

Aussie News

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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION



ABUJA

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High Commissioner's Message



It is a great pleasure to write the welcome message for our second edition of the Australian High Commission Abuja Newsletter.

It has been a busy first six months of 2011 with the successful hosting of the Australia Day function at the Residence on 26 January, the staging of an Anzac Day dawn service in Abuja in April, a well attended International Women's Day function at the Residence and the holding of an Australian Film Festival in honour of Reconciliation Week, featuring the Australian cinema musical comedy, *Bran Nue Dae*, at Silverbird Cinema in Abuja on 31 May.

There have been some very good outcomes in our efforts to engage with the West and Central African region more generally. I was honoured to present credentials in Niamey in January as the first Australian Ambassador to be accredited to the Republic of Niger. I accompanied the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to La Francophonie, Bill Fisher, on his successful visit to the Republics of Gabon, Cameroon and Congo in March. And Ambassador Uhomoibhi, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria, was hosted by the Australian Government on a rewarding bilateral visit to Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne with a delegation of senior MFA officials. More recently, the Republic of Congo Minister for Environment, H.E Mr Djombo, conducted a very successful official visit to Australia in June 2011. This followed the visit of H.E Pierre Oba, Minister for Mines, Republic of Congo, in 2010.

Welcome news was received following the 2011 Federal Budget in Canberra with the announcement of an increase in development assistance to Africa of 45 percent. During 2011, 29 Nigerians will study on long and short development scholarships in Australia, which is an impressive increase on previous years. There was also an encouraging increase in applications for scholarships received from the Republics of Benin, the Gambia, Niger, Congo, Gabon and Cameroon.

We are delighted at the continuing involvement of the Australian mining community in promoting Australian mining interests in West Africa. In support of this, all the Australian Ambassadors/High Commissions situated in Africa were very pleased to attend Mining Indaba in Cape Town in February, including hosting a function for Mining Ministers of the countries in our accreditation.

We also would like to encourage our Aussie compatriots living and working in Nigeria and the region register with the High Commission. Details of how to register are included in this newsletter. We give a special thanks to the terrific contribution of the Australian wardens who support the High Commission's efforts in far flung places. Some of their activities are featured in this newsletter.

With our best wishes
Ian McConville

Australia Day: 26 January 2011

Australia Day is the national day of Australia. Traditionally celebrated annually on 26 January, the day commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove in 1788. This year, the High Commissioner hosted a reception on 27 January at his residence which was well attended by Australians living in Abuja, representatives of the Nigerian government and people, members of the local diplomatic core, and other friends of Australia. During his speech, the High Commis-

sioner talked of the growing relationship between Australia and Nigeria, sentiments echoed by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dr Martin Uhomoibhi, during this address. The event was sponsored by Wayne Litton who provided a fine selection of Australian wines for the occasion and the setting of the residence with numerous aboriginal art paintings formed an appropriate backdrop.



The High Commissioner giving an interview for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) at the occasion of the Australia Day function

AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS LIST



Our Australia Day Achievement Medallions 2011...

Every year on 26 January, as part of Australia Day commemorations, the Secretary of the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade presents a small number of achievement awards to members of the department who demonstrated exemplary service to Australia's diplomatic interests during the year. On 26 January 2011, the Secretary awarded the High Commissioner, Ian McConville, one of just three individual Silver Achievement Medallions, the highest award presented for the year. The Secretary

said the award was given "for outstanding service in exceptional circumstances and for advancing Australia's strategic goals during the tragic Sundance plane crash in the Republic of Congo in June 2010, and its aftermath." The High Commissioner, as part of the department's Emergency Response Team, received a Bronze Achievement Medallion "for outstanding service in exceptional circumstances".



...and one of the Certificates!

Celebrate what's great!



Australian High Commission Team celebrating



Ian McConville, spouse Libby McCutchan and Stuart Mooney with some of the Australian women who attended

International Women's Day (8 March) is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. The first International Women's Day event was run in 1911, one century ago!

On this occasion, our High Commission hosted a special International Women's Day luncheon on 3 March 2011. The lunch was attended by contacts from UN agencies, local NGOs, business and the professions, selected diplomatic missions and the media. We were very pleased that the wife of Nigeria's Foreign Minister, Madame Awuneba Ajumogobia, accepted our invitation and agreed to deliver a short speech as our Guest of honour.

International Women's Day



Libby McCutchan & Mrs Ajumogobia cutting the Women's Day Cake!

The Minister of Women's Affairs, Hon. Mrs Josephine Anenih, was unavailable but was represented by a senior

official within the Ministry, Mrs Joy Ajulu.

Approximately 40 mainly women guests attended the lunch. However, a few honoured men also made it to the lunch, such as Mr Galadima representing the Fistula Foundation of Nigeria, whose NGO works tirelessly to address the problem of Fistula that impacts on women across the region. The High Commission has previously funded this NGO based in Kano and will continue to do so this year.

