is the vital communication currency in PNG. But we could not—and cannot— travel there.

You've heard me time and again refer to the need for this association to evolve and become more involved and entwined with the current PNG—while still honouring the past. Forgive me for repeating a quote from John F Kennedy:

History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future. To try to hold fast is to be swept aside.

As I've said before: We (all) need to urgently and actively engage and recruit our daughters and sons and our grandchildren. We need to pass the baton of history as it rushes into the future. We need to evolve and grow PNGAA, so that a proud history is not lost, and it becomes the basis for new history being created each and every day.

We also owe it to the former custodians of this proud association for their years and decades of selfless, volunteer work. We need to make sure the joint PNG–Australia history remains a part of the narrative of both countries.

This week, I sadly and reluctantly informed the committee that I would step down. My relentless—and growing —professional workload with Kundu Productions means I can no longer give the time they and the association deserve.

However, I have promised my ongoing support. I really want to help make the Port Moresby event happen. And I pledge to do that. I will continue writing about and making films on PNG. I will always be a supporter and advocate of this association. I look forward to returning to the committee one day.

Concluding, I want to thank everyone on the committee for their selfless dedication, especially in these difficult times.