



Kokoda Initiative



Australian Government

Kokoda Nius - October 2018

Leaders open community buildings in Buna



Opening the new Buna health centre by Oro Provincial Government, Australian High Commission, Kokoda Track Foundation and No Roads Foundation.

Oro Governor Gary Juffa and Ijivitari MP Richard Masere joined a large crowd of Buna residents on 10 September to celebrate the opening of the new double classroom at Buna elementary school and the new Buna health centre.

Beachheads communities gave critical support to Australian and Allied forces during the numerous battles against the Japanese forces over 75 years ago.

These new facilities underscore Australia's enduring commitment to work with the PNG Government and communities as an

important and integral part of the Kokoda Track history.

The new Buna double classroom completes Australia's 10 million Kina package of education infrastructure delivered over the past 12 months, including eight new double classrooms creating over 550 classroom spaces across the Kokoda catchment, with eight new staff houses and five classrooms upgraded.

The new Buna health centre is delivered through a collaboration between the Australian Government, Oro Provincial

Health Division, No Roads Expeditions Foundation, Kokoda Track Foundation and Rotary Australia, who collectively resourced the building works, medical equipment supply and medical support services for the Buna catchment of over 7,000 people.

To launch the new health facility, 12 Australian medical volunteers of the No Roads Expeditions Foundation treated over 180 Buna patients on the opening day.

New double classrooms for Gorari and Kebara



Kebara grade 8 students in their new classroom

Communities in Gorari and Kebara villages recently celebrated the opening of new double classrooms funded through the Kokoda Initiative.

The events were well attended by students, teachers, community members and representatives from the Oro Provincial Education Department and the Australian High Commission.

The two new double classrooms are also part of the 10 million Kina package of

education infrastructure implemented through the Kokoda Initiative to mark the 75th anniversary of the wartime campaigns.

The new classrooms provide over 140 students from the two communities with a more comfortable and practical learning environment, and encourage children to attend lessons and stay in school.

Kokoda military heritage management plan launch



NMAG Director Dr Andrew Moutu (centre) launches military heritage management plan

The director of the National Museum and Art Gallery, Dr Andrew Moutu, officially launched the Military Heritage Management Plan for the Kokoda Track and surrounding areas on 27 September.

The strategic document will guide heritage management along the Kokoda Corridor between Owers Corner and Kokoda Station and beyond to the beaches of Oro Province.

“The historical items scattered among the Kokoda Track and beyond are not just remnants from the war, they are treasures and memories of an event that prompted the emergence of our nation,” said Dr Moutu.

The plan sets out the policies and practices that will ensure the heritage of

the Kokoda Track remains safe, authentic and accessible for both residents and international visitors for generations to come.

The plan was developed with Australian support in partnership with the Government of Papua New Guinea.

It focuses on five key elements - Knowledge; Preservation, Conservation and Collections Management; Interpretation and Education; Commemoration; and Promotion.

Australian High Commission Minister Counsellor Andrew Egan said the plan builds upon the shared and unifying histories of PNG and Australia, and also offers opportunities for future growth in tourism and trekking.

Campsite and guest house accreditation



Local campsite owners in Manari village with Tourism Promotion Authority officer Mary Kanawi

Over 75 Kokoda Track campsite and guest house owners participated in the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority's (TPA) Accommodation Accreditation Scheme.

Discussions are ongoing across a range of topics related to the accreditation of their accommodation, including the upkeep of camp grounds, porter accommodation, access to clean drinking water and the assessment of washing facilities.

The scheme is part of an ongoing TPA program that introduces accommodation industry standards to local campsite and guest house owners.

A key aim is improving the trekking experience to support the growth of the tourism industry.

Owners will be supported and encouraged to meet quality benchmarks according to national guidelines.

Kokoda Track Authority review complete

The final report of the Kokoda Track Authority (KTA) review has been submitted to the PNG Government.

The first draft was completed in July. It was recirculated for feedback from stakeholders before finally being approved by the Prime Minister's taskforce. The final draft was then presented at the Kokoda Initiative ministerial committee meeting on 6 September.

The committee approved the report and requested legislation be drafted to give effect to the recommendations. The draft legislation will be prepared for Cabinet over coming weeks, before it is finally considered by Parliament.

The review team consulted widely with track communities, tour operators,

landowners and officials to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

It was important that all stakeholders were provided the opportunity to have their say. As noted by Minister Pundari, it took PNG four years to get to this point.

The review recommended replacing the KTA with a new agency which would sit in the tourism and culture portfolio. It would be responsible for working with landowners and tour operators jointly to grow the tourism industry and share benefits with communities in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner.

Improved management of the tourism industry will encourage more tourists to

visit, sustainably growing the sector and ensure money continues to flow into the region and Kokoda Track communities.



Health workers complete family planning training



Community health workers take part in practical sessions on family planning

Ten community health workers in the Sogeri, Kokoda and Koiari areas recently took part in family planning training.

The two-week program was conducted by Marie Stopes and included theoretical and practical sessions. Competency training included longer term contraception methods, such as implants and intrauterine devices.

Further sessions were held at urban clinics in Port Moresby.

The training also strengthened the counselling skills of health workers, emphasising the prevention of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

“Apart from helping women and girls with family planning methods and counselling in my community, I want to instil the importance of spacing children, while at the same time developing my skills,” said Mary Zeman, community health worker at Efogi Health Centre.

