Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first issue of CDI.News for 2009. This issue highlights CDI’s work with politicians and parliaments in both the Asia-Pacific region and further afield. 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

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The 10th Annual CDI Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 9 to 11 December 2008. This was the first time the Dialogue was held in Vanuatu and the fifth time it has been held outside Australia. This Dialogue was organised in conjunction with the National Parliament of Vanuatu with the support of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and AusAID.

Parliamentarians from Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Australia, as well representatives from the suspended parliament of Fiji, met to discuss the role that parliamentarians can have in addressing political, economic and social development issues. The purpose of the meeting was to open a dialogue on some of the key challenges facing democratic governance in the Pacific region in order to strengthen it. It also provided an opportunity to look at aspects of parliamentary practice in other parliaments in our region. Whilst all share a common parliamentary heritage – that of Westminster – parliamentary practice and procedure has been modified and adapted to suit local conditions in each of our countries.

Parliamentarians can and ought to have a critical role in scrutinising and contributing to the development agendas, resource allocations, and policy making of their countries. The meeting reviewed trends in sustainable development in the region and examined the interaction of parliamentarians with constituents, local communities, local government, and other stakeholders in effecting a shift towards more sustainable approaches to development.

This year the Dialogue had a special focus on Vanuatu. This gave parliamentarians from elsewhere in the region the opportunity to learn about the way parliamentary democracy works in Vanuatu and some of the development challenges it faces. Vanuatu held national elections in September 2008 and since the inauguration of the ninth parliament, the new government of Prime Minister Natapei has faced four motions of no confidence. There was much discussion among the participants about the effect this approach to politics has on political stability and economic development in Vanuatu.

Like all of CDI’s activities, the Dialogue provided the basis for the continued strengthening of links between parliaments in our region, and between individual parliamentarians. An important benefit of this get-together of Pacific Island and Australian parliamentarians was the informal interchange and fostering of relationships that occur between and after the formal sessions and at the social functions. 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 our parliaments and our countries.

Click on this link for more on our website:
At the request of the President of the National Parliament of Timor-Leste, Mr Fernando Lasama de Araujo, CDI organised a workshop for Members of the Working Group of the National Parliament tasked with reviewing theRules of Procedure. This was done in conjunction with the Department of the Legislative Council, Parliament of New South Wales, and with the support of the International Republican Institute (IRI). The Working Group is chaired by Ms Maria Teresinha Viegas and includes representatives from all party benches in the National Parliament.

CDI Deputy Director Quinton Clements, together with Ms Lynn Lovelock, Clerk of the NSW Legislative Council and Mr Stephen Frappell, Director, Procedure, NSW Legislative Council, convened the workshop.

The aim of the workshop was to assist the Working Group in undertaking its review and revision of the Parliament’s Rules of Procedure or Standing Orders. The focus was on examining the current Rules of Procedure and considering best practice from elsewhere. Seventeen Members of Parliament participated in the workshop. During the two day program, participants considered six key thematic areas relating to the Standing Orders - the sources of authority for the Standing Orders and general principles relating to parliamentary practice and procedure, the rules of debate, committee procedures, questions to the government, powers and immunities, and the passage of legislation.

Following the workshop Ms Lovelock and Mr Clements will continue to assist the Working Group with this review. It is expected that the Working Group will complete its review by early 2009 so that their recommendations can then be considered by the Plenary.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

Challenges & Prospects of Democratic Governance in Southeast

CDI Director Ben Reilly participated in an international conference on “Challenges and Prospects of Democratic Governance in Southeast Asia” at the University of Heidelberg in January 2009. The conference focused on the variegated patterns of democratization and democratic rollback observed in Southeast Asia over the past two decades, bringing together scholars from around the world with expertise in issues of democratization, governance and Southeast Asian politics. Professor Reilly provided a paper on “Political Reform and the Demise of Consociationalism in Southeast Asia”.

The conference was unusual in addressing questions of Southeast Asian politics from a theoretically-informed and explicitly comparative angle. The proceedings of the conference are now being prepared for submission to a major university press.

Click on this link for more on our website including a copy of Prof Reilly’s paper and the conference program:
CDI Consultative Council Disbands

The CDI Consultative Council has been disbanded following a decision by the Australian Government to streamline CDI’s accountability arrangements.

In his advice to Council members, AusAid Director-General Bruce Davis noted that: “Over the past few years, CDI has made significant progress in its work, focus and direction. CDI is increasingly placing itself at the forefront of international thinking on democratic processes and work on political parties ...

The Consultative Council has played an important role in helping to consolidate the work of CDI; however, during your time on the Consultative Council, CDI has matured as an organisation and there is now less need for the nature of the guidance that has been provided by the Consultative Council. On this basis, the Australian Government has decided to discontinue the role of the Consultative Council. CDI will remain subject to the oversight of the Australian National University.”

