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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

Report on a Visit

to

Papua New Guinea

April 1986



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Membership of the Committee34th Parliament

Main Committee

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Secretary to the Committee:	Mr P F Bergin

Papua New Guinea Working Group

Mr D E Charles MP - Leader

Hon R C Katter MP - Deputy Leader

Senator N Bolkus

Senator R C Elstob

Mr J Gayler MP

Mr L Kent MP

Mr E J Lindsay RFD MP

Mr P F Bergin - Secretary to the Working Group.

Introduction

1. The visit to Papua New Guinea of a delegation from the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Parliament of Australia during April 1986 reflects the interest which both countries share in promoting the level of contact and exchange between political leaders in Papua New Guinea and Australia.
2. The need for more regular high-level contact was perceived in both countries during 1985. The Foreign Ministers of Australia and Papua New Guinea, for example, noted in a joint statement in July 1985 that:

"The Ministers agreed that the outcome of their discussions over the past two days was a reaffirmation of the deep commitment of both countries to a strong and enduring friendship. Both also agreed however that this friendship must be based not just on past close links but required steady and determined efforts by both countries to maintain the special relationship which was in the interests of both countries. They had, therefore, agreed that there should be a deliberate long-term effort to increase substantially the present frequency of visits and contacts by ministers and officials, and a sustained effort to raise the level of knowledge and understanding to each other's country by the people of Papua New Guinea and Australia."

3. The celebration of Papua New Guinea's first decade of independence in September 1985 provided opportunities for wide-ranging contact between political leaders and officials and drew attention to the need for regular and reciprocal contact to ensure the maintenance of strong and enduring ties.

4. The decision that a delegation from the Committee should visit Papua New Guinea in 1986 flowed from an initiative begun by Mr Hayden in late 1985 and supported by the Prime Minister Mr Hawke. The idea was welcome to the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Foreign Minister Hon. Legu Vagi extended an invitation to the Committee during his visit to Canberra in January 1986.

Aims of the Visit

5. The primary aim of the visit was to increase contact and understanding between the two countries at a Parliamentary level. For the Australian Members of Parliament, the visit provided an opportunity to familiarize

themselves with conditions in Papua New Guinea during a period of important changes in its internal situation and in the bilateral relationship. For Papua New Guinea political leaders and officials, the visit permitted a wider range of contact with Australian Parliamentarians, and gave opportunities to express their views and concerns.

6. Although the itinerary was tight (covering only six days) it was considered essential for the delegation to travel as widely as possible within Papua New Guinea. The itinerary included visits to five provinces as well as the national capital. This greatly increased the value of the visit both to members of the delegation and to Papua New Guinea political leaders and officials.

Arrangements for the Visit

7. The visit of the delegation was greatly assisted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence and the Committee gratefully acknowledges that assistance. In particular, the use of a RAAF Caribou aircraft was invaluable in allowing a wide range of areas to be visited in the short time available. The Australian High Commission took responsibility for the bulk of the administrative, transport and financial requirements and provided an escort officer for the duration of the visit.

8. The Papua New Guinea authorities also assisted with arrangements for the visit and their cooperation is warmly appreciated.

Conclusions

9. The visit to Papua New Guinea was a success in giving Australian Members of Parliament first hand experience of Papua New Guinea and in stimulating renewed interest in regular and reciprocal visits between Papua New Guinea and Australia at the Parliamentary level.

10. The Committee supports the delegation's recommendation that the Governments and Parliaments of Australia and Papua New Guinea give consideration to the establishment of regular and reciprocal Parliamentary exchange between our countries. The Committee takes the view that the importance of our bilateral relations, as well as our longstanding ties of friendship, merits an arrangement of this kind.

11. In presenting this report to the Parliament, the Committee wishes to commend the Foreign Minister, Mr Hayden, and the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, for their encouragement and support of closer Parliamentary contact between Papua New Guinea and Australia. The Committee commends also the dedication of the members of the delegation, who made the visit at their own expense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K W Sibraa', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Senator K W Sibraa
Chairman

November 1986

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE
DELEGATION TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA
19-24 APRIL 1986

Introduction

1. At the outset, the delegation wishes to record its appreciation for the excellent assistance provided for its visit to Papua New Guinea. The Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence were of great assistance. In particular, the delegation is appreciative of the assistance of the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby. The High Commissioner, Mr Michael Wilson, did much to ensure the success of the visit. Our thanks go also to our escort officer from the Australian High Commission, Mr Robert Webster.

