Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to CDI.News from the Centre for Democratic Institutions, Australia.

CDI is Australia’s foremost democracy promotion and training institution, working in the area of good governance (particularly strengthening parliamentary process and political parties) with a geographic focus on Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific.

CDI’s core budget is provided by AusAID, Australia’s Agency for International Development.

CDI’s mission:
- To harness Australian and international best practice in support of developing countries’ needs for democratic governance

CDI aims to provide:
- high quality training programs in key democratic institutions and processes
- in-country technical assistance
- applied research

CDI.News will keep you informed periodically of activities and

This Issue:

Projects, Events, & Research:

Republic of Indonesia & Australia: Seminar on the Parliamentary Oversight of Treaties – Jakarta, July 2005

Political Governance:
Leadership and Accountability Workshop - Solomon Islands, June 2005

CDI Consultative Council meeting – Canberra, June 2005

Hungarian Secretary of State visits CDI – Canberra, June 2005

Political Parties Research

CDI to attend World Meeting of Democracy Promoting Foundations

Review of the Solomon Islands’ Ombudsman’s Act

Responsible Parliamentary Government Course

Indonesian political parties Study Program

Book Review – The UN Role in Promoting Democracy

UNDP Regional Workshop to Strengthen Parliaments in the...
Indonesia/Australia: Seminar on the Parliamentary Oversight of Treaties
Jakarta — July 15-16

On 15-16 July 2005, the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR), and the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) at the Australian National University (ANU) convened a Seminar on the Parliamentary Oversight of Treaties at the Hotel Mulia Senayan, Jakarta, Republik Indonesia.

Designed to deepen ties between the Indonesian and Australian parliaments by facilitating mutual learning and exchange at the highest levels, the seminar brought together elected representatives and secretariat staff from both countries' foreign affairs committees to discuss the central issues of international law and its myriad implications for domestic politics.

Thematically, the program was based around presentations on the respective legislative processes of Indonesia and Australia. Discussion centred on the political and national implications of signing international treaties and entering international agreements and the legal force of international treaties signed primarily by the executive, with only subsequent involvement by the legislature.

Simultaneously, the seminar offered participants an opportunity to address issues of fundamental importance to democratic functioning – lawmaking and executive power. While high level exchanges between Indonesian and Australian lawmakers are increasingly commonplace, few such meetings have offered comparable depth and intensity of discussion. Over one and a half days, participants interrogated issues ranging from aspects of political culture and style to the technical aspects of vetting treaties. Of particular interest to the Indonesia participants were issues of institutional design of parliaments and committees and how this affects their activities and performance, the power of international covenants and agreements in domestic law, the actual practices of treaty-making and recent cases of treaty-making. Of particular interest to the Indonesia participants were issues of institutional design of parliaments and committees and how this affects their activities and performance, the power of international covenants and agreements in domestic law, the actual practices of treaty-making and recent cases of treaty-making. The mutually positive reception to the workshop from Australian and Indonesian participants has set the stage for a return visit from an Indonesian parliamentary
delegation. To this end, seminar participants used the last session of event to map themes for future dialogue.

Like all of CDI's activities, the seminar provided the basis for the continued strengthening of links between regional counterpart democratic institutions, and between individual legislators. As is always the case at successful seminars, an important benefit of this get-together of Indonesian and Australian parliamentarians was the informal interchange and fostering of relationships that occurred between and after the formal sessions and at the dinner hosted by the Australian Ambassador and CDI. Seminar participants got to know each and to exchange ideas and experiences as individuals involved in public life. The contacts, and often the firm friendships, that can be established on such occasions are something to be valued highly in the development of connections between the two parliaments and the two countries.

Solomon Islands 'Leadership & Accountability' Workshop

From 1-3 June 2005, the Solomon Islands Ombudsman's Office in conjunction with the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Parliamentary Strengthening Project and the Speaker's Chambers ran a workshop for parliamentarians and provincial premiers on Political Governance: Leadership and Accountability in the King Solomon Hotel Conference Room.

