

Speeches at the "Sharing Histories: Kiap Tribute" Event in Canberra 20 November 2010

Major-General Michael Jeffery.

Senator Kate Lundy, His Excellency Mr Charles Lepani, PNG High Commissioner, Mr Ross Gibbs, Director General National Archives of Australia; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good afternoon, everyone and what a pleasure it is to be here to take part in this long overdue recognition process of the sterling work done by our Kiaps in Papua New Guinea prior to Independence.

I am an avid reader of the Journal of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia *Una Voce*, which invariably contains moving reminiscences of Kiap life.

As an Army officer I was posted to Papua New Guinea on two occasions and indeed Marlena and I were married in the tiny Haus Lotu, a bush church in Taurama Barracks in Port Moresby in February 1967, when I was a Company Commander with the 1st Battalion, The Pacific Islands Regiment.

It was whilst on various six-week patrols into the Bosavi, Rabaul and Hagen areas that I first became acquainted with the work of our kiaps and District office staffs. Indeed, a very fine former District Commissioner in Mr J.K. McCarthy was the Administrator of PNG at the time and his book *Patrol Into Yesterday*, about his kiap/patrolling experiences, remains riveting reading even today.

A few years later and after a stint of operational service in Vietnam I was posted back to PNG where I was privileged to command 700 very fine soldiers of the Second Battalion in Wewak, and further privileged to be there for Independence on 16 September 1975, when the then PNG Minister for Defence, if I recall correctly, noted that unlike in many other former colonies overseas, the Australian Flag was being lowered with dignity, rather than torn down.

When Marlena and I returned to Wewak in 2008 as Governor-General some 10,000 village people lined the streets to welcome us back — dressed in tribal dress, throwing flowers at us and with wonderful smiles: a truly joyful occasion.

Two years ago, I was honoured to be invested as a Grand Companion of the Order of the Logohu by Sir Michael Somare. The 'Logohu' bird of paradise is PNG's national symbol, and a very beautiful one too. It comes with the honorific title of "Chief".

I subsequently bought a small fishing boat and named it the Logohu, just to remind everyone who is the Chief when we are out on the water, and in particular those retired admiral friends of mine who might volunteer as deck hands and who also might think they know something about boats!

So, it is with a strong affiliation to, and some understanding of, PNG that I can appreciate the tremendous work of the Kiap or patrol officer and the significant role they played in the post-war development of New Guinea up until Independence.

With limited support, the Kiap was often the first contact with remote tribes and the roles expected of him required great resourcefulness, cultural understanding, perseverance and courage. One of the duties of the patrol officer was to establish a patrol post that may have required jungle clearing, the building of huts and an air strip for resupply.

From the Patrol Post the Kiap would conduct walking or perhaps canoe patrols in largely unmapped country to the villages in his area.

Having established contact with the various villages the Kiap would carry out numerous administrative duties including policing, census taking, education in local government practices and tax collection among others.

Patrols lasted from two weeks to three months and were mostly conducted without support or communication with the outside world. The Kiap had to be self-reliant and carry his own food, medical supplies, and paperwork. The Kiap would be accompanied by local native carriers and native policemen who were trained by him. And what a wonderful job those native policemen did.

The role of Kiap was not without peril. Numerous lives were lost through aircraft accidents: some, even more tragically, included family members. Patrol officers died in the Mt Lamington eruption of 1951, while others were murdered or died from illnesses caught on patrol. Drownings and motor boat accidents as well as direct attacks on patrols all led to a number of Kiap deaths.

It was this tremendous work of the Patrol Officers and District Commissioners in developing PNG, from in many cases a primitive tribal regime, to a fully democratised nation, which although it has its problems, unlike many other former colonial countries, has not suffered civil war or a military coup.

Without the Patrol Officers performing their policing, legal, agricultural, governance and administrative functions, PNG would simply not have been prepared for nationhood in 1975.

Thus, it is fitting that there is public recognition of the role of the Australian Patrol Officer in PNG and I hope that this event goes some way towards demonstrating the Nation's appreciation to the former Kiap community for a magnificent contribution to nation building in a country that all of us who have served there, feel a close and enduring affection.

Thank you.

His Excellency, Charles Lepani, High Commissioner to Australia

Senator Lundy, and Excellency, Major General Michael Jeffery.

This is a wonderful occasion, and I'm very grateful for the invitation to participate here, to thank you all, the kiaps, and your families and children who are here today. On behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea, and the people of Papua New Guinea, I say thank you.

Thank you also the National Archives for this wonderful effort to recognise and store away for use of future generations of Australians and Papua New Guineans the means by which to remember the sterling efforts of young Australians who were in Papua New Guinea to assist in creating the nation that it is today.