2. We wish also to thank the crew of the RAAF Caribou aircraft who provided transport within Papua New Guinea. The dedication, competence and cheerfulness of the crew, Squadron Leader Ross Pyers, Pilot Officer Chris Oborn and Warrant Officer Malcolm Monkton, are acknowledged by all members of the delegation.

3. The delegation is especially grateful to all those in Papua New Guinea who contributed to the success of the visit. Without the close cooperation of the Papua New Guinea Government, at national and provincial levels and the assistance of a wide range of officials, the delegation's wide-ranging itinerary could not have been devised and successfully carried out. The delegation wishes especially to thank the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon. Paias Wingti, and other Ministers, for making their time available for meetings with the delegation. The Speaker of the Papua New Guinea Parliament, the Hon. Brown Sinamoi, is warmly thanked for his hospitality and assistance. Throughout the visit, the liaison officer from the Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr David Oasioma, provided valuable assistance. The Ok Tedi mining company is thanked also for its hospitality and assistance to members.

The Program

4. The detailed program of the visit is at Attachment A. The delegation visited Port Moresby, Kiunga, Tabubil (Ok Tedi), Vanimo, Wewak, Goroka and Lae. Members had extensive informal discussions with Papua New Guinea Government and Provincial Ministers and officials, and met agriculture industry and business representatives. The itinerary included visits to the border camps at Niogomban and Blackwater, the Ok Tedi mine, a coffee plantation, and a tour of the Institute of Medical Research in Goroka.

The Border

5. The delegation's visit to the Papua New Guinea/Indonesia border was an important element in the visit. This was the first visit of a substantial group of Australian members of Parliament to the border since the influx of Irianese border crossers¹ into Papua New Guinea began in February 1984.

6. The delegation was able to visit two of the border camps - Niogomban, near Kiunga, and Blackwater camp near Vanimo. The visit to Niogomban on 20 April 1986 involved a five hour round trip by river boat down the Fly river from Kiunga. This trip in itself was a lesson in the isolation and difficult terrain of the border area and the complications which this entails for the governments of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, and for agencies and organizations involved in providing relief assistance for the border crossers. The limited time available permitted only a brief inspection of the camp although a public meeting was held with a large group of Irianese. The visit provided insights into the various motives and concerns of the border crossers, and the conditions under which they are living. Niogomban houses about 700 people and is one of nine such camps in West Sepik Province, together holding some 8000 residents, as well as seven camps housing about 2000 people in East Sepik Province.

1. The term border crosser, as used in this report, is intended to distinguish the post-1984 influx from traditional border crossers, who move back and forth across the border on a regular basis. The use of the term refugee is not at this stage suitable, because UNHCR has not yet accorded refugee status to individuals within the border camps.

7. The delegation visited Blackwater camp by road from Vanimo on 21 April 1986. The relatively high education and politicization of a number of its inhabitants (chiefly from Jayapura and surrounding coastal regions) provided a contrast with the generally less sophisticated people at Niogomban. During the visit, some of the inhabitants made representations concerning their opposition to Indonesian control of Irian Jaya.

8. The delegation also had the opportunity to meet a range of important individuals concerned with the Irianese border crossers and Papua New Guinea policy towards them. These included the Minister for Justice and Member for North Fly, Warren Dutton; Bishop Deschamps of the Catholic Montfort Mission in Kiunga and Bishop John Etheridge of Vanimo.

9. The delegation's aim in visiting the border area was only one of familiarization and the delegation does not intend to comment in this report on political and international ramifications of the Irianese border crossers. In discussions on 24 April 1986 with the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Mr Galeva Kwarara, the leader of the delegation, Mr Charles, reiterated the Australian Government's position that the issue of the border crossers, and border problems generally, were principally the responsibility of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. Mr Charles also noted, however, that Mr Hayden had welcomed the new policy of the Wingti Government towards the border crossers, including the decision announced on 21 January 1986 that

Papua New Guinea would accede to the 1951 United Nations Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees and that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would be directly involved in refugee processing.

The Provinces

10. The delegation considers that its visits to the Provinces were of great value in appreciating Papua New Guinea's diversity and in understanding the role of the provincial tier of government. Without direct experience of provincial affairs outside the national capital the nature of Papua New Guinea society and its developmental process and problems cannot properly be understood.

11. The visit to Eastern Highlands Province, for example, allowed the delegation to examine the nature and operations of the coffee industry, which plays so important a role in the Papua New Guinea economy. The delegation visited the Angco Coffee Factory and the Kama Coffee Plantation.

