The Centre for Democratic Institutions
Annual Address
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8 March 2004

The Hon. Paul Tovua

RESCUING DEMOCRACY IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

ROLAND RICH:

The Honourable Mrs Chris Gallus, Honourable Paul Tovua, His Excellency Milner Tozaka, High Commissioner of Solomon Islands, Members of Parliament, Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the Annual Address of the Centre for Democratic Institutions. It’s my great pleasure to be the master of ceremonies for this event. The order of events will be that in a minute I’ll call on Mrs Chris Gallus to introduce our speaker. Paul Tovua will deliver the address and then take questions.

At around one o’clock, you are very welcome to join us for lunch and to meet Paul in the Mural Hall which is up the stairs, just behind the main committee room.

Well, Paul Tovua is giving the 2004 Annual Address and in doing so he joins a group of rather distinguished speakers who have given previous addresses for the Centre for Democratic Institutions. In fact, there have been three from South East Asia – Fidel Ramos, Anand Panyarachun and Surin Pitsuwan. There’s been one from Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev, and there’s been one other from the Pacific in the form of Sir Anthony Siaguru. It’s a great pleasure to be able to have another speaker from the Pacific here today.

The Centre for Democratic Institutions is Australia’s democracy promotion body. It is based at the Australian National University and fundamentally it deals with the dissemination of ideas. It deals with what we can call soft power. It’s the power of principles, the power of ideas, the power of technical know-how. And CDI’s work method is through discussion and dialogue which we hope is always a two-way process of discussion and dialogue.

I have to say that for several years, I was particularly frustrated in the work we were doing with the Solomon Islands because there’s a limit to what soft power can achieve. There are certain circumstances where soft power is the appropriate power but in the Solomon Islands, what we needed was some hard power. And the Australian government has delivered that
hard power, and now I feel it’s very much again the turn of soft power to be dealing with the issues in the Solomons. The soft power of ideas and discussion come to the fore again.

And if I could just comment on the program that CDI has in the Solomon Islands; we invite Solomon Island parliamentarians to our annual Pacific Parliamentary Retreat. We have a very strong program with the Ombudsman’s office of the Solomon Islands where many of his staff – and he himself – have had training here in Australia. And they then deliver training to the provinces in the Solomon Islands so it’s very much a process where we are training a group of people who then deliver that message beyond our own shores.

And we’ve had a program with civil society organisations in the Solomon Islands as well because ultimately for democracy to take strong root in the Solomon Islands, we need to see civil society have a voice. We need to hear the voice of people who are affected by all these decisions.

So, I feel the focus today on the Solomon Islands is a particularly appropriate one and I know you are looking forward very much to hearing our speaker. So, let me invite Mrs Chris Gallus to introduce him for you.

CHRIS GALLUS – PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

Thank you, Roland. And to the Honourable Paul Tovua, His Excellency Milner Tozaka, High Commissioner of the Solomon Islands, Excellencies, my parliamentary colleagues, members of the ANU, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased to introduce the 2004 Centre for Democratic Institutions Annual Address and please let me also welcome the members of the CDI Board who have joined us today.

Prosperity, peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region is a priority for Australia. Given the instability, civil unrest and the breakdown of the rule of law in our region, having Paul Tovua with us today is particularly relevant as chair of the Solomon Islands National Peace Council. Paul Tovua OBE has had a distinguished parliamentary career in the Solomon Islands with terms as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for National Planning and Speaker of the House.

He has also been Chairman of the Electoral Commission and a Director of the Ross Mining Company, operators of the Gold Ridge mine. The outbreak of violent conflict and the breakdown of law and order, affected the lives of many people in the Solomon Islands. The economy shrunk fourteen per cent in 2000 and by another nine per cent in 2001. We can just imagine the impact that that has had on the Solomon Islands as it would on any country. More than a hundred and twenty lives were lost, people were displaced, critical social welfare services were cut and property was destroyed.

Australia’s commitment to peace and stability in the South Pacific is demonstrated by our work with the neighbouring governments as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, known as RAMSI.

Australia also supports stability and development in the Solomon Islands through our assistance to the Solomon Islands National Peace Council and its predecessor in the days of the Townsville Peace Agreement, the Peace Monitoring Council. The council continues the work of the Peace Monitoring Council in promoting peace, reconciliation, national unity and the return of the rule of law. As chair of the Peace Monitoring Council and now the National
Peace Council, Paul Tovua has helped the council make crucial contributions to civil society in the Solomon Islands.