Designed to complement the wider 'Machinery of Government' efforts being implemented by AusAID, RAMSI and UNDP in collaboration with the Government of Solomon Islands, the workshop was designed to contribute to the improvement of political governance and practice in Solomon Islands by focusing on the challenges, opportunities and benefits of quality leadership and accountability in government. It aimed to raise awareness among participating parliamentarians and premiers of the parliamentary oversight roles of key government departments, commissions, offices and committees by explaining their structures, functions, services and obligations in relation to leadership and accountability. Simultaneously, it provided a forum for MPs to discuss democratic governance in an open, progressive and non-partisan environment. By sharing comparative knowledge of the goals and benefits of these structures and processes in both the Solomon Islands, Australia and key regional neighbours, the workshop organisers hoped to build the capacity and encourage the enthusiasm of MPs and premiers to continue to improve their leadership and accountability practices.

Accordingly, while organised around presentations designed to outline to MPs and Provincial premiers the respective roles of public servants and the transparent benefits of improved accountability mechanisms, the workshop became a vehicle for broader discussions about the nature of public leadership in the Solomon Islands.

Two main themes in these discussions are worthy of note. Firstly, many MPs claimed that their
institutions were weakened by a lack of resources. However, the PNG delegation stated that if MPs were serious about encouraging accountable parliamentary governance they were ideally placed to oversee the Executive because of their popular support. The Hon. John Hickey stated that the PNG Public Accounts Committee began operating without significant support from the Executive through budgetary allocations, but eventually demanded funding commensurate with the level of public support it received.

Second, MPs were at pains to discuss the status afforded them as public leaders, and what effect their relations with constituents and their performance in office had on the public's perception of them. Many members noted that they are marginalised by the Executive from decision making. The Legislature, they stated, has diminished in importance as a house of debate and decision-making for several reasons. Members noted that oftentimes MPs were insufficiently motivated to drive policy debates, especially where constituents pressured their representatives for material benefits directly, rather than demanding improvements to the economy or the application of uniform national policies aimed at economic growth, for example. This created an economy in which MPs were constantly torn between the specific demands of electors and the national interest. This tension became a prominent theme in the sessions about constituency relations and the disbursement of the RCDF and ROC micro-projects funds. After intensive discussions, most MPs agreed that accommodating local needs and the national interest were not mutually exclusive intentions, so long as decisions about which projects would be supported were made in the spirit of development rather than the unfair support of one group over another or exacerbation of grievances between communities in the Solomon Islands based on unequal access to state resources. Moreover, participants agreed that these funds should be expended and accounted for transparently by MPs, to avoid uneven development.

The workshop was both important and timely, especially considering the provincial elections which took place in Choiseul and Western Provinces in mid-June 2005, two weeks after the workshop, and considering the national general elections scheduled for early 2006.

Having resource personnel drawn from the region emphasised the point that many of the issues currently facing Solomon Islands MPs have been experienced to varying degrees elsewhere in the Pacific. The presentations by the Hon. John Hickey and Repe Rambe from the PNG Public Accounts Committee were particularly well received by Solomons participants, not least because the nature of the challenges besetting the PNG committee and its Solomon Islands counterpart were very similar. Sharing information, experiences and lessons learned with neighbouring countries reaffirmed the importance of regional approaches to strengthening democratic institutions.

Link to Report Page

Indonesian Political Parties Study Program
In October 2005, CDI will conduct a 10-Day study tour for invited representatives from Indonesia’s seven major political parties. The itinerary will include Sydney and Canberra, and will be centred on attendance and observation of at least one major Australian political party conference. CDI has received confirmation from the NSW division of the Liberal Party of Australia that they would welcome the attendance of such a delegation from Indonesia at their Annual conference in Sydney in October, and CDI is working towards this outcome. The Program will also call on the other major Australian political party secretariats, aiming to include specific briefings on issues such as party polling, focus groups, platform and policy development, membership, and relationship between central party organisation and branches. Observation of federal parliament, including Question time and committee hearings will also feature in the program.