12. The delegation was fortunate in being able to meet three provincial premiers (West Sepik, East Sepik and Eastern Highlands) and a deputy premier (Morobe) as well as a wide range of other provincial officials.

Ok Tedi

13. The delegation visited the Ok Tedi gold and copper mine at Tabubil in Western Province, mainly in view of the importance of the mine's future contribution to the Papua New Guinea economy and to government revenue. The Ok Tedi mining company gave the delegation a thorough briefing on the future development of copper production and the controversial question of waste disposal into the Fly River system. On both these issues, Ok Tedi officials were keen to reassure the delegation that Ok Tedi was heading in the right direction. The question of possible environmental damage caused by pollution from the mine was of particular interest. While there did not appear to be any cause for alarm about possible pollution effects in the Torres Strait and further south at this stage, the Members left with the conclusion that the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments should co-operate more to prevent possible serious pollution problems, particularly through environmental monitoring programs.

14. The delegation notes that the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation, in its report on Protection of the Great Barrier Reef (November 1985) recommended inter alia that:

"the Australian Government consult with the Papua New Guinea Government on the need for an environmental assessment of the Ok Tedi mine giving particular regard to the possibility of the pollution of reefs in the Torres Strait and the northern Great Barrier

Reef Marine Park; and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority establish a monitoring program in the northern Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Torres Strait to detect any pollution from the Ok Tedi mine."

The delegation supports these recommendations.

Central Government

15. In Port Moresby, the delegation completed an extensive round of appointments with key government leaders, including the Prime Minister, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Defence, the Minister for Minerals and Energy, and the Commander of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force. Unfortunately, senior leaders of the Opposition, including the former Prime Minister Michael Somare, were unable to meet the delegation because of other commitments.

16. Apart from making the acquaintance of the new Papua New Guinea leaders and authorities, these meetings allowed the delegation the chance to touch upon various bilateral and domestic issues and to convey some of their observations from their visit to the provinces.

17. The meeting with the Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr John Kaputin, focused on the development of the Ok Tedi mine, and the possible pollution problem arising from tailings waste disposal in the Fly Rivers.

18. The delegation also met the Papua New Guinea Police Commissioner, Mr Taison. The Commissioner paid tribute to the role played by the Australian police forces in the training of his officers and briefed the delegation on the law and order situation.

19. The delegation was honoured to be received by Prime Minister Wingti, who gave the delegation an extensive account of his government's policies, stressing the special importance of agricultural development for the livelihood of most Papua New Guineans. Among the problems faced by the government, he mentioned the disparity between Papua New Guinea's population and its economic growth rate, and the inefficiency of Papua New Guinea's bureaucracy and provincial government in implementing policies. On law and order, the Prime Minister said that the situation had to be seen in perspective - the problems were largely confined to Port Moresby, as a result of people drifting to the capital in search of jobs. Elsewhere, law and order was not a major issue and the extent of the problem should not be exaggerated.

Foreign Policy

20. The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Galeva Kwarara, gave the party a general explanation of Papua New Guinea's policy of seeking co-operation and mutual understanding with Indonesia, particularly on the border issues. Other foreign policy issues

discussed briefly were the question of Papua New Guinea joining ASEAN, Papua New Guinea's efforts to expand and diversify its trade and the situation in New Caledonia. On the latter subject, the Minister made it clear that Papua New Guinea supported independence for New Caledonia and would be very concerned if the new French Government failed to pursue the process of decolonization.

Aid

21. Australia's aid to Papua New Guinea was one of the main issues which arose in discussions with Papua New Guinea officials. Following the recommendations of the Jackson Committee, the Governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea negotiated a new five year aid agreement, under which Australia would provide some \$1.4 billion in aid to Papua New Guinea. The agreement provided for a reduction in budget support by five percent per annum. Overall, Australian aid would decline by three percent per annum in real terms, with the difference being made up by an expanded program of project aid and technical assistance.

22. The delegation was impressed by the resolve of the Papua New Guinea Government to reduce its reliance on Australian budget support grants. The Papua New Guinea authorities with whom the delegation held discussions had a clear appreciation of the need for a new balance in the Australian aid program and for a diversification in the sources of aid to Papua New Guinea.

23. The changing composition of Australian aid requires increased efforts on the part of Governments and officials in both countries to ensure an adequate level of dialogue on the design and use of the aid program. The delegation noted that Papua New Guinea authorities had not been able to utilize all the funds available for project aid. There is a need for all tiers of Government and bureaucracy in Papua New Guinea to improve communication and coordination so that planning for the use of non-budget support funds in the years ahead is improved. Better coordination between the National and Provincial Governments would assist in the identification and assessment of possible projects.

