



PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, Inc.

Incorporated in New South Wales - ABN 35 027 362 171

Incorporating the former Rabaul & Montevideo Maru Society

71st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes

11.30am Saturday 30 March 2022

1. Welcome

President, Chris Pearsall, opened the meeting and handed over to Andrea Williams to welcome members, including two visiting from Queensland, Belinda Macartney and John Johnston, and guest speakers, Dr Andrea Connor, Acting Policy & Research Manager, Whitlam Institute and Dr Hannah Sarvasy, Western Sydney University.

Dr Connor managed a recent project on PNG comprising a multi-institutional team from the Divine Word University, Madang, the PNG University of Technology, Lae, the University of PNG, Port Moresby, and the Uruwa Ward 1 community of Kabwum District, Morobe Province. Dr Sarvasy served as a facilitator for the project and coordinated the research. By capturing a wide cross-section of perspectives and experiences on socio-economic, political, diplomatic and development assistance matters from ordinary PNG citizens not usually included in official conversations, particularly those living in a remote part of PNG, the project aimed to provide Australian policy makers with enhanced knowledge about how the peoples of PNG perceive themselves, their communities, their country and their relationship with Australia, for the benefit of our long-term bilateral relations. The resulting research publication Baptiste, L, Yamarak, L, Sarvasy, H, Dom, L Z, Dono, I, Gipe, G J, ... Yakam, L T 2022, *PNG Voices: Listening to Australia's Closest Neighbour: Papua New Guinean Perspectives on Australia and the World* Whitlam Institute within Western Sydney University ISBN 978-1-74108-537-2 can be viewed at <https://www.whitlam.org/publications/pngvoices>.

2. Members Present and Apologies

Members present as per Attendance Book		Apologies	Guests
Ralph Allan	Cheryl Marvell	Claire van Bakel	Michael Bestic
Patricia Bestic	Robin Mead	Murrough Benson	Andrea Connor
Greg Cornor	Bev Melrose	Norma Dewick	Fergus Davidson
John Egerton	Allan Neilsen	John Mills	Robin Gibson
Steven Gagau	Oscar Oberholzer	Edna Oakes	Katherine Neilsen
Frank Haviland	Chris Pearsall	George Oakes	Louise Pearsall
Robin Hodgson	Alan Pierce	John Townsend	Louise Smith
Suellen Holland	Jane Rybarz	Max Uechtritz	Hannah Sarvasy
Pat Johnson	Leonard Smith	Russell Wade	Margaret Threlfall
Ross Johnson	Neville Threlfall	Chris Warrillow	
John Johnston	Elizabeth Thurston	Judy Waterer	
Gaynor Kaad	Sara Turner		
Belinda Macartney	Andrea Williams		

3. **Confirmation of Minutes of the AGM held on 26 October 2021** (available at <https://pngaa.org/documents-relating-to-the-2021-agm/> after logging into the website)

Copies of the Minutes of the 70th AGM were circulated. It was **moved** and **accepted** that these Minutes be taken as read.

4. **President's Report**

Chris Pearsall prefaced his report by saying that there are some new initiatives the Committee is working on and, to improve the flow of information and seek feedback, he will be sending regular Mail Chimps 'From the President's Desk' to all members. He then summarised the Committee's activities during the past year.

- a) *PNGAA Scholarship Fund*: During the past year the Committee has considered and approved the establishment of a PNGAA Scholarship Fund. By way of background, Chris spoke about the Tony Friend Scholarship (TFS) scheme. Tony Friend, a kiap who also worked as a development officer and community liaison officer, spent more than 30 years in remote areas of Papua New Guinea, almost 15 years of which were at Oksapmin and Telefomin in the West Sepik Province. Tony greatly valued education and during his years in PNG he supported a number of high school and college students. After he died in 2017 his wife, Maria Friend, decided to set up a scholarship in Tony's name to support students at Oksapmin and Telefomin High Schools. This year the TFS scheme is also sponsoring two students from the Edwaki area who have been accepted into the Nursing College at Telefomin operated by the Baptist Church.

Chris has had a number of telephone conversations with Maria Friend in regard to the establishment of a PNGAA Scholarship Fund along the lines of the TFS scheme. Maria Friend was very helpful in allaying the Committee's concerns regarding both governance and making sure the scholarship funds were not siphoned off for another purpose. She explained that the selection criteria for their students is not focussed only on academic achievement, but on other criteria including potential to contribute to PNG, and a recommendation from the school itself. She maintains contact with the headmaster, receives a report from the school on the student's progress and has established a system that seems to work well from a governance perspective. Additionally, to ensure the money goes where it should, the student's scholarship funds are paid directly to the school.

