Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the fourth issue of CDI. News for 2007. This issue highlights CDI’s 2007 Annual Address, delivered by the Tongan pro-democracy representative ‘Akilisi Pohiva. Tonga is the only independent state in the South Pacific that is constitutionally not a democracy, despite increasing pressure both domestically and internationally for political reform. CDI hopes that Mr Pohiva’s address on ‘Tonga’s Quest for Democracy’ will help to highlight the situation in Tonga and the ways in which peaceful constitutional change may be achieved.

More information on this event and other recent CDI activities are detailed in the following pages.

CDI’s work combines technical assistance and capacity building programs, networking, and interpersonal and knowledge exchange, including the dissemination of CDI’s original research on democracy and its institutions. Our focus countries comprise Indonesia and Timor-Leste in South East Asia and Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in Melanesia.

CDI’s central goal is to support these regional focus countries in strengthening their political parties & systems of parliamentary governance.

Accordingly, CDI works to:

- Improve the operation and understanding of parliamentary machinery by members of parliament and parliamentary staff in focus countries
- Strengthen political parties in focus countries through improving the knowledge and skills of members and officials of political parties
- Extend networks in the region between Australian parliamentarians, political party officials, and parliamentary staff and their counterparts from focus countries

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

CDI. News will keep you informed periodically of our activities and events, and you can access this information at any time by visiting our website: www.cdi.anu.edu.au.

Benjamin Reilly | CDI Director
The 2007 CDI Annual Address

"Tonga's Quest for Democracy"

The 2007 CDI Annual Address was delivered by the leader of Tonga’s pro-democracy movement, The Hon ‘Akilisi Pohiva, to an audience of 100 people at the Australian National University on 24 April 2007. Mr Pohiva, who is facing sedition charges in Tonga, has been a member of Tonga’s Legislative Assembly for 21 consecutive years and is one of the founding members of the Human Rights and Pro-Democracy Movement. He has been a long-standing campaigner for democracy in Tonga, the subject of his CDI address.

The past year has seen increasing demands for political change in Tonga, the only independent state in the Pacific Islands region which is constitutionally not a democracy. The Tongan political system is a form of absolute monarchy, with executive power resting with the King and his appointed Cabinet. Only nine of the 32 members of parliament are popularly elected - including Mr Pohiva, who gained the highest vote share of all the “People’s Representatives” at the last election.

In October 2006, a National Committee on Political Reform, which was supported by funding from Australia and New Zealand, recommended sweeping political reforms, including increasing the number of elected MPs from 9 to 17. This recommendation was opposed by the Tongan government, and the postponement of debate in parliament on the Committee’s report was followed by protests and riots on the streets of Nuku’alofa.

Mr Pohiva’s speech detailed the history of attempts by the democracy movement to reform Tonga’s system of government, starting in the 1970s. He also examined the ongoing attempts to silence critics of the government and the aristocracy, and the way the November riots have been used to justify further postponement of the political reform agenda, which remains in limbo with no agreed timetable for introduction of the National Committee’s recommendations.

Mr Pohiva ended his talk with an eloquent plea for freedom for the people of Tonga, who unlike their brothers and sisters elsewhere in the Pacific still cannot choose or change their government through free elections.
CDI's Policy Paper Series 2007
"The Indonesian Parliament after Two Elections: What has Really Changed?"

Dr Stephen Sherlock

On 4 May 2007, CDI Associate and Indonesia specialist Dr Stephen Sherlock launched his latest report entitled "The Indonesian Parliament after Two Elections: What has Really Changed?" at the ANU, as the first in our Policy Paper Series for 2007. Dr Sherlock’s report follows from a study on the structure and operation of the Indonesian Parliament (DPR) published by CDI in 2003. Since that time, the DPR has been transformed into a much more important player in Indonesian politics, while constitutional changes mean that the President is now chosen by the electorate in a direct popular election.