24. The delegation considers that Papua New Guinea's efforts to decrease its dependence on Australian budget support grants must be matched by Australian Government efforts to maintain predictability in the level and composition of aid flows. The decline in the rate of budget support must be manageable. As the Joint Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee noted in its review of the Jackson Report, radical reductions in the level of budget support grants would be developmentally irresponsible and in contradiction with the principles laid down in the 1976 communique setting out the basis of the post-independence aid arrangements. One of the advantages of the five year aid agreement concluded in September 1985 was that it provided a stable and predictable environment for changing the level and composition of Australian aid to Papua New Guinea.

25. The recent reductions in Australian aid to Papua New Guinea have been made well after the delegation's visit to Papua New Guinea, and the delegation does not wish to comment on them in detail. Nevertheless, on the basis of the delegation's discussions on aid with Papua New Guinea authorities, the delegation is concerned that the principle of predictability in Australia's aid flows to Papua New Guinea may have eroded to some degree and that the Australian Government's commitment to honouring the five year aid agreement may have been cast in doubt. Given the importance of Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea, the ties of friendship, and Australia's historical obligations to Papua New Guinea, these would be regrettable developments.

Defence Co-operation

26. Australia has conducted a Defence Cooperation Program with Papua New Guinea since 1975. Expenditure in 1985-86 is of the order of \$20 million and the main components are loan personnel, consultancy studies and particular projects such as the Pacific Patrol Boat. The members visited Moem Barracks at Wewak, Murray Barracks at Port Moresby and the Air Transport Squadron at Lae. At all three bases the group was briefed by the Commanding Officers and toured the facilities.

27. One topic which was raised during discussions was the provision of housing for service personnel. This seemed to be particularly crucial in relation to the service establishments at

Lae. In Australia, the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has taken a keen interest in the question of appropriate housing for Defence personnel. Members of the delegation found that Defence housing for Papua New Guinea Defence personnel was rather poor in that many Defence personnel had to live away from their families for long periods of time, as there was no appropriate housing available. The Australian Government in consultation with the Papua New Guinea Government, should consider developing a program to assist in the provision of improved defence housing for Papua New Guinea Defence personnel. Alternatively, the Australian Government may consider granting flexibility in the use of a proportion of the Defence Cooperation Program funds in order for the Papua New Guinea Government to target priority defence needs - of course, defence housing could well come into this category.

28. The delegation received informative briefings from the Minister for Defence, Mr Stephen Tago, and the Commander of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) Brigadier-General Tony Huai. The briefings covered various aspects of the PNGDF, including staffing and logistics problems and the PNGDF's role in border patrols.

Conclusions

29. The delegation considers that the visit was successful in extending and promoting the level of contact between the two countries, and in giving members of the delegation a better understanding of Papua New Guinea.

30. The delegation was gratified by the warmth with which it was received throughout its visit and is confident that the visit was highly appreciated by the central and provincial governments of Papua New Guinea and by others associated with the visit.

31. Given the proximity and longstanding friendship of the two countries, it is appropriate and important that there be maintained a pattern of regular and reciprocal contact at the Government and Parliamentary levels. There is already limited Parliamentary contact, as a result of biennial Commonwealth Parliamentary Association regional seminars and conferences, but the exchange of Parliamentary delegations on a bilateral basis should probably be more frequent. The last Australian Parliamentary delegation to Papua New Guinea before this visit was in August 1983 and the last Papua New Guinea Parliamentary delegation to visit Australia was in 1978.

32. At present, New Zealand is the only country with which Australia maintains a regular biennial Parliamentary exchange. The importance of Australia/Papua New Guinea relations is such that a regular reciprocal exchange is desirable.

33. The delegation believes that the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments and Parliaments should give consideration to instituting a regular and reciprocal pattern of Parliamentary exchanges. Both countries need to bear in mind that changes of generation and circumstances in Papua New Guinea and

in Australia may tend to reduce the levels of contact and familiarity if steps are not taken to maintain them. The delegation commends the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments for the initiatives which led to its visit to Papua New Guinea, and hopes that the success of this visit will initiate further exchanges on a regular basis.

