

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
**THE OFFICIAL GIFTING FROM AUSTRALIA TO VANUATU - NATIONAL ARCHIVES
AND LIBRARY BUILDING**
ON SITE (NEAR VANUATU CULTURAL CENTRE), PORT VILA, VANUATU
30 JULY 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, I feel enormously privileged to be here during this important and special time for your nation.

Vanuatu is a truly stunning part of the world.

The physical beauty of its islands.

The might and mystery of its volcanic terrain.

The dazzling colours of its bays and jungles.

Its rich cultural, social and political histories.

And your people - your warmth and generosity; your pragmatism and resourcefulness; your spirituality, and respect for traditional ways in contemporary times.

I know that as part of these anniversary of independence celebrations your National Museum is exhibiting some fascinating images from its photographic archive.

Images that tell the story of the last 30 years of this archipelago:

the advancement of public and private life here, in your urban and rural areas

the expansion of education and opportunity

the strengthening position of women

the impacts of climate, and of the earth and ocean in this Pacific Ring of Fire

Vanuatu's international relationships

and the evolution of custom and culture across your 83 islands.

Some of these things are directly related to your progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, in particular your work:

in reducing child mortality

and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

These are noteworthy achievements, given a global environment dominated for some time by energy, food and financial crises.

All of the changes that have occurred here since independence are part of the Vanuatu fabric:

they affirm your origins and passage

they characterise your values and aspirations

and they will define your future.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can think of no better place to be sharing these thoughts with you than here on the site of your new Archives and Library Building.

A structure that will come to symbolise and tangibly contribute to:

the protection of your democracy, human rights and freedoms

the openness and efficiency of your government

your lifelong learning and inquiry

the preservation of cultural knowledge, memories, the things that are central to who you are as individuals and as a people

your mutual understanding, collaboration, and shared sense of heritage and purpose.

These are words and expressions we hear often these days.

Sometimes they can sound only distantly hopeful.

But today, we are witnessing:

their action,

and genuine promise upon the completion of this project,

to unite and uplift Vanuatu's communities

in engaging, affirming and enduring ways.

One of our world-class Australian authors, and a very favourite of mine, Mr David Malouf, has written some really marvellous stories:

about our connection with place and with one another

about the simple and powerful human experiences of life and living, now and in the past.

Ten years ago he spoke about the meaning of heritage.

When I recall his words now I realise that they resonate even more deeply in me.

He said:

Heritage is:

the recognition of shared experience,

of accepted monuments to events and to sentiments,

a shared acceptance of guardianship for what we care for and are determined to pass on, it is essential to that sense of neighbourliness on which citizenship is based.

What makes the difference is the remembering, the keeping alive in the memory, of lives lived, stories told.

What we are doing when we acknowledge the full history of places is

making them real to ourselves,

embedding them in our consciousness,

making them places fully possessed in the mind and imagination,

loved places that we live in, in spirit as well as in fact.

This is what your new National Archives and Library Building will do.

Its archivists and librarians and historians:

will reach out into and reflect the diverse aspects and nuances of Vanuatu society,

they will connect with you, engage your interests and passions

and they will make what they do personally and intrinsically valuable to you too.

Of course, is it all about the people who make these projects happen - their own enthusiasm and commitment and love for the places they live in and belong to.

Here, one person in particular stands tall.

This project represents:

the many, many years of dedicated professional work of your Chief Archivist, Mrs Anne Naupa, the fruition of a dream pursued with limited resources and boundless energy and optimism and the finest public service by an individual.

Mrs Naupa, you are a leader, a mentor, a worker and a community builder.

And now, you will have the resources you need to do justice to your immense effort.

Australia is a proud and willing Pacific partner and friend to Vanuatu.

Thousands of Australians travel here every year and fall in love with your land and people.

Australians want to see your story nurtured and safeguarded, and your future shine.

And so, from the Australian Government and people to the people of Vanuatu, I gift the new Vanuatu National Archives and Library Building.

May it serve you well and long, and may you cherish its place in your shared life.