The Weapons Free Village campaign is one of the Council’s notable achievements and predates the arrival of RAMSI. Ordinary people have opposed the presence of guns in their communities and over a thousand villages in the Solomon Islands have now declared themselves weapons-free as part of this campaign. The work of the National Peace Council is making a lasting contribution to peace and national unity in the Solomon Islands. We hope to continue working with the people of the Solomons towards peace and stability in the region for many, many years to come.

And today, I am very pleased to welcome the Honourable Paul Tovua to present the 2004 CDI Annual Address.

[applause]

PAUL TOVUA – CHAIRMAN OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL:

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Chris Gallus, Honourable Members of Parliament, Solomon Island High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr Milner Tozaka, distinguished members of the diplomatic corps, director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions, Mr Roland Rich, members of the consultative council of CDI, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to speak at the 2004 Annual Address of the Centre for Democratic Institutions. It gives me great honour to present at such an important occasion. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you, Australia, through you, Honourable Chris Gallus, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the government, to the Members of Parliament, to your people – good people of Australia – for your generous and timely assistance to the Solomon Islands. Already, I can see that your help has had a great impact in reducing the conflict in the Solomon Islands.

I also thank all the countries of the Pacific Island Forum for agreeing to support the Solomon Islands under the framework of the Biketawa Declaration. This is the first assistance under the declaration and this is a significant milestone in regional cooperation. Now, children can walk to school freely, women can walk through the gardens and men can be confident and safe without a gun at their sides. The wrongdoers are being charged and cases are being heard in court. If something wrong happens, you can call the police and know that they will help.

All these things were not possible just eight months ago before Australia and other nations of the South Pacific came to our shores. It has given us hope. I think I might say people’s only hope for the future at that particular time.

Now, I have been asked to come here today to talk about the prospects for democracy in the Solomon Islands. Parliamentary democracy was formed in the Solomon Islands in 1978, when the Solomon Islands became an independent nation. Against the history of the evolution of democracy amongst nations, democracy is new in the Solomon Islands. And parliamentary democracy in the Solomon Islands developed in some ways until the year 2000. 2000 was the year of testing of democratic institutions in the Solomon Islands.

This year showed that our parliamentary democratic institutions were weak. 2000 was the beginning of an overhaul of all our efforts to build our parliamentary democracy. It was the
beginning of a dark period, politically as well as economically and socially. It brought our nation to the verge of collapse. The country was bent on its knees – the economic structure, the social structure and the political structure.

The topic of today’s discussion is parliamentary democracy, hence I will concentrate on some of the failures of the political structure. But bear in mind that often, economic and social changes drive political changes. This is particularly so in a small nation such as the Solomon Islands which has a population of about five hundred thousand people.

The failure of the political system, in my view, is due to the reality that from the beginning of democracy – 1978 – there has been a misconception about parliamentary structure in the Solomon Islands. What we implemented is not parliamentary democracy as it is understood and practised in other nations around the world. The Solomon Islands inherited the wrong kind of parliamentary democracy. In parliamentary democracy, parliament should have an oversight role, even overseeing the Executive, or better known as the Cabinet. Cabinet should report to parliament. However, in the Solomon Islands, cabinet seems to have overpowered parliament consistently since 1978. Cabinet made itself more important than parliament.

In terms of Executive accountability, it was not working properly; you could say it was non-existent. We did not follow the checks and balances between parliament and Cabinet. Of course, the judiciary did its best but even this form of checks and balances was not able to exercise its dual role in terms of keeping tabs on parliament and Cabinet and responding to social change. Each successive government formed a cabinet that overpowered parliament. We did not operate parliamentary democracy. Our system of government was simply one driven by a few in Cabinet.

In hindsight, it is easy to see that a reaction to such domination was bound to erupt at some stage so 2000 was the year of testing of this style of government. At this time, the rule of law was virtually non-existent. Political structures including parliament were under duress. Political structures were not freely running the country and had, in fact, corrupted law enforcement. Instead, these things – law and politics – were governed by the muzzle of the gun.

