

Vic & Bev Romanyshyn

To The Australian Government AID Review Panel.

My wife and I taught science in PNG, one year at Keravat National High School and one year at schools in Lae, from 1972 to 1973. We returned to PNG at the beginning of June, 2010, as volunteers to teach chemistry and biology to the grade 12 students attending Keravat National High School. This stint of volunteer service came about after my retirement from over 30 years of classroom instruction and several years with our provincial government's education department reviewing science curriculum and developing textbook resources for high school science programs in our province.

Based on our recent experience at Keravat, and comparing it to the quality of education being delivered back in the early 70's, it is our view that there has been a drastic decline in educational standards and effective delivery of schooling in PNG. Equally appalling is that the country is no longer looking after its gifted and talented students. We fully endorse the recommendation made recently by the PNG Minister of Education and Secretary of Education that the previous National High Schools who used to produce the top professional people for the country should be made into selective Schools of Excellence. It appears that this will happen as the Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, has put aside money in the Budget for the improvement of these schools.

To ensure that these schools are restored into Schools of Excellence we would encourage direct support from AusAID. Given the sad state of the school buildings, particularly at Keravat they will need help. These schools have been allowed to deteriorate over the years so now major work is required to restore them. Some buildings will have to be pulled down and rebuilt. Financial assistance as well as construction expertise and monitoring from AusAID would be most valuable in the completion of these renovations.

In addition, we suggest that AusAID offer to help the PNG Education Department to train the professionals required to teach in these schools in the years ahead. Over the past 20 years the standard of education has slowly fallen in PNG for a number of reasons as identified by Barbara Short, who has experience teaching in PNG and who has also submitted a similar proposal to your organization. Given the late introduction of students to English, lack of school resources, and the inadequate training of teachers in effective pedagogy and general knowledge in courses taught we feel that much can be done to improve in these areas for future student success in high school.

We are endorsing Barbara Short's suggestion that the Australian Government aim at something concrete that they can do as a form of aid which can be seen by everyone. The offer to rebuild four National High school, Sogeri, Keravat, Aiyura and Passam, which are now in a terrible state of decay, would be a wonderful legacy for the Australian Government. Along with the physical restoration of these schools would come an obligation by the Australian Government to offer help with professional development to improve teaching skills and area expertise for teachers that would staff these schools.

As Mrs. Short has suggested, AusAID could organize to have these schools introduce a syllabus from Australia or Canada which would bring PNG education for the gifted up to world standards. Delivery of such a syllabus would demand that schools be put online so the students can have access to the Internet. Schools would need to be supplied with computers and teachers and students taught how to

use them. The libraries would also have to be replenished and science laboratories would need to be re-equipped. Teachers would have to be trained on how to use this equipment. The supply of course textbooks would be essential.

The current educational system in PNG does not graduate students trained to a level that can cope with university courses which has dire consequences for the future of PNG. Direct AusAID support at this time can be crucial to restoring some level of respectability and quality to an educational system in decay. The future of the country really depends on this upgrade to which AusAID could contribute so much.

Yours truly,

Victor & Beverly Romanyshyn
(Retired Science Teachers)