On 23 January 2023 the PNGAA Scholarship Fund will be ready to commence sponsorship of two students in the Sepik area where the Committee understands the need is great. Chris noted that the scholarship would be restricted to students attending a government school as many private colleges are not accredited by the University of PNG. The cost of a year's schooling is around \$3,000 as most students need to board due to difficult access from isolated areas - the scholarship would cover 50% of annual school fees.

Maria has put Chris in contact with Glenda Tekin who knows the area very well, being a former teacher in the West Sepik area and later a district inspector of schools. She is now retired and lives in Wewak. Glenda could be very helpful in establishing the reporting process and in monitoring progress.

Coincidentally, the Association was contacted by Benny Afo to sponsor several students from the Edwaki area. He had previously approached Maria seeking support for these students from the TFS scheme but funds had already been allocated. As the PNGAA Scholarship Fund will be limited to students attending government schools (see above), our fund, too, will be unable to support Benny's students who are enrolled in private schools.

Jill Worsley in Western Australian recently generously donated a quilt, which she had created, to the Association to help with fundraising and this will be used to commence this project. Members may find they are able to support this PNGAA activity in various ways within their community, with funds going to this project. In this way the Association will be able to expand the number of students sponsored. Please contact me if you can assist in any way.

- b) *Corporate Membership*: Chris emphasised the need to implement and expand a corporate category of membership which would not only increase the total membership but also expand PNGAA's network and visibility in the community and encourage financial sponsorship for some of our activities. The Committee is considering an appropriate membership fee and preparing a letter of introduction and a list of companies to be targeted.
- c) *Sydney Wantoks*: It had been hoped that there could be greater engagement with Sydney Wantoks, the PNG community. With COVID-19 restricting events in the past two years, this has been challenging. Whilst there have been joint events in the past, Chris and Steven Gagau agreed that both groups continue to encourage participation in events where possible.
- d) *PNGAA website*: Chris acknowledged members' complaints about ongoing problems with the website. Consultants have identified structural problems with the website architecture, and recommended building a totally new website using new technology at an estimated cost of \$22,500, an impossible figure for the Association to consider. Suellen Holland said that she has her own website and would speak to Chris after the meeting about alternative website builders.
- e) *Montevideo Maru website*: The upgrade essentially involved a transfer of data and this has now been completed.
- f) *New secretaries*: Chris welcomed Gaynor Kaad and Norma Dewick who had both volunteered for the position. Norma lives in Canberra and Gaynor spoke about her recent visit there to meet Norma.
- g) *Discussions with Canada Bay Council*: During the year the Committee resurrected discussions with the Board of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, located in the Sydney suburb of Concord, about a possible site for our Australia Pacific Centre with the inclusion of a permanent home for the growing collection of books, documents, files and artefacts donated to the PNGAA over many years. Cheryl Marvell commented that Alice Kang, the Director of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, and a featured speaker at the Association's AGM last year, is very keen. There is a natural synergy, which would provide benefits to both parties, including a potential increase in visitor numbers.

However, the actual land on which the Walkway sits is owned by Canada Bay Council. As the Mayor, Angelo Tsirekas, is on indefinite leave due to his appearance at the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Chris has been talking to Mr Tsirekas' personal assistant who is liaising with senior Council officers to try and get our submission moving. To date, it appears that the Council is not interested in stewardship and sites are only available on commercial terms.

The cost of building our Australia Pacific Centre and a dedicated home for our collection is estimated to be \$1.5 million, highlighting the necessity for corporate sponsorship.

- h) *PNG Kundu*: John Egerton, the Editor, noted that proofreading for the June issue of *PNG Kundu* is underway and it should be delivered on time; the March issue was three weeks late due to flooding in Lismore where the journal is printed. John encouraged members to send him contributions, no matter how short, and suggested that a

photograph often prompts an interesting story. Chris thanked John for his valuable and ongoing contribution as Editor and there was a round of applause.