These reforms have fundamentally altered the relationship between the DPR and the Presidency, turning Indonesia from something of a hybrid parliamentary-presidential system into a more straightforward presidential style of government with a clearer separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches.

Taking this new situation as a starting point, Dr Sherlock’s paper explores two main questions. First, what changes have these new structures meant for the functioning of DPR today? Second, how have the new constitutional relationship between the branches of government in Indonesia changed the DPR’s role in law and policy-making and in Indonesian politics in general?

Click on this link to access Dr Sherlock’s paper on the CDI website:

CDI Deputy Director part of evaluation of UNDP Pacific Parliamentary Support Projects

CDI is assisting the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Pacific Centre's evaluation of the UNDP's parliamentary support projects in the Pacific - in Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Fiji.

The evaluation provides an opportunity to assess the performance of each project as well as to analyse the common challenges facing such projects and to identify lessons learned across the region. The evaluation also provides a starting point for identifying regional level activities which can help to strengthen Pacific Island legislatures. The involvement of UNDP, like that of CDI, in parliamentary strengthening is premised on the belief that effectively operating parliaments are essential to ensuring stable democracy in the region.

Led by Professor Robert Nakamura, Director of the Center for Legislative Development, at the State University of New York, Albany, and including CDI Deputy Director, Mr Quinton Clements, the evaluation commenced in mid-April 2007. Mr Clements, who undertook the original legislative needs assessments for Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, joined the evaluation team as Pacific Parliamentary Specialist for the Fiji and Solomon Islands evaluations.

In April 2007 the evaluation team spent one week each in Fiji and Solomon Islands meeting with key stakeholders in each country including, in the case of Solomon Islands, the Speaker and Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff, senior government officials, NGOs and the media.

As the Parliament of Fiji was dissolved following the military coup of 5 December 2006, in Suva the evaluation team considered the future of the project in an environment where Parliament is no longer operating and its staff are being redeployed to other government agencies.

In the case of Solomon Islands, the project evaluation will feed into the design of a proposed phase 2 of the Project following its current expiry date of August 2007.

Click on this link to visit our website for more details:
Electoral Reform in Papua New Guinea

CDI hosted forums on electoral reform in Papua New Guinea in April as part of the ANU’s annual PNG Updates.

Chaired by CDI Director Ben Reilly, the forums featured a presentation by PNG political scientist Dr Joe Ketan on “The Use and Abuse of Electoral Development (“Slush”) Funds in Papua New Guinea”. Dr Ketan’s presentation looked at the history of slush funds, the evolving political culture of PNG and the way that slush funds had assumed increased importance in elections over the years, but how they had also become a source of controversy and abuse. He suggested several possible reforms to the funding mechanism based upon his preliminary research on the subject.

Other speakers covering the forthcoming 2007 PNG elections included Peter Aitsi from the Media Council of PNG; Paul Barker from the Institute for National Affairs; Lawrence Kalinoe from the Law Reform Commission and Enaha Kwa from the University of PNG.

The Updates were held in front of large audiences at the University of PNG and in East New Britain province. Click on this link for more detail:

Web Page

Australia’s Public Diplomacy

The Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade invited CDI to a public hearing in May 2007 looking into the nature and conduct of Australia’s public diplomacy. The Committee, chaired by Senator Marise Payne, is investigating the effectiveness of Australia’s current public diplomacy programs and activities in achieving the objectives of the Australian Government; the opportunities for enhancing public diplomacy both in Australia and overseas; and possible reforms to the conduct of public diplomacy within and between relevant Commonwealth agencies and State agencies. CDI Director Dr Ben Reilly gave evidence to the inquiry on 15 May regarding CDI’s training, networking and research activities, their alignment with other Australian agencies, and their contribution to Australia’s overall public diplomacy efforts.

Click on this link for more information:

Web Page

CDI sponsors Solomon Islands participation in Public Accounts Committee conference

The Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) held its 9th Biennial Conference from 11 - 14 April 2007 at Parliament House in Canberra. Hosted by the Australian Parliament’s Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, the theme of the conference was “Challenges facing contemporary Public Accounts Committees”.