34. The delegation therefore recommends that the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments should consider instituting regular and reciprocal Parliamentary exchanges - possibly on a biennial basis.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE
DELEGATION VISIT TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA
19 TO 24 APRIL 1986

Program

Saturday 19 April 1986

9.30am Arr Port Moresby - met by Hon Brown Sinamoi
Speaker PNG Parliament & Hon W Dutton PNG
Minister for Justice.

Briefing by Australian High Commissioner
R.E. Michael Wilson and High Commission
Staff.

11.30am Meeting Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs
Hon Galeva Kwarara MP.

2.30pm Call on Speaker PNG Parliament.
Hon Brown Sinamoi MP.

Inspection Parliament House.

6.00pm-7.30pm Function hosted by Hon Brown Sinamoi MP
Speaker PNG Parliament
Parliament House, Port Moresby.

Overnight Port Moresby

Sunday 20 April 1986

7.10am	Dep Port Moresby for Kiunga accompanied by Mr W Dutton PNG Minister for Justice and member for North Fly.
10.30am	Arr Kiunga Depart for Niogomban Camp by River Boat
1.00pm	Meeting - Residents Niogomban Border Crossers Camp
4.30pm	Meeting, Bishop Gerard Des Champs, Montfort Catholic Mission, Kiunga
5.00pm	Dep Kiunga
6.00pm	Arr Tabubil Briefing on Ok Tedi by Mr D Podobnik, Deputy General Manager, Ok Tedi Mining Limited.
8.00pm	Dinner with Executives of Ok Tedi Mining Limited.

O/night Tabubil

Monday 21 April 1986

7.00am	Inspection of Ok Tedi Mine and Mill
10.30am	Dep Tabubil
12 noon	Arr Vanimo Call on Premier, Provincial Government of West Sepik, Mr P Langro
2.30pm	Inspection - Blackwater Border Crosser Camp
4.00pm	Informal discussion - Bishop John Etheridge
4.45pm	Dep Vanimo
6.00pm	Arr Wewak
7.00pm	Delegation Meeting
	<u>O/night Wewak</u>

Tuesday 22 April 1986

9.00am	Call on Premier, Provincial Government of East Sepik, Mr Jonathan Sengi
9.45am	Call on Speaker, East Sepik Provincial Assembly, Mr Jack Paichua
10.15am	Inspection - 2RP.I.R. Moem Barracks and briefing by Col. Andi Trongat, Commander
11.30am	Dep Wewak
1.30pm	Arr Goroka
2.00pm	Call on Premier Provincial Government Eastern Highlands -Mr J Yaneba MBE
3.00pm	Visit Kama Coffee Plantation
4.00pm	Visit Angco Coffee Factory
4.45pm	Visit PNG Coffee Industry Board
5.15pm	Informal Discussions - Coffee Industry Representatives

O/night Goroka

Wednesday 23 April 1986

9.00am	Visit Institute of Medical Research Goroka
10.15am	Dep Goroka
11.15am	Arr Lae Call on Deputy Premier - Provincial Government of Morobe Province - Mr M Aitoba
12.45pm	Dep Goroka
1.45pm	Arr Lae Inspection - PNG Defence Force Air Transport Squadron
2.45pm	Dep Lae
4.00pm	Arr Port Moresby
6.00pm	Press Conference - Travelodge Hotel
8.00pm	Dinner hosted by Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea H E Michael Wilson
	<u>O/night Port Moresby</u>

Thursday 24 April 1986

9.00am	Call on Minister for Defence Hon S Tago MP, Commander PNG Defence Force Brig Gen T Huai and Secretary Department of Defence Mr T Maketu
10.00am	Call on Prime Minister - Hon Paias Wingti MP
11.15am	Call on Prof Brian Brogan. Director, PNG Institute for National Affairs
1.00pm	Call on Police Commissioner Mr Taison
2.00pm	Call on Minister for Minerals and Energy, Hon J Kaputin MP
4.00pm	Dep Port Moresby
5.25pm	Arr Cairns
6.00pm	Delegation Meeting
	<u>O/night Cairns</u>

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE
MINORITY REPORT ON A VISIT TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA
APRIL 1986

This minority report is an expression of our concern for the refugee situation in Papua New Guinea which is not reflected in the majority report.

We consider the side-stepping of the issue has the effect of ignoring the plight of the approximately 12 000 West Papuan refugees currently in camps in PNG. The majority report does not even mention refugees but calls them "border crossers" so as not to offend the military kleptomaniacs in Jakarta.

The term "border crossers" acts as a smokescreen to the human rights abuses committed by Indonesian authorities in West Irian which actually created the refugee situation.

