BRIEF REPORT ON THE 2007 AUSTRALASIAN STUDY OF PARLIAMENT GROUP

ANNUAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Mr. Speaker, President Kabui, cabinet ministers present at this session of parliament and colleague ordinary Members of this honourable House. I am honoured and priviledged to stand before you to present this short brief on a conference the Clerk of this House, Mr Robert Tapi and I attended. Apart from us here in Bougainville, CDI also sponsored two other people including Jude, the Deputy Clerk of the Solomons Islands Parliament, and since the Honourable Member for Baubake, Hon Thomas Lugabai didn’t make the trip because of his passport problems, they (CDI )invited Mr Podi from the Papua New Guinea Haus Tambaran to represent the National Parliament. The Deputy Director of CDI, Mr Quinton Clements attended the conference as well.
Mr Speaker, the conference was held in Adelaide, the capital City of South Australia and attended by academics from most universities in both Australia and New Zealand, current and former Members of the South Australian Parliament and Parliamentary Services staff throughout the Australasian Region. It was conducted in the Assembly Chambers of the Lower House from the 23\textsuperscript{rd} – 25\textsuperscript{th} of August this year.

Mr Speaker, these conferences are held annually and the government which hosted this year’s Conference was South Australia. The government of Queensland will host the 2008 Australasian Study of Parliament Group conference in July at the city of Brisbane. Let’s hope, Mr Speaker, some Members and our parliamentary staff attend that one next year again as I believe we need to groom our Members of Parliament, permanent staff of parliamentary services and also our Cadets.
I am proud to announce what our Clerk, Mr Robert Tapi, negotiated while attached with the Federal Parliament in Canberra, ACT, after the conference, has already secured spaces for two of our cadets (a male and female) who will work with staff there to learn about what they can do there, which they will adjust to suit our situations here when they return to Bougainville.

Mr Speaker, the theme, "Parliament’s Accountability to the people", which the conference attempted to address was the basic dedication towards ways Parliaments are. Secondly, Mr Speaker, they (parliaments), whether at the Upper House (Legislative Assembly), the Lower House or at the Federal Government, in our case, Mr Speaker, the COE Assembly, Bougainville Executive Council, the House of Representatives and the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea, also discussed how, at all levels of governments, the Parliaments are made to be held more accountable to their people.
Mr Speaker, there are mechanisms and practices developed by parliaments to maintain and exercise scrutiny over what happens in Government. On top of that Mr Speaker, there were a range of critical issues explored and argued upon to support this year’s theme such as conscience voting, party discipline, role of independents, communicating the parliament and resourcing the parliament.

Mr Speaker, I request Members of this House to continue to read on their own on the roles of Parliamentary Select Committees in Public Accountability, as we had a training workshop on it already. Read on and find out how the Media plays an important role in maintaining high standards within the institutions of governments, and why it is necessary for the media to keep on scrutinising the activities and decisions, Parliaments are engaged in and are implementing which needs care and scrutinising.
Mr Speaker, the Professional Development and Education which should involve communities and institutions is another good piece of reading which needs looking at so that students at schools, at an early age and the parents appreciate their parliaments more. Libraries within Parliaments are seen as the resource where Members, Parliamentary staff and the public can access. Mr Speaker, this is an area we are starting to work on and I believe you have been collecting books from our friends abroad to help our Members. We have been experiencing visits from schools, individuals and community groups and this is very encouraging. We, as a government need to do more so that all our people know the parliament and what goes in it.
Mr Speaker, the fascinating thing which I noted, as an observer and as a first-time politician observing at this conference, this question I had in mind about this group of people, “why were they so carried away and interested with the work of politicians, parliaments and what went on in those chambers”. “Why we, as Papua New Guineans and Bougainvilleans not interested in talking about strengthening our parliament and avoiding as much as possible, corrupt practices some of us are always practising today.

Mr Speaker, will we ever change our attitudes to ensure Bougainville is corrupt-free. I guess now I understand why it is very important to continue to analyse ourselves and critically look at ways we can strengthen our political institutions and our parliament. We must continue to come together to discuss issues which are confronting us. The work of good governance can be seen and experienced by the people, politicians and their parliamentary staff, if there is continuous communication on addressing political issues.
Mr Speaker, we as politicians and public servants have an obligation and must make it our business to serve our people with pride and distinction and without favouring a certain group of people. Concerns of public interest must be queried and commission of enquiries conducted through Parliamentary Select Committees to identify corrupt practices made by politicians, individuals and groups.

Mr Speaker, the government needs to get rid of the corrupt practices now eroding away the foundations laid by this government when started in 2005. It is time now for the ABG to be strict and start scrutinising good governance so that transparency and accountability among ourselves and our people is always maintained. In return, our people will continue to respect and work with its government. Let’s all avoid following in the foot-steps of our friends in other provinces. Mr Speaker, some hard decisions will have to be made, and now is the time to do it. Some of us must pay the prize.
To conclude, Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Clerk and I, to personally extend our many thanks to you, your staff, the Government of Bougainville for the opportunity given, CPA, CDI’s Deputy Director, Mr Quinton Clements, his hardworking staff for the loyalty in ensuring we were cared for during our stay there in Adelaide, and our travels there and back. We really appreciate their arrangements. We thank CDI for also taking care of the Clerk’s Medical expenses when he was hospitalised for two days with Malaria at the Adelaide Royal Hospital. Mr Speaker, we sincerely extend our many thanks to Mr Malcolm Lehman, the Acting Clerk of the South Australian Parliament and the people of Adelaide for the hospitality they provided us there.

With this in mind, Mr Speaker, thankyou very much.