

Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange ***New Ideas, New Connections***

18-19 September 2019, NSW Parliament House

Communiqué

1. We, the delegates of the *Pacific Connect* Ideas Exchange, met in the Preston Stanley Room at NSW Parliament House on Wednesday, 18 September and Thursday, 19 September 2019, at the invitation of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP) and Global Access Partners (GAP), with the financial support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). We congratulate ICDP, GAP and their hosts and supporters for delivering an outstanding event.
2. We are delighted that over 60 participants from Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Australia were able to join the dialogue, and congratulate the organisers for assembling such a diverse group of emerging leaders from across the Pacific with expertise in a broad range of sectors.
3. We thank **DFAT** for renewing their support of ICDP for a further three years and look forward to its activities continuing to evolve to broaden and deepen relationships between emerging leaders in Australia and the Pacific. We appreciate the holding of *Pacific Connect* Dialogues in Brisbane as well as the Pacific, and the increased support offered for project development.
4. We appreciate the work of **Dr Ian Watt AC, Simone Pensko, the ICDP Board, and staff members of ICDP and GAP** in building the *Pacific Connect* Community and continuing to develop its activities in Australia and across the Pacific.
5. We were moved by the opening address delivered by **Liesl Tesch AM, MP** and were inspired by the fortitude she has shown in overcoming adversity. We will endeavour to be equally proactive in making contacts, seeking partners and grasping opportunities of our own. We felt 'inspired', 'challenged', 'passionate', 'optimistic', 'connected' and 'committed' by the opening night's dinner.
6. We thank **the Hon. John Ajaka MLC** for welcoming us to the oldest state parliament in the country and agree that developing security, trading, diplomatic, cultural and sporting links will benefit both Australia and Pacific Island nations.
7. We were enlightened by **the Hon. Christopher Pyne's** incisive assessment of the regional security situation and the need to support the international rule of law. Unity between allies and engagement with China offer the best hope of a peaceful and prosperous future for all in the region.
8. We were inspired by the presenters of *Every Building is a Classroom* project, **Cameron Neil** and **Robertson Szetu**, and their mission to utilise suitable buildings to meet learning needs in the Solomon Islands. The project exemplifies how modern technology can optimise the use of scarce resources to pursue beneficial social goals for marginalised communities.
9. We welcome the launch of the first *Pacific World Economic Forum Global Shapers Hub* in Samoa, an initiative championed by **James Fraser**, and look forward to the creation of similar communities in PNG and other Pacific nations. These hubs can play an important role in encouraging and mentoring the young entrepreneurs who will drive economic growth in the future.

10. We drew valuable lessons from the panel of entrepreneurs including **Zha Agabe-Granfar, Molly Benjamin, James Kana** and **Georgina Naigulevu**, who answered our questions on the forming and fostering of new businesses. We share their ambition to pursue social goals through business means and applaud their spirit of enterprise and self-reliance. We appreciate the value of building relationships in business, discovering and meeting client needs and the need to develop culturally appropriate banking solutions.
11. We were intrigued by the proposal by *VR Samoa* to map cultural sites and record stories and cultural lore threatened by the effects of climate change. The safeguarding of traditional culture through digital technology offers exciting opportunities to both preserve and disseminate Pacific culture.
12. We believe in the potential of *Pacific Finds* to help small vendors and handicraft makers in the region sell authentic products and experiences to tourists and foreign consumers. The lack of accessible and convenient online sales platforms hampers economic development in the region, and *Pacific Finds* seeks to offer a practical and scalable solution.
13. We support much needed measures to improve access and support for people with disabilities in the Pacific and so were interested in the *Mobile Me* proposal to map buildings and streets for people with disabilities in Suva, Fiji. We are convinced that this approach could have wider applications across urban areas as well as encouraging more tourists with disabilities to visit and explore the region.
14. We understand the potential for *Less than a Container Load* solution to help small-scale farmers and growers export their goods more effectively. We wish the initial project with cacao farmers in the Solomon Islands well, and hope the logistical and market problems they face will be eased by this innovative and practical solution.
15. We recognise the desire of educated young people in PNG to create their own businesses and economic opportunities. We therefore back the creation of the *Lae Innovation Hub* and hope that similar schemes will help unlock young people's talents across the Pacific.
16. We were entranced by the proposed *Yumi Wan* women's business support group and back its aim to encourage and empower businesswomen in Vanuatu. We wish its initial events well and trust that local women, and their male supporters, will find the advice they need from similar groups in the region to thrive and succeed.
17. We were moved by the circumstances surrounding the *Kumul Garden* project and impressed by the resilience and business sense of its founder. Home grocery deliveries are an increasing feature of Australian cities, and similar schemes should find a place in Pacific towns.
18. We thank **Dr Ian Watt AC, Michael Pilbrow** and **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu** for facilitating an enjoyable and enlightening event and will endeavour to take its positive, practical approach to our own projects in the future. We applaud the efforts of ICDP in organising this and other activities and will continue to work as part of the *Pacific Connect* community to build ever strong and closer relationships with Australia and each other.
19. We greatly enjoyed the visits to Sydney's most prominent innovation hubs and mentorship and personal development opportunities organised by ICDP as part of the *Pacific Connect* Ideas Exchange. Inspired by these presentations and projects, we look forward to the challenges to come. We are passionate about these issues and committed to tackling them together. Our greatest asset is our connections to each other, and our optimism that change can be achieved by our own hearts, minds and hands.