The obstinate avoidance of the term 'refugees' in the majority report can only lead us to believe that the report seeks to create a false impression. It attempts to gloss over the serious problem of the thousands of displaced persons who have been in border camps for more than two years and whose fate is exacerbated by our wish to appease the Indonesian Kleptocracy.

The word 'refugee', according to the Oxford dictionary means: "One who, owing to religious persecution or political troubles, seeks refuge in a foreign country. Originally applied to the French Huguenots who came to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes 1685".

Later, especially in World War II, the term 'refugee' was used to describe people who fled their place of residence and were displaced because of the war.

And while the word 'refugee' has existed for over 300 years in the English language, the majority of members on the Papua New Guinea Working Group of the Committee chose to describe the Melanesian refugees as "border crossers".

The term "border crossers" cannot be found in the dictionary but even to a person with a rudimentary understanding of the English language, the term indicates persons who are border dwellers and as such, have legitimate tribal, family or trading reasons to cross the border to transmit their business and return.

Our visits to Niogomban and Blackwater camps provided us with the opportunity to establish, first hand, that the inhabitants of those camps fled because of fearing or, in some cases, encountering atrocities committed against Melanesians by Indonesian authorities.

The refugees expressed their opposition to the Indonesian occupation of their homeland and clearly stated that they have no intention of returning so long as Indonesia occupies their country. They also clearly expressed their fear of persecution by the Indonesians if they were forcibly repatriated.

Our understanding of the situation is identical with that of the International commission of Jurists which visited the area in September 1984. This extract from the Commission's report is indicative:

Most of those spoken to, consider themselves to be refugees and are fearful that they would face trial - or worse - if they returned, because of their involvement in the planned coup. If they are not accepted for asylum in PNG some expressed a wish for third country resettlement under UNHCR auspices. Some said they would prefer to be killed in PNG rather than be returned to Indonesia.

A brief look at the history of the foreign occupation of Western New Guinea indicates the justification for the Melanesians calling themselves refugees.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the early 19th Century the Dutch, who had established a colonial empire in Java and other islands of the East Indies, set up outposts in the western half of New Guinea. At the turn of the 20th Century Papua became a territory of Australia and after World War I, German New Guinea became mandated territory of Australia under the League of Nations.

In 1942 the Japanese army invaded part of Australian New Guinea and Papua and took over the Dutch Western half of New Guinea. Australian and US forces drove the Japanese from the area in 1944 and the Dutch returned.

The Dutch continued to administer Western New Guinea until 1962 when the Netherlands agreed to hand the country over to Indonesia. The agreement provided that before the end of 1969 there should be an "act of self determination" which theoretically, would allow the inhabitants to determine whether to remain part of Indonesia or not.

The Indonesians managed to arrange the so-called "act of free choice" so that only 1 000 people were eligible to vote. Not one of them spoke in opposition to integration with Indonesia.

Since 1967/68 members of the O.P.M or "Free Papua Movement" have been active in their opposition to Indonesia's forcible annexation of West Papua. Fighting, although sporadic, has been intense in the border areas.

On 13th February 1984, two persons attempted to raise a Free West Papua flag instead of the Indonesian flag outside a government building and one of them was shot. The incident met with violent retribution from the Indonesian forces and many Melanesians, fearing persecution crossed the border into Papua New Guinea.

CONCLUSION

It is our view that the Australian attitude towards refugees from West Papua is racist in nature. Papua New Guineans who have accused our Government of practising a policy of discrimination against the Melanesians, claim this attitude is rooted in Australian racism.

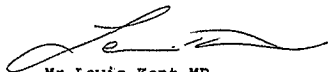
For example Mr Wingti was quoted in The Age (26/4/86) as saying that the Australian government had given "very weak reasons" for not taking some of the genuine refugees. Former Prime Minister Somare in the Niugini News (31/1/86), accused the Australian government of rejecting Irian Jayan refugees because of their black skin.

What we saw on our trip to the area and the report of the International Commission of Jurists, left no doubt in our minds that the Melanesians in the border camps are in fact, refugees.

We conclude:

1. That this large number of people are either refugees within the terms of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, or are people clearly in a refugee-like situation within the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, excepting that small number that is now prepared to return voluntarily;

2. That the displacement of this large number of persons is an indication of serious problems within Irian Jaya, and
3. That there is clear evidence of human rights violations in the area of Irian Jaya nearest to PNG by the Indonesian authorities against local villagers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lewis Kent', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr Lewis Kent MP

Senator Nick Bolkus