Various attempts were made to get outside assistance to help the government address the volatile situation. In 2000, Australia came to our assistance with the facilitation of the Townsville Peace Agreement, which was an agreement between the warring parties. As early as 2000, the Townsville Peace Agreement had good effects, such as stopping the gunfire between the parties.

However, many of the conditions of the Townsville Peace Agreement were done hurriedly. Consequently, not much thought was given to many of the conditions. We have lived with many of these legacies, some of which may have given cause for further conflict. We struggled along until further assistance was provided mid last year.

Mid last year was the arrival of the Australian-led intervention, what was known among Solomon Islanders as RAMSI, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. Many Solomon Islanders initially thought RAMSI was a man, a very big strong Rambo-type man who was single-handedly capable of cutting the legs off Harold Keke, Jimmy Rasta and I think we will continue to try and catch Edmond Sae in the Solomon Islands. Many villagers were surprised when they saw the Special Coordinator of RAMSI, Mr Nick Warner, step out of the helicopter! Many of us, and me in particular, are very grateful and very surprised by the recent turnaround in Australian foreign policy in the South Pacific and I would say that this is an appropriate policy.
The policy gives a new start to Solomon Islands in terms of law and order and security. Being a nation free of weapons is creating a high level of security and building confidence. I think we could be the first nation in the world to be weapons free and this security is providing us with the breathing space to develop parliamentary democracy with proper checks and balance. So you can say that RAMSI begins the resurrection of democracy in the Solomon Islands.

In terms of political structure, I hope RAMSI can help us, and as I said before, one of the weaknesses highlighted by the ethnic tension was the flaw in our political structure. This view was also reflected in the resolutions of the Townsville Peace Agreement. The resolution called for a change in political structure in terms of federation of state, of state system of government.

A countrywide consultation on the idea of state governments was undertaken early to mid last year, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program. The terms of reference included consultation on the review of the present Constitution. The proposal was to change some of the parliamentary functions and political systems. Consultations concluded and a report was given to the Solomon Islands government. The government is currently considering the reports. The review will be very interesting.

My view is that nothing really is wrong with the present Constitution in terms of government structure. I do not think we need a state government system. There is nothing wrong with our current system to warrant an overhaul – that's my view.

In fact, at this point in time in our development, I think a state government system may cause more conflict. I say this because in the Solomon Islands, the discussion on a state government is all about status. People are focused on the perspective that we get state government, we get everything. People do not discuss the mechanics of the proposals, such as responsibility for developing economic policy and delivery of social services. People should be thinking about economic development, about investment coming into the provinces, about income generating in the communities.

Please do not think I am a nationalist, that all power should be invested in the national government. This is not my view.

I believe that it is reasonable, appropriate and possible to delegate further responsibility to the provinces without creating a separate state system, often called federal system. This is a solution that will best serve the interests of the citizens of the Solomon Islands as well as those of provinces and of the national government. This can be accommodated by small changes to the constitution, such as devolving more financial responsibilities to provincial governments so that they can make decisions on provincial spending priorities.

Another negative aspect of getting people to think about federal system is that it will be used as a vehicle to progress the independence of provinces. Temotu Province, for instance, has been seeking independence for some time. At this stage in our development, there is a real threat that a federal system could inadvertently be used to strengthen the differences between provinces in a negative way. This in turn would lead to more inter-provincial conflict not dissimilar to the ethnic tension of 2000.

I don’t think anyone in the world, including donor communities, would like to see a further fragmentation of the already fragmented Solomon Islands, so I think it is very important that the reform and review of the Solomon Islands constitution is handled very carefully. And if we don’t address it now, the end result would be very negative for our country. It would be hard for my country.
I think rescuing democracy in the Solomon Islands must be done in a way that is understood by all people. Perhaps this can be achieved in steps, with less emphasis on politics and more on management. It is easier for the average citizen to understand management than to understand politics. We really need less politics and more management.

Instead, if we improve our management within the government administration, ensure proper procedures were followed, then parliamentary democracy may follow the same suit – that is improvements in public management standards, and may affect the expectation of the standards within parliament and between parliament and Executive.

I refer to the colonial days when our government institutions were managed by the British and by our Solomon Islanders. We were able to deliver health, education, law and order. Admittedly today, we have a higher population, particularly among the youth-aged group, but the geographically fragmented nature of the country which is the great challenge to service delivery is still the same. The colonial administration was able to overcome this geographic challenge.