Back up family planning supervision was provided in October with another three visits to follow. This training forms part of the Kokoda Initiative support to 24 health workers and 12 health centres across the Kokoda Track corridor.

Health and education patrols

In response to recent concerns of a re-emergence of polio in PNG, the Kokoda Initiative is supporting community health workers to vaccinate children across the Kokoda Track.

Close to 8,500 children (about a third of the total Kokoda Track population) have been vaccinated in the past few months, with Kokoda Initiative health and education teams visiting 40 schools in the Sogeri, Koiari and Kokoda catchments.

Also, close to 5,000 students and teachers received oral health and hand washing kits from Colgate Palmolive.

The program promotes good hygiene practices among children to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.



Eora elementary students practicing hand washing with soap.

CEPA training on heritage management



CEPA team at the Blue Mountains in Sydney

Four CEPA officers recently visited Australia to participate in workshops on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and developing protected area management plans.

In Canberra, Australian War Memorial staff shared insights into the significance of the Kokoda campaign for Australian visitors to PNG, and the group visited the Kokoda exhibition.

The staff also visited two of Australia’s World Heritage sites.

In the Blue Mountains region west of Sydney, local Aboriginal rangers and elders explained how cultural heritage can be preserved and promoted through tourism. At the Sydney Opera House, staff discussed how to balance protection of heritage sites with the needs to service a high-volume tourism industry.

Protected area consultations



CEPA consultation team in Hagutawa village to discuss the gazettal process

In parallel with the Kokoda Track Authority review, CEPA has commenced consultations as part of the gazettal process for the Owen Stanley Ranges and the Brown River Catchment to become a national protected area under the Conservation Areas Act.

Work to date has concentrated on identifying and understanding the unique and special values of the region, including biodiversity, cultural and historical values.

The CEPA team is consulting closely with communities. Information sessions will provide opportunities for locals to share concerns, ask questions and provide open forums for discussions.

The first phase involved the Central and Oro Provincial Administrations and Kokoda and Koiari LLGs. In late August, two teams visited communities to explain the gazettal process and gather comments and concerns.

Further field visits are expected before the end of 2018, along with a Port Moresby workshop for people from the region living in the national capital.

The gazettal process will ensure land is protected against unsustainable uses, such as logging and mining, which can seriously degrade the area’s unique values and undermine the tourism sector.

It is important for all Kokoda Track residents to understand the gazettal process and how it will affect them.

Teachers grateful for new classroom in Gorari



Teachers Wari and Cornelius Pondo with elementary students outside their new double classroom

A husband and wife team teaches elementary students across three grades at Gorari Elementary School.

After graduating in 2012 from a teaching course at Kokoda Station run by the Kokoda Track Foundation, Wari and Cornelius Pondo returned home to Gorari and established a classroom made of bush materials to teach children at elementary levels.

Attendance in the bush classrooms has grown substantially since then to over 150 students.

Recognising the need for better facilities, Gorari Elementary School recently received a new double classroom through by the Kokoda Initiative.

Wari Pondo said that when the new classroom was built for elementary grades, it really assisted because previously students were sitting on bare earth to learn with leaking roofs.

“With the new classroom, I’m able to teach students from morning until afternoon, even when it is raining, and students also have proper desks and chairs.”

IT lab for Skills Training Centre



IT classes were previously conducted outside

The Kokoda Skills Training Centre will utilise the new double classroom constructed by the Kokoda Initiative last year as an information technology (IT) lab for training and studies.

IT classes were previously held under a small shelter outside. Computers were set up in the morning and packed away into a secure room in the afternoon.

To complete the lab for students, 20 desks have been set up in the centre. Work is also underway to install security doors and windows to protect the equipment.

Sogeri road rehabilitation



New Vesulogo bridge on Owers Corner Road

The Australian Government, through the Kokoda Initiative, has committed around 1.5 million Kina for the improvement of Owers Corner Road at Sogeri. Rehabilitation of the 20km road is due for completion in December 2018.

Local communities living along the Owers Corner Road are contributing an estimated 500 hours of grass cutting and other local works.

Earlier this year, an urgent replacement bridge was built at Vesulogo after the previous bridge collapsed. The new bridge, constructed of heavy timber and steel reinforcements, will last many years.

From the Track

Gregory Babilis, Principal Curator of Modern History, NMAG



Mr Babilis at the NMAG World War II exhibit

Where are you from and what do you do?

I am from Wautogik village in East Sepik Province. I’m the principal curator of the modern history department, which is one of our five science departments at the National Museum and Art Gallery (NMAG).

How long have you been working with NMAG and what does your role involve?

This is my fifth year working with NMAG and my role is preserving Kokoda Track World War II history. This requires preserving the physical remnants of the war, especially here at the museum and the bulk of collections at Murray Barracks. And also preserving the intangible historical heritage of the war, basically oral history and narratives.

What is your most memorable experience as a Curator with NMAG?

For me, it’s been an experience travelling extensively and frequently up to remote villages along the Kokoda Track, having discussions with locals and trying to set up local museums.

Another significant project is the Kokoda Military Heritage Management Plan, supported by the Kokoda Initiative.

What are your plans for the future?

I have ambitions to undertake further studies in museum training and development.

My vision is to spend my career at the museum and to contribute more to its development. I want to take it to the next step to see how we can enhance our exhibitions and collections, which will inform me on the history curriculum of students.

Everything we do should inform curriculum development, and what should be taught in primary and high schools. Museums have an important educational function for the work we do in archaeology, history and biology.