- i) *PNGAA Collection*: Cheryl Marvell drew members' attention to the display table of recent donations she had set up for viewing during the afternoon. She noted that, although storage space is limited, paper items are now able to be stored in an insect-proof and dry area separately from non-paper items for which storage conditions are not as critical.
- j) *Special thanks*: The Association is looking for another Treasurer to fill the position Murrough Benson so bravely took on and so diligently and ably carried out, initially with help from Ross Johnson and then self-taught. Chris Pearsall thanked Murrough for his valuable contributions as both a former Secretary and then as Treasurer and there was a round of applause.

Robin Mead also voiced a loud thank you to all Committee members who contribute so much in a voluntary capacity, and there followed another round of applause from members.

The President's Report is **attached**.

5. Treasurer's Report and adoption of Audited Financial Statements

Prior to this AGM, a copy of the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 was emailed by the Treasurer, Murrough Benson, to all members who indicated they would be attending. These included Statements of Income and Expenditure, Assets and Liabilities, Changes in Equity, Cash Flows and the Independent Auditor's Report. As Murrough lives in Queensland and was unable to attend the AGM, he asked Andrea Williams to read his report. There were no questions.

Any member requiring a copy of the Audited Financial Statements should contact the Treasurer by email: treasurer@pngaa.net or by phone: 0448 216 049.

It was **moved by** John Johnston, **seconded by** Andrea Williams, *that the Audited Financial Statements be adopted as a true reflection of the state of affairs for the year ended 31 December 2021, and that the Treasurer be instructed to complete and lodge the Annual Return (Form A12) with NSW Fair Trading.* All in favour. **CARRIED**.

The Treasurer's Report is **attached**.

6. General Business

- a) *Death of members not advised to PNGAA for acknowledgment in PNG Kundu Vale*: Allan Neilsen informed the meeting of the deaths of John Stevenson in early 2021 and Jill Curtis in 28 March 2022. John was an electrician who worked in PNG for about 10 years from the early 1950s. Jill was the wife of Bob Curtis, a didiman who died of an extremely rare cancer in 2010.
- b) *Current situation in the Solomon Islands*: Members raised their concerns regarding the recent signing of a security agreement between China and the Solomon Islands and its implications for Bougainville and Papua New Guinea. It was recognised that the next Australian government will need to do much more to embrace the Pacific Island countries. Chris noted that the Rules of the PNGAA do not permit the Association to be involved in or engage in partisan politics in pursuance of its objectives. Robin Mead said that, in his view, the Association has a role to play in the political space, while not being political, and Ralph Allen suggested writing to the government to express members' concerns. Chris said that the Committee members are volunteers and already have a large workload with limited resources but that should not prevent other members of the Association from writing. He said it was his view that PNGAA's primary

focus should be to continue to seek ways of working with Papua New Guineans and building on the established friendship between our two countries and, in that way, help keep PNG out of China's growing sphere of influence.

- c) *Items brought to the AGM for the collection:* Neville Threlfall donated a model of the first post office erected at Simpsonhafen (Simpson Harbour) in 1905, later to become Rabaul and the capital of Germany's South Pacific possessions. The model was made by J Prior based on a photograph in Scottish author Bessie Pullen-Burry's book *In A German Colony 1907*.

He also brought specimens of *Oliva parkinsoni*, a marine gastropod mollusc or sea snail. Neville was a shell collector from an early age and the New Britain coast was his hunting ground. After finding these particular specimens he showed them to another Rabaul collector, Brian Parkinson who, after not recognising them, sent the shells away for scientific identification. They turned out to be a new species in the genus 'Oliva' and the species was named 'parkinsoni' after Brian. Neville Threlfall kindly offered for members present to avail themselves of a shell from the presented collection on the day of the AGM if they desired.

Neville's contribution added to the interesting day that it was, and PNGAA thanks him for his support.

- d) *Upcoming joint fundraising event by Newcastle Branch of Rotary International and PNGAA for a dental clinic in the East Sepik:* Suellen Holland spoke briefly about this event on to be held on 13 July, encouraging members to think about attending. Full details will be in the June issue of *PNG Kundu*.

The meeting closed at 12.27pm.

The presentation by Dr Andrea Connor, Acting Policy & Research Manager, Whitlam Institute, and Dr Hannah Sarvasy, Western Sydney University on *PNG Voices: Listening to Australia's Closest Neighbour: Perspectives on Australia and the World* followed the AGM.

PRESIDENT APPROVAL:

(Signature & Date)

SECRETARY APPROVAL:

(Signature & Date)
