



Political Party Development Course

*Monday 18 May – Friday 29 May 2009
Crawford School of Economics and Government
The Australian National University, Canberra*

The Centre for Democratic Institutions' *Political Party Development* (PPD) course was conducted from 18 to 29 May in Canberra. This was the fourth occasion the course has been conducted, being held annually since 2006. The two-week course is based at the Crawford School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University, and is presented by Dr Norm Kelly.

The PPD course is designed to provide senior political party officials from the Southeast Asia – South Pacific region with the skills to strengthen their parties and party systems, with the objectives being improved governance and more stable democracies. The intention of the course is to provide participants with:

- Information on the Australian political system, with insights into how Australian political parties administer and organise themselves;
- An understanding of party theory and the factors that influence the development of party systems;
- A better understanding of parties and party systems in the region;
- Opportunities to develop contacts and networks with other parties in their own countries and throughout the region; and
- Development of links with Australian parties and institutions.

This course was again well supported by Australia's main political parties, with requests for site visits, meetings and guest presenters positively received.

Course Participants

Nineteen participants from seven countries attended the course, being from:

- Malaysia (3)
- East Timor (2),
- Papua New Guinea (2),
- Solomon Islands (4),

- Vanuatu (4),
- Fiji (2), and
- Samoa (2).

The majority of participants hold senior positions in their respective parties. In addition, the group included a political trainer from the International Republican Institute in East Timor, and a Solomon Islands' advocate for women's political representation. The group included one current Member of Parliament (Vanuatu's only woman MP) and an MP elected at Fiji's most recent democratic elections in 2006.

It was the first time that Samoa was represented on the course, and only the second time that Malaysia has been included. CDI did not call for nominations from Indonesia this year due to that country's focus on presidential and parliamentary elections this year.

There continues to be significant interest from the target countries to participate, with about 40 nominations being received – a very high number considering the absence of Indonesian nominations. Participants were required to be fluent in written and spoken English, and this enabled good dissemination of information and exchanges of ideas between participants and presenters.

CDI is keen to encourage women's participation in regional politics, however this year saw only three women participating. The course included specific sessions on women in politics, with a focus on how Australia's main parties encourage women's involvement in administrative and campaign aspects of party work. CDI will seek to increase the number of nominations from women for future courses.

Structure

The PPD course is composed of lectures and guest speakers, visits to Australian political institutions, and participant presentations. In addition, two social events are held – a welcoming event where participants met Australian government and party officials, ANU academics, and their countries' embassy and high commission staff. At the end of the course, a dinner is held, with presentations to each of the participants.

As part of the course, the participants were required to give a presentation on one of five topics. These topics were – Internal Party Democracy; Recruiting and Maintaining Members; A Voice for Women; Party Financing – Fundraising; and Campaigning.

The standard of these presentations was high. These presentations were valuable for the group to recap on what they had learnt during the course, and to provide a better understanding of regional differences in these topic areas.

The course covered the following topics:

Functions of Political Parties
Party Systems & Democratic Development
Australian Political Parties
Electoral Systems
Parliamentary Wing

Membership
Policy
Campaigns
Pre-selections
Finances

Women in Politics
Regulation of Parties

Media
Coalitions

These topics were covered by a mix of lectures and visits to political institutions including party secretariats, the ACT Legislative Assembly and the national Parliament. Sessions with guest presenters included time for discussion/Q&A.

Presentations from Political Institutions

The following political institutions made presentations to the group:

Political parties – Liberal Party (national secretariat), Labor Party (national and ACT branch secretariats). These presentations included information on administrative structure, campaigning, and the participation of women.

ACT Legislative Assembly – a visit to the Assembly included presentations from the Clerk of the Assembly, Tom Duncan; the Speaker, Shane Rattenbury; and Greens Parliamentary Convenor, Meredith Hunter.

Australian Parliament House – in two visits, the group met with Members and Senators (covered below), and the Acting Clerk of the House of Representatives, Bernard Wright. The group also observed Question Time in the House of Representatives, and Senate Estimates hearings.

Australian Party Involvement

The success of the course relies on the active involvement and support of the main Australian political parties, and this was forthcoming when requested, both from the administrative and parliamentary wings of the parties. Special acknowledgement and thanks go to Bruce Edwards (Liberal), and Bill Redpath and Michael Morgan (Labor), for assisting this level of access and involvement. Talks from the Nationals and Greens parties on administrative and organisational issues were provided by their Parliamentary and ACT Assembly representatives.

At the parliamentary level, the willingness of parliamentarians to meet with the group, especially in the busy post-Budget week (the House of Representatives was sitting and Senate committees were conducting Estimates hearings), was very much appreciated. The group met with the following Federal Members and Senators:

Labor: Duncan Kerr MP (Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs)
Harry Jenkins MP (Speaker of the House of Representatives)

Liberal: Julie Bishop MP (Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs)
Senator Marise Payne (Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance)

Greens: Senator Rachel Siewert (Party Whip)

Nationals: Kay Hull MP (Chief Whip)

The sessions with these representatives were very useful for understanding the relationships between the parliamentary and lay wings of parties, as well as the group getting an appreciation of the government's and opposition's views on regional issues.

The experience and expertise of party officials added much value to the course. Of particular importance were the presentations from:

Tony Eggleton (former Liberal Federal Director) – on the role of a major party secretary,
Bruce Edwards (Liberal, International Secretary) – Liberal party structure and policy development,

James McGrath (Liberal, Deputy Federal Director) – campaigning,

Natalie Colbert (Liberal, Chair ACT Women's Council) – women in the Liberal party,

Bill Redpath (Labor, ACT Branch Secretary) – Labor organisational structure, finance and campaigning,

Alys Graham, (Labor, National Secretariat Campaigner) – campaigning principles.

Ian Hanke, a media trainer and former Ministerial staffer, conducted sessions on developing messages, and dealing with the media.

CDI lectures were conducted by Dr Kelly, on the Australian party and electoral systems, campaigning principles, and finance and fundraising; and CDI Director, Professor Ben Reilly, on the functions of political parties.

Conclusion

This fourth PPD course has built on the successes and lessons of earlier courses. Minor adjustments to the course structure continue to improve content. There was a high level of camaraderie and rapport within the group, and it is expected that many participants will remain in contact into the future.

Administratively there were no significant issues, other than that CDI was in the process of relocating its offices, creating some difficulties later in the course. One accepted participant withdrew about a week prior to the course beginning, leaving it too late to organise a replacement.

Administrative support was excellent, and lecture room facilities were adequate. There was a problem with a replacement projector in week two, but this was thankfully fixed prior to the end of the same session. The course programme worked well, resulting in a useful mix of presentation and participation. The two week model remains a preferred format, both for conducting the course, and for attracting preferred participants.

It appeared that many participants used the opportunity of visiting Canberra to further their links with Australian parties and organisations, as well as interacting with their diplomatic and expatriate communities. CDI arranged meetings between participants and DFAT and AusAID. In addition, two women participants attended a parliamentary group meeting on women's health issues. The presence of representatives from Fiji added a dimension to the course, and provided a reminder of the fragility of democracy in some of the target countries.

All participants exhibited a genuine desire to learn, and to put that learning into practice on their return to their respective countries. Due to the overall political party development programme, CDI is establishing very strong links with parties and government officials in the region, which is beneficial for identifying suitable applicants for future PPD courses, and other potential in-country CDI activities.

The enthusiastic support and involvement of the Australian political parties and their parliamentarians was critical to the success of the course, and CDI acknowledges the willingness of the parties to support and actively participate in the various sessions. The PPD sessions also help Australian parties to gain a better understanding of some of the issues and challenges that confront political parties throughout the region.

Three Years of PPD

	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Participants	14	18	19	19	70
Women part.	2	4	5	3	14
Countries	5	7	5	7	8
Parties	17	17	17	16	40