Often, I have been to occasions like this, particularly for the PNG Association of Australia and I have pressed those attending for one thing: please write—rather than sit in coffee shops in Manly, or tea houses, and exchange reminiscences—write about your memories, your reminiscences. The young generation of Australians and Papua New Guineans can then share your knowledge of those challenging times in creating the nation that today is Papua New Guinea.

I have my own recollections: growing up in Trobriand Islands, and in Port Moresby, and before I came to Australia. The story of Patrol Officers, Assistant District Commissioners, (in our case, in Trobriands, we didn't have a District Commissioner). The District Commissioner was in Samarai, our headquarters, but yes, we had very good officers. My father served with them as a Storeman and a Clerk. He was sent to Port Moresby to train. He became a Clerk in the Treasury office, cleaning the windows of the Director for Treasury then, whose son I happened to meet here. He was the Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and now your Ambassador in Italy.

My father used to talk about the kiaps, the Assistant District Officers he worked with in Trobes, like Turner, and Owen the red-headed kiap, Mr Owen. Of course, Mr Whitehouse was the famous one before the war period. He was a tough one. Trobrianders used to be very scared of him.

Then in my school years in Charters Towers, I came across Mr Phillip Bouraga, the first Papua New Guinean kiap who was admitted to your ASOPA training. He was doing his senior year to repeat maths to get to ASOPA, and I was studying in grade seven, in Charters Towers.

So, I've experienced a fair bit of kiap contact. Even in my first job. I was trained as a trade unionist by Bob Hawke and his cohort in ACTU. I then came back and worked for PSA. Those were transition days. Australian kiaps and Australians were leaving public service, and the PSA made a major effort to get you your "golden handshakes", I was part of that team, though very peripheral as a junior officer in the Public Service Association.

My father used to come to Kaugeri, where we lived, with these small payslips that he was to type for your pays when he worked at Treasury. Some of you, if you got the wrong pay slips, or were underpaid, [can] blame him for it!

However, let me on a serious note repeat how wonderful it is that National Archives has taken on this role, to reinvigorate the experiences that you have had in Papua New Guinea, and establish the record about which all Australians and Papua New Guineans should be proud, particularly the young generation.

My job here in Canberra is also not just dealing at government-to-government level. I enjoy most going to Rotaries, Councils, and schools that come to the High Commission. When I go out to talk to them, it's very important we maintain and sustain this relationship that you've contributed so much to build in Papua New Guinea. The young generation of both our countries need to learn. The Kokoda Foundation is one group that is spearheading a lot of work in building up the Kokoda tradition, the iconic story between Papua New Guinea and Australia and our friendship.

At times politics can be tough between our two countries, and so can politicians, but as friends we continue a substantive role to play between our two countries. That's part of the reason why it's very important to write your memories down, and store them away so it will be accessible to future generations.

The other story I want to tell you is how our present Prime Minister, who would, I think be the last generation of Papua New Guinean leaders who straddles effectively both Western modern and past tradition cultures. The young generation of leaders have a different perspective on life.

Two things that I remember Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare has mentioned to me. A couple of us, two years after independence were having a drink in his office just after the Budget Session. I was Head of the Planning Office. I remember he said, "Charles, I think we really started off on the wrong track. There are certain parts of the country we should fence and let the kiaps run, and there are certain parts of the country we should get independence for."

Today, he continues to preach this sentiment when he's here in Australia. He's asked the former Prime Ministers if we could have some of the retired judges, retired teachers, even retired patrol officers to go back and help in extension services, the delivery of services. That's the key issue today. We've got public service, we've got a lot of money—more money than we've ever had—but to effectively deliver the services that you did so well, that's what we, the country and the leaders, are seeking to regenerate amongst our public servants.

The key word today is not "patrol" officers, but "petrol officers". As some of you may know, if a station calls and says "Can we have these supplies, or can we see you on a patrol?", the answer is: "Oh, no, Sori, nogat petrol."

These are the difficulties of today's development that Papua New Guinea faces. We have challenges. We have good prospects and good potential, but we do look forward to your continued friendship and support. At government level we have had very good and growing support from the Australian governments, both previous and current: in the development effort; the two reviews of universities;

and the development cooperation treaty, which is the essence of our relationship in your aid program.

We think, at least the Prime Minister and I agree on this, that aid can be good, but it can also be bad for our relationship. Australians, as I've always said—some of you might have heard me say this—think that it's "a waste of taxpayers' money". Papua New Guineans think it's "boomerang money". There's a lot of confusion going on, that has gone on, but the latest review has been very good, that is, to not only start reducing Australia's aid, but also build it into investment, trade, and give the money to investors, and to NGOs to help in the effective delivery of your aid. Papua New Guineans also share this view.

So, in conclusion, once again, Ross, thank you very much for the effort your gallery has put into this day, but also to store in the Archives the reminiscences and the records of this great bunch of Aussies.

Thank you.