CDI sponsored the participation of a delegation from Solomon Islands. The three participants were:

- Hon. Fred Fono MP, Leader of the Opposition & Member, Public Accounts Committee, National Parliament of Solomon Islands
- Mr Floyd Augustine Fatai, Auditor General; and
- Mr David Kusilifu, Public Accounts Committee Secretariat.

CDI Deputy Director Quinton Clements accompanied the delegation. Click on this link for more detail on our website:

Web Page

CDI Political Party Development Course Concludes in Canberra

CDI’s flagship Political Party Development course (PPD) was held in May in Canberra, featuring 18 participants from Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Malaysia.

A full report on the PPD course will be included in the next CDI Newsletter. Click on this link to visit the PPD Web page:

PPD Web Page
International Visitors

National Democratic Institute: W. Paul Rowland, the National Democratic Institute’s Regional Representative in Indonesia, visited Canberra to discuss areas of future cooperation between CDI and NDI, who already work closely on political party strengthening programs.

Asian Center for the Study of Democracy: CDI hosted a visit on 13 April 2007 from the Chairman/President of the Asian Center for the Study of Democracy and the Philippine Council for Foreign Relations, Ambassador Jose V. Romero, Jr. PhD. Ambassador Romero met with CDI Deputy Director, Quinton Clements, and discussed political party development in the Philippines.

Forthcoming

CDI Organises Workshop for Bougainville Parliament

At the request of the Speaker of the Bougainville House of Representatives, Hon. Nicholas Peniai, CDI is organising a training workshop for Members of the Autonomous Bougainville Government House of Representatives. The focus of the training is on the role of parliamentary committees, with an emphasis on engaging the community through committee work. The workshop will be held in Buka, Bougainville Autonomous Region in late June.

The workshop aims to assist the House of Representatives with ensuring that its parliamentary committees can perform their proper roles. Members will gain a greater appreciation of the value of parliamentary committees as a means of ‘taking Parliament to the people’, thus enabling them to be better informed about community views; of their role in providing a bridge between constituents’ concerns and the broader community interest; of promoting public debate; and of scrutinising the Executive and contributing towards better government through a more informed administration and policy making process.

Mr Peter Loney, former Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, Legislative Assembly of Victoria, will convene the workshop on behalf of CDI.

Click on this link for more details on our website:

Media Coverage

Recent CDI media contributions to debate and analysis of governance issues in the Asia-Pacific included:

10 May | Ben Reilly spoke to Radio New Zealand about Australia’s international aid priorities as set out in the 2007 federal budget.

27 March | Ben Reilly spoke to Associated Press and ABC Radio about the problems in Timor-Leste and the history of preferential voting in Australia.

Feature Articles, Publications, Events, & Links

Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders in Washington

The Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders, held in May, is an opportunity for the United States and more than 20 Pacific Island governments to consult with each other on a wide range of security and economic issues, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In her opening remarks May 7 in Washington, Rice said the United States has “a special kinship” with its Pacific neighbours. She called 2007 “the year of the Pacific,” and said throughout the year the United States will be focusing on efforts in the region to increase stability, good governance and economic development through closer political, economic and cultural ties.

The secretary said the United States will be announcing a number of public diplomacy and economic initiatives at the conference, including new democracy grants in the region to build capacity in the nongovernmental sector and...
projects focused on democratic processes, civil rights and rule of law.

Rice also expressed the United States’ deep concern about the unlawful overthrow of the freely elected government in Fiji in December 2006.

“We are very pleased that Pacific countries have spoken with one voice through the Pacific Islands Forum in calling for the speedy return of democracy to Fiji,” she said. “The Pacific cannot devolve into an area where strong men unilaterally decide the fates of their country and destabilize democratic foundations of their neighbours.”

The full text of Rice’s remarks and more details on U.S. engagement in the Pacific Islands region are available on the US State Department’s Web site, click on this link to access: