

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**ADDRESS AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
12 SEPTEMBER 2005

- The Honourable Michael Laimo, Minister for Education
- The Honourable Sir Peter Barter, Minister for Inter-Government Relations,  
and Chair of the National Events Council
- Dame Carol Kidu DBE MP, Minister for Community Development
- Mr Oseah Philemon, Chairman, Office of Libraries and Archives
- Dr Joseph Pagelio, Acting Secretary, Department of Education
- Mr Daniel Paraide, Director General, National Library
- Distinguished guests all

I am delighted to be at Papua New Guinea's National Library today.

This building has special significance in the Australia-Papua New Guinea relationship.

On the occasion of Papua New Guinea's independence - 30 years ago this week - Australia's gift to the government and people of Papua New Guinea was to build this National Library, and to assist in establishing a collection of items of national significance.

In 1975, it was agreed by the Prime Ministers of our two countries - Sir Michael Somare and Mr Gough Whitlam - that decisions about the design and content of the Library would be made jointly by the governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Less than three years later, in May 1978, the building was ready for occupation. It was formally handed over to Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare by the then Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, in October 1978.

The aim of all libraries - especially a country's National Library - is to promote literacy, encourage reading and disseminate information.

National libraries have an additional and unique role to play in contributing to the vitality of a nation's cultural heritage. They ensure that documentary resources of national significance are collected, preserved and made accessible to the public.

Today your National Library houses a rich and rare collection of historical material. I understand that there are some 56,000 items, including books, films and video footage as well as maps, charts, photographs and microfilm.

The extraordinary concentration of up to 850 languages and more than 200 tribal groupings, represents an incredible treasure house of human creativity, reinforced through wonderful skill in pottery, carvings, basketwork, and musical instruments, that individually and collectively contribute to a magnificent national culture; a culture nurtured over time through heritage, local traditions and customs as practised in highland valleys, isolated villages and coastal regions. Your PNG cultures must be preserved and treasured for the knowledge, pride and pleasure of future generations.

It is for this reason and on behalf of the Government and people of Australia, I am pleased to confirm that, to mark the 30th Anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence, Australia will provide seven million Kina to refurbish the National Library, including upgrading the building's air conditioning system, roofing and insulation.

The refurbishment will help to ensure the Library's unique, valuable collection is preserved for future generations.

This gift acknowledges the significance of the 30th anniversary for Papua New Guinea. It also reflects the importance that Australia places on its relationship with Papua New Guinea.

We are close friends and neighbours, and we share deep historical and community links.

The Australian Government is also commemorating Papua New Guinea's 30th anniversary by funding an exhibition rugby league match between an Australian Prime Minister's team and the PNG national team, the Kumuls, on 18 September.

I am well aware of the popularity of rugby league in this country and I understand there has been considerable excitement building up around the match. I wish both teams well.

Ladies and gentlemen, at Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, the Australian Government stated in unambiguous terms that it was committed to helping the Government and people of Papua New Guinea achieve their development objectives.

We remain inextricably linked through geographical proximity, a shared history in peace and war, a mutual desire for strong democratic institutions operating under the rule of law, and by our ongoing security, economic, tourism, educational and people-to-people links.

I want to assure you that Australia remains committed to helping Papua New Guinea achieve a secure and prosperous future.

Let me conclude by congratulating all Papua New Guineans on the occasion of your 30th anniversary.

I wish you and your beautiful country every success for the future. Thank you.