If we cannot do the management ourselves, then we should be asking our donor partners. When RAMSI arrived in the Solomon Islands, it presented a good opportunity to address law and order and security, and I think management should also be considered.

As part of the proper good governance, we Solomon Islanders need to create a more disciplined political culture. Our party system has not been very strong. I think this is an underlying cause of the frequent fault of parties in the Solomon Islands. With each election, a new alliance is formed, the marriage of convenience between factions and parties, this time slowly to form government.

The formation is not based on shared ideals of policies, of a shared history of working together. Parties or other groups of individuals simply agree to marriage at the outset in order to form government. Once in government, no real working relationship is maintained, in fact politicians do not follow parties. Even before the election, lots of parties appear. If these parties do not get voted in, the parties disappear and are never heard from again.

I am a former politician. I know that when you stand for parliament in Solomon Islands, you do not stand for a party, you stand as an individual. And when you vote in the Solomon Islands, you do not vote for a party, you vote for the individual – or more explicitly you vote for your wantok. Wantok regime can be part of the problem against the implementation of proper parliamentary democracy.

I will explain what I mean by wantok because it has specific cultural meaning in our nation. Wantok means one language, tok means language. It refers to someone who speaks your language, your dialect. Someone in your family, in your tribe. In Honiara, where provincial groups live together, the term is expanded to mean someone from your province, Guadalcanal, Western, Malaita, Isabel and so forth.

People from your province become your wantoks. Just like when you move to Canberra, some of you, you are still a Victorian or a Queenslander or a Western Australian. However, in the Solomon Islands, this association has a much stronger effect on our relationships due to our communal nature. We have a great sense of belonging to a group. It is part of who we are.

In the Australian culture, you think as individuals. This is not our way of thinking. When I think of myself, I think of my wantoks- my relatives. When I feed myself and my family, my wantok also think that I should feed them. You may say we have an obligation to look after
our wantoks. Well, it is true that yes, it can sometimes be a burden. It is also an honour and it is natural for us.

Of course, wantok regime has positive elements as well. It means we do not need a social security system. If I need to help my wantoks will help me. The wantok system gets abused when it means that to help my family I must steal from others. If I work in the government, then I redirect funds or other resources to my pocket to feed my family and wantok.

It is hard- nigh impossible- to say no to a wantok even if it means getting things in an illegal way. Loyalty to the wantoks is much greater than loyalty to broader society and it is greater than loyalty to the law, greater than loyalty to the system of democracy. So, you can see wantok regime can permeate into our democratic institutions. It does not end at politics.

For example, selecting wantoks occurs in the selection of student scholarships and in the selection of employees in the workplace. One particular group has had more numbers in the Royal Solomon Island Police than any other cultural group. So, in the so-called coup of 2000, when one cultural group took over the police, it was easy to do because the majority of police were from the wantok group. This time, the wantok group was defined as people from one province.

It is important to understand wantok regime as it has operated since independence and it still operates today, for it is my belief that wantok is inconsistent with democracy. We will never practise democracy until we address wantokism.

Does democracy have a future with the presence of wantokism? Can the international intervention – RAMSI – assist us in addressing the spread of the wantok regime into parliamentary democracy? I do not know. I suspect it is something we have to address ourselves. But whatever the political or social will exists to address the negative side of wantok regime, I do not know.

However, Solomon Islanders are beginning to openly talk about the recent cost of wantok regime, which is a good sign. Of course, politicians all over the world would always represent their wantoks. Politicians would always look to fund projects in their constituencies. This is the reality of democracy. But the costs of the wantok regime are very strong in Solomon Islands to the point that it has and still is crippling our nation.

I believe our nation is maturing. We are a young nation. We are culturally and geographically diverse. We are beginning to understand and accept each other. We are beginning to lay the foundations of a united nation. I am hopeful and optimistic about the future of democracy in the Solomon Islands. I believe with your generous support and the support of the other nations in the South Pacific, we can have the breathing space to openly talk about our problems and find ways to rescue and build our parliamentary system.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my views today. I greatly appreciate your audience and I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you.

[audience applause]

ROLAND RICH:

Thank you very much, Paul. We have fifteen minutes or so for questions, so I open the floor. Could I, as Chair, pose the first question Paul, and it’s one that is of interest to, I think, me and many other members working on these issues. What do you see as the role for Australia
and the other Pacific countries in the continuing process of strengthening democracy in the Solomon Islands?

PAUL TOVUA:

Thank you Roland. Clearly, we have already implemented the Biketawa Declaration, which provided the assistance of RAMSI. I think the Declaration also goes on to cover other areas including, I hope, democracy in the Solomon Islands or in other countries in the region. The option that was offered by Australia was to send in the military- the police. Police are a very important component.

Now, when the law and order has been stabilised, I would like to see more involvement in the civil service areas, including parliament, to help address some of the areas that we need to address in parliamentary democracy. I think it is timely that RAMSI has taken us this far but I think now there are other areas we should also be asking RAMSI to delve into.

MARK FORBES – THE AGE:

Paul, you talk about the need to put an end to corruption in the political system. On a practical level, obviously we’re seeing RAMSI going through arresting militants. We have now seen some concrete action up to the very top of the police force.

As you would well know, there are many political figures who have been complicit in the crimes which we have seen. How important is it, and what are the community expectations, that action will also be taken against those political figures? Have you got any concerns that this is a problem where Australia has effectively almost endorsed the current government, and even the Prime Minister who is, as you’d be aware, subject to some of those allegations?

PAUL TOVUA:

Thank you. I think it is only a matter of time before further action is taken, and the Prime Minister used the term the “big fish”. I think the law and order restoration could lead to the arrest of some of our leaders. I know from my meeting with RAMSI that this year they're going to focus a lot more on corruption of civil servants and I think also corruption in the political area.

Already, there has been an arrest of one of the ministers and I think, as I said, it will only take time. But this is the expectation from the ordinary people. They would like to see these people arrested first. Of course, you have to have strong evidence and it is not easy. It will take time but I know RAMSI and Australia are helping the present government.

I think you really need to have somebody in place, a government, and I am happy with the present Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza. He's doing what he can in a very difficult situation up until the arrival of RAMSI. So I think this is very much the expectation of the communities and they do raise this with us when we have meetings outside of Honiara, on Guadalcanal and Malaita, Western Province as well.
GRAHAM TUPPER – DIRECTOR AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Thank you for your presentation and for some extra insight into these issues. You mentioned the need to develop a strong culture, like a management for a successful future, and here we talk about issues of good governance and also about how appropriate it is to transplant the Australian system onto other cultures and doing this with a need for more consideration of local culture and practice.

I suppose what I'm wanting to ask is that what do you see is good governance Pacific style that's appropriate for the Solomon Islands? And take it out five or ten years and tell us what the Solomon Islands as a well-governed Pacific style looks like in five or ten years time.

PAUL TOVUA:

Thank you Graham. First of all, I would like to see the electoral process strengthened and I think some of the officers from the Australian Electoral Commission are here with us. There are clearly some very good recommendations for the Solomon Islands that have been put across to government in an attempt to address those Acts, especially the Electoral Act. And that is, you know, even making the electoral system more open so that many more people would come in.

At the moment it is simply whoever is there is allowed to vote. There is no postal voting, there's no provision for one box for all the candidates. Instead, each of the candidates has a separate box which is hidden away inside a room and in a lot of cases, coming back to wantokism, they just don't pass their ballot. They keep it in the pocket and then come out and give it to someone and it goes to just the one box. That is one area.

Certainly, really I think we have to inherit some kind of democratic culture in that there are distinctive responsibilities and not only responsibility, but in parliament, there is an oversight of the role of parliament. It's not only with the present government but all governments from 1978. We inherited, I think, our own way with more emphasis placed on cabinet, whereas the oversight has been the role of the parliament, which should also include cabinet reporting and being accountable to parliament. Many of the parliamentary committees are not working well and they need to review, they need to change. So, these are some of the areas I think should be strengthened. I’m not saying that we inherit completely the Australian system or the New Zealand or Canadian systems.

But I think it is up to our leaders to see clearly where we should begin to address some of the system. I have mentioned this to our own parliament many times but nobody seems to listen.

BEN REILLY – AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY:

Just to pick up on your last comment and listening to your speech, it’s striking how similar the issues are that you were describing in your neighbouring country, Papua New Guinea. For example wantokism, the same weak political parties and the same problems running through the political system that comes from that.

In PNG recently, they’ve pushed through some really ambitious attempts to try and build stronger political parties and change the electoral system, in part I think to try and deal with this problem of wantokism. They’ve, as you know, put in place quite major political reforms that try and address these problems. I just wonder if any of the past New Guinea reforms may be of relevance to the Solomon Islands?
PAUL TOVUA:

I think maybe some of the reforms would be relevant and I think this is where, I’m hoping, that PIANZEA, which is the Pacific Island, Australia, New Zealand Electoral Administrators that meets and share ideas to discuss this. I hope that when they meet this year that Papua New Guinea will share with its neighbours, the Pacific Island countries, what areas that they have been able to amend or reform the Electoral Act. So, I’m hoping very much that, Alistair, this year the Pacific Island Electoral will be also be sharing those ideas with you. Alistair Legge is sitting next to you.

ERNST WILHEIM, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY:

Thank you, you’ve emphasised the need for cultural change, particularly in relation to the wantok culture. And from an Australia perspective, it’s very easy to understand and sympathise with the view you take. From a domestic viewpoint in the Solomon Islands, cultural change of this kind will have winners but there will also be losers. Where this sort of cultural change is largely driven by foreigners, to what extent is there a risk that the losers will be able to portray the change as driven by foreigners, and to what extent is there a significant risk of a resentment and opposition to change on that sort of ground?

PAUL TOVUA:

It may pose some objections from a lot of the communities but as I said, we have, from the outset in 1978, been following something that is quite different from what I perceive should be related to the Westminster system, although not completely. But it is very, very difficult to change straight away but I think over time and I think it will need a lot of education.

I say this because some of the issues including peace are being taken up by the National Peace Council to try and formulate some guidelines and that we would also hope that the government agree this would be incorporated in the curriculum system so that it can be taught in schools. I agree this is not an easy task but I am hopeful if we make a start, some changes will come.

HIS EXCELLENCY LEIATAUA DR KILIFOTI S ETUATI – SAMOAN HIGH COMMISSIONER:

It’s very good to hear from you, the people and the government of Solomons regard the action by RAMSI as being very successful so we are very pleased with that.

I go back to the question that was asked by Roland Rich at the beginning which is, what can be done? What do you see as activities that the RAMSI, or New Zealand, Australia and the other countries in the region, can engage in for the medium to long term? Obviously, this area is close to the Solomons, with assistance from outside, are going to be able to themselves improve on, but I would think that there may be areas where you need to send people outside your country. I’m thinking of the area of work where there may not be enough work created within the country in the medium term. But in the long term, say ten to twenty years, is this something that is under consideration by your government and your people in discussions with New Zealand and Australia in particular to assist in this direction?
PAUL TOVUA:

Thank you, High Commissioner. May I take this opportunity also to thank you for the men and women from Samoa who have been a great help, especially to the police in the Solomon Islands. We very much value that.

There are a lot of other areas that we could think of, economic development is one. Of course, parliamentary democracy which is the root governing system not as well developed as the one that you grace here. It is something that the government, at the Prime Ministers’ level I think, has discussed with the Australian government. I raised the same point as an issue when a Senate committee, which was led by Senator Cook, visited last year.

So, this is probably taken up at a government level and I am not able now to tell you what stage it’s reached. But that kind of scheme would be welcomed. Sometimes we always think about getting money but, you know, giving jobs is also important. So, thank you for that point, raising that point, High Commissioner.

ROLAND RICH:

Senator Cook, your name was mentioned. Would you like to make a comment before we close this afternoon?

PETER COOK – FEDERAL LABOR SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA:

Only that it’s a good recommendation and I hope it is picked up and worked on by the government.

ROLAND RICH:

Thank you very much.

PAUL TOVUA:

Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

ROLAND RICH:

Well, may I ask you once again to thank Paul for (indistinct).

[audience applause]

ROLAND RICH:

Well, that was a very thoughtful presentation which I think will resonate with us. May I just make the point that the text of that presentation and also the video of it on Real Media will be on the CDI website in a couple of weeks time.

Let me thank again Paul Tovua for that presentation. He left me with an image that is very difficult for me to get out of my head. And, that is Nick Warner as Sylvester Stallone.
[Laughter]
Next time I see Nick, I will mention this to him and ask him to pump up a little bit for us. Thank you very much for joining us today. Please if you can, join us for lunch upstairs in the Mural Hall and meet Paul personally. And if you have any further questions, you can put it to him there. Thank you very much.