New CDI Director Appointed

Dr Benjamin Reilly is the new Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI). As a result of Dr Reilly’s appointment, CDI has relocated from the Research School of Social Sciences to the Asia-Pacific School of Economics and Government (APSEG) at the ANU.

The move into APSEG will have important benefits for CDI’s work program. APSEG is Australia’s leading graduate professional school focused on governance and international policy in Australia, Asia and the Pacific. Accordingly, there are likely to be strong training and research synergies between CDI’s parliamentary and political party development programs and APSEG’s outreach and executive training programs. APSEG is part of the new College of Asia and Pacific Studies which brings together all the components of the ANU working on Asia-Pacific issues.

CDI’s new offices are in the Sir Roland Wilson Building, located on McCoy Circuit up from the Science Dome. Other contact details remain the same.

Follow the link below to access the Minister for Foreign Affairs media release announcing the new Director’s appointment, along with Dr Reilly’s cv, and all CDI staff and contact information.

A New Beginning for CDI

Dear Colleagues,

This newsletter marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the Centre for Democratic Institutions.

As many of you know, the Centre was established by the Australian government in 1998 to support the efforts of new democracies in the Asia-Pacific region to strengthen their political systems. Our core budget is provided by AusAID, Australia’s Agency for International Development.

The government has recently given CDI an important new mandate to focus directly upon two critical institutions of representative democracy: parliamentary governance, and political parties.

This revised mandate represents a major development in CDI’s evolution. While we have been working directly with parliaments for a number of years, the opportunity to work directly with political

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parties is relatively new. Both areas offer great challenges and opportunities for the future.

As the Centre’s new Director, I would like to take this opportunity to explain briefly how this new focus will be reflected in our work program. While there will be considerable continuity in many areas, there are also some exciting new developments.

At the broadest level, our objective is that CDI becomes the leading source of expertise, advice and assistance on issues of democratic development in the Asia-Pacific region – a “think tank” on political governance, if you like. We aim to produce new thinking, fresh insights, and critical analysis.

In order to do this, we will be conducting innovative training courses, providing direct technical assistance and undertaking applied research on our core areas of parliamentary and political party development. All of this will be aimed squarely at emerging leaders in our target countries – Indonesia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Some of this activity will be new and, in some ways, unprecedented. The truth is that nobody knows for sure how best to build and sustain strong parliaments and responsible political parties in fragile environments. A key task for CDI is to develop bold new ideas and approaches to improve the effectiveness and quality of our assistance to partner countries in these areas.

Central to these objectives will be the provision of two flagship training courses, held in Canberra each year. Complementing our well-known “Responsible Parliamentary Government” course, which has been running for several years, will be a new course on “Political Party Development”, aimed at giving party officials and their equivalents in our partner countries the skills to build stronger and more responsible party organisations.

We will be working closely with the Australian party secretariats to cover issues of party functioning such as candidate selection, membership, campaigning, finance, media relations, issue management, the role of parliamentary parties, ways to ensure party discipline, and so on.

These high-level training programs – both unique in the Asia-Pacific and, I suspect, in the world – will also feed into a range of more targeted, in-country programs working with parliaments and parties in Indonesia, East Timor and Melanesia. The first of these will be held in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia over the next two months.

Finally, we will be taking advantage of our location in Canberra, our close relationships with the Australian parliament and the major Australian parties, and our links with both government and academia to produce policy-relevant applied research on these topics, again with a special focus on parliaments and political parties.

An example of such research is the new international collaborative project between CDI, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and the United Nations University on political party regulation and development in conflict-prone democracies. Through projects such as this, we seek to forge a range of research-to-policy links which will ensure that the material we present is the result of hard thinking about difficult issues, but always with a practical focus on what works and what doesn’t.

More information on all of these activities will be available in the coming months. In the meantime, CDI.News will keep you informed regularly about our new programs, and you can access this information and more at any time by visiting our website, www.cdi.anu.edu.au. I also look forward to hearing any suggestions you may have on our new agenda or our work program more generally.

Benjamin Reilly
Director

Political Parties Program Launched

With the appointment of Dr Reilly as Director, CDI is moving from the foundation work of the last year to ramp-up implementation in the area of political party assistance. Like CDI’s other main focus area, parliamentary governance, the political party programme will work in partnership with our focus countries in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific to strengthen democratic governance.

Ongoing training, research, publications, networking and other linkages will continue to shape and complement this work.

In May 2006 the ‘PNG Political Parties Strengthening Dialogue’ will commence with a key seminar and associated work in Port Moresby, and in October of 2006, we will conduct the inaugural CDI Political Party Development Course (PPD) at the ANU in Canberra for selected party leaders from the region. PPD will join CDI’s already established Responsible Parliamentary Government Course (RPG) and the Pacific Parliamentary Forum (PPF), in our parliamentary strengthening sector, as flagship courses on parliamentary and party development in the region.

More on CDI's Political Parties Program

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CDI Director Participates in two Major International Conferences

CDI Director Dr Benjamin Reilly recently spoke at two major international conferences on different aspects of democracy promotion. At the first, the annual meeting of the International Studies Association in San Diego, he was a participant in the panel on “Evaluating Political Institutions and Electoral Processes”, which looked at issues of political parties, elections and powersharing in post-conflict societies. Professor Larry Diamond of Stanford University, one of the leading experts on democracy promotion and a former democratization advisor to the transitional administration in Iraq, was the main discussant. The main focus concerned the lessons learned for the international community from recent transitional elections in Afghanistan and Iraq. Dr Reilly led discussions of similar cases of particular interest to Australia, such as Indonesia and Bougainville.

Following this, Dr Reilly attended and spoke at the Vail Symposium on “Dilemmas of Democratization in War-Torn Societies”, the culmination of a two-year international project sponsored by US and European democracy-promotion organisations examining how to promote sustainable democracy in wartorn societies as a pivotal strategic objective in building international peace. The meeting focussed on the thorny issue of war-to-democracy transitions, examining how societies shattered by war can move towards sustainable democracy, given that the process of transition toward competitive party-politics, divisive constitution-making processes, and hard-fought elections also can exacerbate conflict among contending social forces.

The symposium featured a mixture of 35 policymakers and experts from international organizations, states, transnational non-governmental organizations, policy institutes, and development aid agencies including the United Nations, the U.S. Agency for International Development, International IDEA, the Carter Center, the International Peace Academy, the United Nations Foundation, and the Centre for Democratic Institutions.

CDI Participates in JSCOT 10th Anniversary Seminar

In late March at Parliament House in Canberra, Deputy Director Michael Morgan took part in the tenth anniversary of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT). The seminar assessed the establishment of JSCOT and discussed more broadly the role of the legislature in the treaty making process in the Australian context and internationally. JSCOT is chaired by CDI Consultative Council Member Dr Andrew Southcott.
**CDI Hosts KPI Visit**

Assoc. Professor Noranit Setabutr, Secretary General of King Prajadhipok’s Institute (KPI), Thailand, and KPI Council member, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thong-in Wongsothorn, visited CDI in February for meetings with Deputy Director Michael Morgan to discuss the ongoing relationship between the two democracy building organizations. They reaffirmed their mutual commitment to helping build sustainable democratic institutions in the region.

During their visit they presented an informal seminar on recent events in Thai politics to CDI and the National Thai Studies Centre, which included an overview of recent protests.

King Prajadhipok’s Institute is an independent public organisation which was established in 1994 to develop democracy for the achievement of sustainable peace.

**CDI Forges Links with the Indonesian Centre for Electoral Reform**

CDI has forged links with the Indonesian Centre for Electoral Reform (CETRO). Hadar Gumay, Executive Director of CETRO, attended the ‘Political Finance & Government Advertising Workshop’ conducted 24-25 February at the ANU in Canberra by the Democratic Audit of Australia, as a guest of CDI. He participated as a panel member at the ‘Comparative and Regional Perspectives’ session of the workshop, chaired by CDI Deputy Director Michael Morgan.

During his visit, Mr Gumay also presented a CDI seminar entitled ‘Observing Elections in Indonesia’ which focused on CETRO’s recent activities, including their observation of recent local elections in Indonesia.

**CDI Helps Develop MP Induction Program for Solomon Islands**

CDI continued its support for Pacific Islands parliamentarians in February when Deputy Director Michael Morgan took part in a planning workshop organised by the National Parliament of Solomon Islands and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to develop an induction program for Solomon Islands MPs to be held in Honiara later this month.

This Induction Program will encourage greater understanding of public leadership, constitutional frameworks, accountability, transparency and parliamentary oversight among sitting and newly elected Members of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. This approach will require a combination of informational and participatory sessions, including presentations by local and international experts and the workshopping of core procedures and practical skills, such as parliamentary speechmaking, question time and debate. The program is designed to balance MPs’ need for capacity building and skills transfer with demands for the greater engagement of MPs in public policy discussions. It also seeks to deliver training in both the formal and informal mechanisms of parliamentary work. The induction program will draw on local and regional expertise with key speakers and resource personnel from Solomon Islands, PNG, Australia and Fiji. Importantly, it now looks very likely that this induction program will serve as a template for induction programs in other Pacific Island nations including Fiji.

**Report Page & KPI link**

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**Full Report**

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Feature Articles, Events, & Links

The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion

The first featured item this issue is an article by Thomas Carothers entitled 'The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion', published in Foreign Affairs, March/April 2006.

This article discusses the growing scepticism about the legitimacy of democracy promotion, particularly in the Middle East and other areas dominated by authoritarian regimes. While focussing on the US experience, the article also contains some important insights for Australia.

Thomas Carothers is Director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His most recent book is Promoting the Rule of Law Abroad: In Search of Knowledge.

Click on this link for access to this article:

The Future of Muslim Democracy

Our second featured article is a speech entitled 'The Future of Muslim Democracy' given by former deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim in late 2005 for the National Endowment for Democracy's New York Democracy Forum.

In this piece, Anwar Ibrahim discusses the democratic dimensions and significance of the historical post-colonial/independence trajectory of states including Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey. Importantly, he also speaks about Muslim countries largely missing the democratization boat following the Soviet collapse of the late 1980s, noting that for Muslim democracy in South East Asia particularly, it was the East Asian financial crisis that served as the major modern democratization catalyst. As he also notes "What happened in Indonesia in 1997 is one of the most decisive moments in Islam’s modern history."

Click on this link for access to this article:

Forthcoming

PNG Political Parties Strengthening Dialogue - Port Moresby Seminar

In late April 2006, CDI will conduct a seminar in Port Moresby as the initial in-country project phase of our PNG political Parties Strengthening Dialogue which seeks to improve skills and knowledge of the participating political party representatives on the building and maintaining of transparent and participatory internal party structures. This seminar will take place at Parliament House in PNG with the cooperation of the speaker of the PNG parliament, the Hon Jeffrey Nape MP, and is targeting PNG party leaders by allowing PNG and Australian experts in party system development to discuss directly how PNG parliamentarians can strengthen their political parties.

The seminar marks the first in a series of new CDI activities looking at innovative approaches to political party development as a means of building more robust and responsive democratic systems in the Asia-Pacific region.

All suggestions and comments are welcome

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