Outcomes from this program towards improving political governance and strengthening political processes and practice in the partner country will include improved skills and knowledge for the visiting political party representatives on the building and maintaining of transparent and participatory internal party structures, processes and practices that are critical to strengthening the integrity and functioning of political parties and reflect the Australian Government’s concern with strengthening the integrity and functioning of partner countries political parties.

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**Responsible Parliamentary Government Course**

CDI has once again engaged the ANU's Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government (APSEG) to manage its Responsible Parliament Government Course in Canberra in September 2005. Developed by CDI over the past four years, the course is designed primarily for mid-level parliamentary officials and examines the fundamental principles and doctrines underlying the practice of responsible parliamentary government. Using the Australian Commonwealth Parliament as the principal example, the course covers issues including constitutional foundations, the main activities of parliament, and related structures for accountability and scrutiny of the administration. Officials from the parliaments of Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand, Vietnam and Papua New Guinea will participate.

This unique course has become incredibly popular, with positions being hotly contested by regional parliamentary secretariat staff. This year the course will be run by CDI’s Indonesia-based legislative specialist, Dr Stephen Sherlock.

The course contributes to strengthening political governance throughout the region, by strengthening the interpersonal networks between regional legislatures and Australia, and by contributing to skills transfer to a younger generation of regional parliamentary staffers. Thus it seeks to improve the skills and knowledge base for participating parliamentary officials on the
structures, processes and practices which underpin and enable parliamentary accountability in Australia and the region. This course responds directly to the Australian Government’s focus on strengthening political parliamentary processes and practice in partner countries.

CDI consultative Council Meeting

The 7th CDI Consultative Council convened on 23 June 2005 in Canberra and endorsed the work undertaken by CDI in the last year. During the meeting, CDI’s work plan for the coming 12 months was honed, with special emphasis on CDI’s proposed approach to engaging with parliaments and political parties strengthening. CDI will focus its activities on the foundations of public leadership in its recipient countries, especially relating to the way political parties mobilize around issues of public importance and the manner in which political leaders may encourage support for issues of national importance, or otherwise. The meeting was chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, The Hon Bruce Billson MP, and attended by Mr Gary Gray, Dr Andrew Southcott MP, Mr Geoff Walsh, Mrs Annmaree O’Keefe, Ms Evelyn Loh, Mr Dan Heldon, Dr Michael Morgan, Ms Sally Thompson, and Mr Luke Hambly.

World Meeting of Democracy Promoting Foundations

CDI will continue to contribute to global discussions on best practice in democracy promotion when Acting Director Michael Morgan flies to Stockholm, Sweden, in late August for the World Meeting of Democracy Promoting Foundations, a three day event bringing together representatives of the world’s democracy promotion organisations. Organised by The Preparatory Committee of Swedish Democracy Promoting Foundations, the workshop is designed provide an outlet for organisations involved in democracy promotion to share experiences, improve coordination and determine international best practices.

Political Parties Research

CDI has begun preparation on its major research and technical assistance program targeting political parties in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Having finalized its major research publication – Political Parties in the Pacific Islands – CDI is now moving ahead with its preparations for a forum on political parties in Papua New Guinea, planned for the end of the year. The centre has engaged a Researcher, Ms Louise Baker, to undertake preparatory research and analysis. Acting Director Michael Morgan will fly to Port Moresby in August for meetings with political party representatives.
to make arrangements for the program.

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**Hungarian Secretary of State visits CDI**

On 8 June, CDI Acting Director Michael Morgan met Hungarian Secretary of State, Dr. András Hajdu at the ANU. Hungary is in the process of establishing the International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) and the Secretary of State was interested to meet with CDI to discuss its work in South East Asia and the Pacific Islands and how this might influence ICDT’s own approach to democracy promotion.

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**Solomon Islands: Review of the Ombudsman’s Act**

Solomon Islands' Ombudsman John Smith Pitabelama (left) and Former deputy Australian Commonwealth Ombudsman and current CDI Associate Dr John Wood review the first draft of the new Solomon Islands' Ombudsman's Act in Honiara in early July.

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**UNDP Regional Workshop to Strengthen Parliaments in the Pacific**

*Henrik Lindroth, Programme Manager, UNDP Governance for Livelihoods Development (GOLD) project*

The UNDP Pacific Sub-Regional Centre, with support from AusAID, and in collaboration with the Parliament of Fiji organised a regional workshop on “Parliamentary Library Improvement in the Pacific Island Country Legislatures” 19-22nd July at the premises of the Fiji Parliament.

The workshop was opened by the Honourable Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of the Fiji Parliament, and attended by Clerks of Parliaments and Parliamentary Library staff from across the Pacific region.

Weaknesses in the structure and functioning of Parliamentary libraries were then identified as a key factor hindering the development of Parliamentary efficiency. This workshop, therefore sought to:

- Enhance lawmaking effectiveness through skills improvement of Parliamentary library staff
- Clarify the relationship between parliamentary processes and library procedures to determine actions required to improve parliamentary library services
- Encourage parliamentarians to utilize library services by illustrating the benefits in doing so

The major outcome of the workshop was the unanimous endorsement of a communiqué that
outlines follow-up recommendations.

In collaboration with national parliaments and other partner organisations, UNDP has committed to support training courses, experience sharing seminars and policy analysis workshops to improve the capacity and effectiveness of Parliaments, at both the national and regional level.

This initiative was a direct outcome of the UNDP and Forum Secretariat organised regional seminar on “Parliamentary Strengthening in Forum Island Country Legislatures”, held in Apia in April this year, in which CDI Acting Director Michael Morgan took part.

UNDP Pacific Sub-Regional Centre

^ Book Review - The UN Role in Promoting Democracy

The June 2005 issue of Democratization includes a review of The UN Role in Promoting Democracy, which was published by UNU Press in 2004 and co-edited by former CDI Director Mr Roland Rich.

Full Review

Link to Democratization

^ Feature Articles

Governance, Corruption, and Ethics in the Pacific

This article entitled ‘Governance, Corruption, and Ethics in the Pacific’, was written by Elise Huffer and published in The Contemporary Pacific 17:1, pp. 118-140, 2005. The governance agenda came to the Pacific in the 1990s as a “polite” way of dealing with corruption. It originated from the World Bank’s assessment that a failing and inadequate political environment was the underlying cause for sub-Saharan Africa’s unsuccessful response to structural adjustment reform. In the Pacific, the governance agenda has been taken up by the region’s main bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as by international agencies. They have been concerned about the region’s lack of sustained economic development (particularly, its lack of consistent growth); its rising political instability; the increasingly visible mismanagement of public funds in many countries; and an upsurge in the so-called ideology of traditionalism. The recipe put forward to cure these ills, in the Pacific as in Africa, has been to promote liberal democracy, the rule of law, government workforce reduction (“right-sizing”), and more open markets.

Full Article

Link to The Contemporary Pacific

^ Democracy in South Asia: Getting beyond the Structure–Agency Dichotomy

This article entitled ‘Democracy in South Asia: Getting beyond the Structure–Agency Dichotomy’, was written by Katharine Adeney and Andrew Wyatt, and was published in Political Studies 52: pp. 11-18, 2004. The abstract is as follows:
With reference to South Asia, we argue that recourse to the conventional structuralist and transition accounts of democratisation sustains an unhelpful dichotomy. Those approaches tend towards either determinism or agent-driven contingency. In contrast, an alternative approach that recognises the relevance of both structure and agency is proposed. In certain circumstances, human agency opens up the possibility of the relatively rapid transformation of structures. In particular, there are periods of political openness when structures are malleable, and individuals, or individuals acting collectively, are able to reshape structures. Decolonisation both constituted a moment of transition and opened up the possibility of structural change in the context of enhanced elite agency. For the purposes of comparison, the discussion covers the three cases of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Particular attention is drawn to political parties and the structure of ethnic diversity as leading explanatory variables.

Full Article

Link to Political Studies