CDI would like to thank all members of the Consultative Council for their work, particularly Council Chair Tony Eggleton AO CVO for his invaluable guidance and counsel over the past three years. CDI intends to remain closely engaged with Tony and other Council members on an individual basis in coming years.

Australia Assists Bangladesh Elections

Australia’s Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, the Hon Bob McMullan MP, was an observer at the breakthrough Bangladesh elections in December 2008. The elections have led to the formation of a new single-party government headed by Sheik Hasina, whose secular Awami League party won 230 out of a possible 300 seats in parliament.

The elections represent a major political advance for Bangladesh. As Mr McMullan notes in the attached op-ed on the subject, “The legitimacy of this election, and broader issue of a transition to democracy, matters to Australia and the world. If it is successfully managed, Bangladesh will be one of the largest democracies in the world. With a population of 140 million, its future matters. Furthermore, it will join countries such as Indonesia and Turkey as large, peaceful and moderate Islamic democracies.”

CDI has been assisting the Bangladesh parliament over the past year. Five Bangladeshi officials attended CDI’s 2008 Effective Parliamentary Committee Inquiries course, and we are currently looking at ways in which we may be able to extend our parliamentary assistance work to Bangladesh, possibly in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute, which organised the election observation.

Click on this link for more detail on our website including the observers’ report and Mr McMullan’s op-ed:

CDI @ the ANU Pacific Update

CDI Director Ben Reilly was the lead speaker at the opening of the Australian National University’s annual Pacific Islands Update in Canberra. Prof Reilly spoke on the subject of ‘Political Change in Melanesia’, discussing the increasingly ambitious reforms to electoral, parliamentary and political party institutions that are currently taking place across the Pacific region. Other speakers on the panel included Jenny Howard-Jones of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Dr Jon Fraenkel of the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia project, and Dr Peter Larmour of the ANU’s Pacific Policy Project. The Update is an annual public event which covers a wide range of issues relating to the development of the Pacific Islands – especially Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:
Just Completed

CDI Sponsors 4th Residential Summer School for Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees

The Public Sector Governance and Accountability Research Centre at La Trobe University in Melbourne held its 4th annual Summer School for Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees in February 2009. The course was sponsored by the World Bank Institute, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Centre for Democratic Institutions, and ran from 8 to 14 February 2009.

The Program focused on building effective Public Accounts Committees as the Parliament’s primary means of financial scrutiny of the Executive. It combined both the theoretical and the practical, with a five-day training course in Geelong, and visits to the Parliament of Victoria in Melbourne.

The Summer School is aimed at Chairs and Members of Public Accounts Committees, Auditors-General and Audit Office staff, and Public Accounts Committees staff. Participants from a range of countries including Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia were invited to participate.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

2nd Annual CDI & NSW Parliament Effective Parliamentary Committee Inquiries Course

The 2nd annual CDI & NSW Parliament Effective Parliamentary Committee Inquiries Course was held at Parliament House in Sydney from 16 to 20 February 2009. The course, developed by CDI in partnership with the Parliament of New South Wales, was supported by the World Bank Institute and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The course was aimed specifically at parliamentary committee staff, focusing on the practical aspects of parliamentary committee work, and was convened by CDI Deputy Director Quinton Clements, and Steven Reynolds, the Clerk Assistant of Committees and the Usher of the Black Rod in the Legislative Council of the New South Wales Parliament.

20 parliamentary officials involved in supporting committees from 14 parliaments in 13 countries around the
region participated – Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Samoa.

The course program followed the process of conducting a committee inquiry from the beginning with the issuing of terms of reference, through to the drafting of the final report and its tabling in Parliament. Topics covered included planning and budgeting for an inquiry, collecting evidence, processing written submissions, conducting public hearings and analysing the evidence received.

The program was designed to be very interactive and practically oriented. Participants not only learnt from the presenters but were encouraged to learn about committee work in each other’s respective parliaments. The group undertook a number of exercises, both in small groups and as individuals, including a mock public hearing in which each participant played a specific role.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

PNG to boost number of female MPs

ABC News Report 22 January 2009 By PNG correspondent Geoff Thompson:

Papua New Guinea is taking steps to boost female representation in parliament. Since PNG gained independence in 1975, fewer than five women have been elected.

For the first time, a law is being used that will allow three women to take up nominated seats on the floor of parliament along side PNG’s sole female politician, Dame Carol Kidu.

“I’m retiring in 2012 and so it’s really critical that I make sure there is an exit strategy that ensures that there are women on the floor,” she said.

The women will be treated as independents and will have the same rights as their elected peers, but cannot take part in a vote of no confidence.

Almost 100 applicants are being screened for the three available positions, with the aim of taking up the roles in March.

Click on this link for more on the ABC news Website: