



PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

73rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 5 MAY 2024

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thank you all for being here today.

A very warm welcome to all of you today, especially Mr Ponabe Yuwa, Consul General for Papua New Guinea, and Ms Joanne Sharpe, who is the Director for Justice and Strategy for Papua New Guinea within Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and who is leading the coordination for celebrations of PNG's 50th anniversary. Also noting Mr Phil Ainsworth, President of the NGVR/PNGVR Ex-members Association, and Mr Steven Gagau, President of the Sydney Wantok Association – both PNGAA Management Committee members too.

Management Committee

I'd especially like to welcome and introduce you to Management Committee members who have joined us since last year's AGM - Kylee Andersen (Secretary and admin), who has come over from Perth, Editor - Christine Leonard and Public Officer, Jane Rybarz.

It is good to see our former President Chris Pearsall here today with Louise after stepping back last year. We're grateful to Chris for his efforts on the committee, particularly with initiating the PNGAA Scholarship Fund.

In October Kylee responded to a plea for administrative assistance on the Committee and we are delighted she has joined us. Kylee recognised the need for the Association to have Deductible Gift Recipient status as well as charity status with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission and has jumped in to start these challenging processes. Both her professional and volunteering experience is valuable on the Management Committee, assisting in many areas.

In December, John Egerton advised that he needed to relinquish the role after the March 2024 issue. John has edited fourteen issues of PNGAA's magnificent journal, with Production Manager, Jeannette Gilligan. PNGAA is incredibly grateful to John's passion, skill and endless efforts resulting in a highly acclaimed international journal, regularly passed around and receiving praise. His insights on the committee are regularly sought and valuable. We also acknowledge all the lovely comments that regularly come in about the journal. John has done an outstanding job for which we are truly grateful, and we thank him.

Happily, we were delighted to announce that Christine Leonard (née Wall) has taken on the editor's role for the Association. Christine had hoped to be here today from Brisbane but had a long-standing commitment.

Another new member of PNGAA's extended volunteers is Jane Rybarz who has kindly taken on the Public Officer's role. Born in PNG, Jane's professional accounting experience has already been of great help regarding walking through the DGR challenges.



Sadly, Kieran Nelson, who was PNGAA's mainstay on social media, and the Brisbane connection with SE QLD PNG diaspora, passed away in February 2024, and is greatly missed.

In February this year members were delighted to hear PNG PM James Marape make the first historic speech by a Pacific Leader to the Australian Parliament. This recognition of Australia's close connection with PNG was appreciated.

In the 2023 year, the PNGAA has been actively engaged in promoting cultural exchange, fostering connections, and supporting its members throughout the year.

Here are some highlights of our activities:

Scholarship Initiative and Finance

Sponsorship of six students from West Sepik Province began in 2023 with fees and textbooks. One student has pulled out of the programme at the end of 2023 and has been replaced with a new student earlier this year. We have also heard there is a new headmistress at Anguganak in 2024.

School fees were not set by the PNG National Education Board until the start of the 2024 academic year. Once these were announced PNGAA decided to extend the school sponsorship to a further three (3) Grade 9 students from Oksapmin Secondary School in the Telefomin District in the Sandaun Province:

We thank all members and friends who have made donations to assist PNGAA in achieving this help for the students. We look forward to your further support so that we can continue to assist and broaden the education of selected PNG secondary school students. Members might consider holding even a small fundraising event themselves, liaising with our Secretary Kylee Andersen.

In Perth, Jill Worsley has made several quilts which have been donated to events and resulted in successful fundraising.

In June 2023 the Gold Coast PNG Club, under President Greg Pike CSM, kindly supported PNGAA with a generous \$4000 donation from the fundraising at this event for the Scholarship Fund. This support was greatly appreciated.

PNGAA Treasurer, Murrough Benson, meticulously looks after PNGAA's finances with support from other committee members. We thank Murrough for his diligence and cautious approach.

EVENTS

PNGAA Luncheons:

The Management Committee is grateful to our event co-ordinators around the states - Linda Cavanaugh Manning, with assistance from Robyn Petricevic, Kylee Andersen, Peter Ryan and Kieran Nelson (dec'd), Belinda Macartney, Chris Warrillow and Deryck Thompson - all of whom arrange wonderful gatherings so that members and friends can meet and share a meal, whilst recounting stories that only those who share our interest can do. It doesn't matter where you lived in PNG, or even if you didn't, there is always a connection and something to chat about. The gatherings are always greatly enjoyed, and I encourage you to attend!

Lunches were held in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Cairns.

If you think you can hold a gathering in your area, please keep in touch with our admin – Kylee Andersen – and remember that photos for the journal and members area of the website are always welcome, as is support for PNGAA fundraising projects.



A reminder here, also, that PNGAA currently urgently needs an Event Coordinator in the Sydney area. Notices are in each journal with contact details.

PROJECTS

PNGAA members continue to work on projects that promote the rich culture and connection between Australia and PNG. One of these is Steven Gagau, a PNGAA committee member who was instrumental in the magnificent 'Bilas' exhibition at the Australian Museum, and who continues to work on projects featuring PNG and the Pacific connection.

Steven Gagau, Kalolaine Fainu and Max Uechtritz were involved with the Tidal Kin Exhibition at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney, which opened on 7 October 2023.

Rabaul and Montevideo Maru

Following the successful discovery of the Montevideo Maru a year ago PNGAA committee members Max Uechtritz and Andrea Williams attended dinners held in Oslo, with the King of Norway, and Canberra, with the Australian Prime Minister, to acknowledge the wonderful achievement.

Despite Tokua airport being semi-dug up for maintenance this year, 38 people had a successful trip to Rabaul to commemorate Anzac Day this year.

Membership and Community Engagement

After three years it was agreed to increase PNGAA membership fees by 10%. In the current environment of rapidly escalating costs everywhere, this seems very reasonable. We thank Roy Ranney who spent considerable time migrating the website subscribers to the new rates.

With increasing scam emails, a reminder that members need to be vigilant and check the email addresses - 'if in doubt, throw it out'.

PNG KUNDU

The journal is a breath-taking glimpse of both contemporary information and life before PNG gained independence from Australia. With so many Papua New Guineans born since Independence, and now around 50 years of age, they have little knowledge of what life and developing PNG was like before Independence. The Australian era in PNG is almost forgotten. PNG Kundu ensures that the relationship between Australia and PNG is remembered and continues. Your contributions with items of interest are important in so many ways, and so is membership of this important association. Please help our association to grow by encouraging members to join, to contribute both stories and items of interest, and to engage with and assist the committee.

As mentioned earlier, we are hearing many comments expressing pleasure at the varied stories and information contained within each issue of this quarterly journal, and the very professional presentation. The journal is shared with family and friends over and over—and it is exciting to hear it is so well loved by our members and wider PNG/Australian friends.

Our committee is proud of the enormous effort put in by our Editors, John Egerton and now Chris Leonard, proof readers, Murrough Benson and Andrea Williams, and our Production Manager, Jeannette Gilligan, to ensure it is enjoyed by you. Jeannette has contributed greatly to the quality of PNG Kundu and her impact in every way is immeasurable. Thank you, Jeannette.



Following the journal publication there is always the uploading onto the website – another big job. Thank you to Jeannette Gilligan and Roy Ranney for organising and making it digitally available.

WEBSITE

The PNGAA website is an extraordinary resource. The members area houses journals back to 1978, photo galleries and electronic books. In 2023 we were asked if some photos could be used for a large new exhibition on WWII and its legacies at the National Museum and Art Gallery in Port Moresby. In supporting exhibitions we hope, too, that the PNGAA and its work is highlighted to those who have not heard of the Association.

There has been work on the website photo galleries and also a search reference for the Vales on the website with thanks to Roy Ranney, Claire van Bakel (who assists Roy generally, behind the scenes on the PNGAA website) and Will Muskens. In November, PNGAA doubled the capacity of the website (which also enhanced performance)

PNGAA Collection

One objective of the PNGAA is *'to encourage the preservation of documents, historical and cultural material related to PNG, including the production and recording of oral and written histories'*. Significant artefacts, patrol reports, maps, books, diaries, photos and movies have been donated by many various members and friends - kiaps, lawyers, medicos, midwives, didimen, planters, pilots, teachers, anthropologists, missionaries, mechanics, academia etc. This list is not exhaustive, but all items are carefully curated by Cheryl Marvell and collected and often transported by various members of the committee.

Members will know that a major and urgent goal for the PNGAA is to showcase the PNGAA Collection which is continually growing. This collection would complement a cultural centre where both Australians and international visitors could learn more about the Pacific, PNG and its Australian connection, and there is electronic availability. A major sponsor is necessary to establish and to maintain a venture of this nature. The PNGAA needs all possible support to make this happen.

Future Projects

The PNGAA continues to advocate for recognition of Australia's past role in PNG, for Australia taking PNG to a peaceful independence, and the close relationship with ASOPA, at Middle Head, Sydney.

Following the 2023 AGM Paul Munro AM delivered several copies of the PNGAA submission responding to the Harbour Trust's Draft Master Plan to its Middle Head office. This was followed up with postal and electronic delivery. The Harbour Trust received 209 submissions which were reviewed for use in creating yet another revised draft master plan! Frustratingly, it simply appears to be a continuing evolving circle of draft management plans. Clearly the SHFT is driven to achieve commercial independence.

The proposed Australian Pacific Community and Cultural Centre is viewed as an educational, resource and cultural centre located in Australia to educate Australians about our past and contemporary roles in PNG and to support all Pacific communities. Significantly, an interactive centre of collaboration between Australian and Pacific communities would strengthen understanding and relationships. It is greatly needed.

PNGAA believes that the values and principles that guided the ASOPA experience and which assisted PNG development, should be preserved, celebrated, and fostered to bring about better relationships between Australia and its nearest neighbours.



With PNG's 50th anniversary of independence rapidly approaching in 2025, taking a nation, PNG, to a peaceful independence is something to be proud of and to celebrate. PNGAA hopes members will bear this in mind as they share special memories encouraging Australians to know this history and how it sustains our relationship now.

PNGAA believes that permanent recognition of Australia's role in PNG would, ideally, be part of Australia's education system, alongside acknowledgement in an Australian Pacific Community and Cultural Centre.

On 11 September 2024 it will be the 110th anniversary of Australia's first military action suffering its first WW I casualties when Australia took the then German controlled Bitia Paka radio station on New Britain.

Advocacy and Legacy

PNGAA thanks all volunteers on the Management Committee and the wider working groups. Whilst there is a lot of expertise on the Management Committee, the PNGAA urgently needs to fill two important voluntary roles — President and Events Co-ordinator (Sydney Area Environs). Our Association is unique, and its main goal is to strengthen the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea. The only way an amazing association like ours succeeds is through the passionate, proactive, dedicated and generous efforts of its volunteers! Being flexible and a team player is vital. Please put your hand up!

As we move forward, the PNGAA remains committed to fostering connections, supporting our members, and promoting cultural understanding between Papua New Guinea and Australia. We appreciate the active participation of our members and look forward to another productive year. Thank you for your continued support.

Andrea Williams