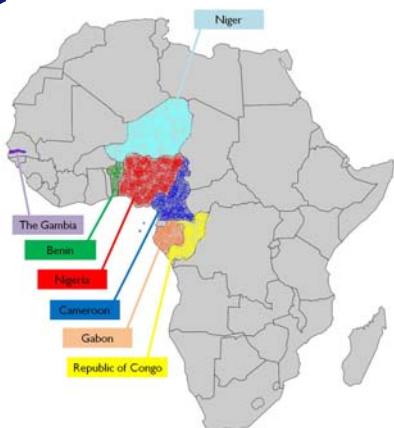
The event received media coverage in the Daily Trust, a reputable Nigerian daily based in Abuja.



Presentation of Credentials: Republic of Niger

Ambassador McConville presented credentials to His Excellency, General Salou Djibo, President of the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy of the Republic of Niger, on 25 January 2011. This was the first time that an Australian Ambassador had presented credentials in Ni-

me, and underlined the potential for relations to grow with increased mining investment in Niger. Also accompanying the Ambassador on this visit was Mr Greg Walker, Chairman, Australia Africa Mining Business Council and Mr Stuart Mooney, Second Secretary.



Our Countries of Accreditation: The Republic of Niger



The Australian High Commission in Abuja is responsible for managing Australia's diplomatic relations with a number of countries, namely Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo and The Gambia. In this edition, we would like to give our readers an overview on Australia's engagement with the Republic of Niger.



Facts and Figures:

- Land size: 1,267,000 square km (roughly half the size of Western Australia)
- Population: 15.2m (official estimate, 2010)
- Capital city: Niamey
- Religion: predominantly muslim
- Ethnic groups: Hausa, Djerma-Songhai, Fulani, Tuareg, Kanouri amongst others
- Major languages: French (official), Arabic, Hausa, Djerma, Fulfulde, Tamasheq and others
- Climate: Arid tropical, generally hot and dry weather, about 80% of the country covered by desert
- Domestic economy: Driven by subsistence farming
- Main exports: Uranium; Niger's uranium deposits are among the world's largest

Recent Niger Politics

Approximately one year after a military coup that toppled then President Mamadou Tandja, the Republic of Niger held a peaceful presidential run-off on 12 March 2011 to return the country to democratic rule. The elections, which were widely judged as free and transparent, saw opposition leader Mahamadou Issoufou as the winner with almost 58% of the vote.

Diplomatic relations:

Australia established diplomatic relations with Niger on 7 May 2009. In addition to presenting credentials in February, Mr McConville, accompanied by Second Secretary Stuart Mooney, travelled to Niamey to attend the investiture of the democratically elected President Mahamadou Issoufou on 7 April 2011.

Australian business interests:

There are several known Australian companies with mining interests in Niger, mainly focusing on uranium (e.g. Paladin Energy, Artemis Resources Limited, Oklo Uranium Limited, West African Resources Limited) and gold (e.g. Middle Island Resources Limited).

Australian humanitarian and development engagement:

In 2010-11, Australia provided \$10.5 million in humanitarian assistance to address food shortages in Niger resulting from severe drought. This is in addition to \$3.5 million that Australia provided in 2009-10. This included \$1.5 million granted through the World Food Program (WFP) and \$2 million through Australian non-government organisations (Caritas and World Vision) to assist vulner-

able communities in Niger with health and nutrition needs.

In 2010-11, Australia's overall contribution to WFP through the Strategic Partnership Agreement is \$45 million, of which almost two-thirds will be directed to programs in Africa.

Niger is now eligible for assistance through the Australia-Africa Partnerships Facility, which provides Australian Capacity Building in sectors of agreed priority. We were pleased that an officer from the Niger MFA attended a trade policy course in Canberra in May 2011, and we anticipate Niger being awarded three short term Australia Awards in the mining sector for 2012. The Niger Minister for Mines attended the Australian Ambassador's lunch in Indaba in Cape Town in February, 2011.

The Australian High Commission's Development Cooperation Programs

Each year, the Australian High Commission in Abuja provides direct funding to grassroots organisations to support development projects in communities throughout Nigeria and increasingly to our other countries of accreditation.

We have three small grants programs: the Human Rights Small Grants Scheme (HRSGS) managed by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) in consultation with DFAT and Australia's network of Overseas Diplomatic Posts; the Direct Aid Program (DAP) and the Australia Africa Community Grant Scheme (AACGS), both of which are ad-

ministered by the High Commission in Abuja on behalf of AusAID.

The 2010-11 financial year was a very productive year. The High Commission has provided AUD245,000 through DAP to a total of 22 projects and AUD189,000 through AACGS to three projects covering a diverse range of activities including in the water & sanitation, health, education and environmental conservation sectors and other poverty alleviation initiatives.

Our project funding is a small part of the bilateral relationship between Australia and Nigeria, but for those of us working at the High

Commission, it is amongst the most personally rewarding work that we do. And the Australian High Commission in Abuja is always looking for new and worthwhile projects to support and welcomes funding applications from Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and the Republic of Congo.

DAP Contact:

Latonia Dabiri-Mpamugo

Email: latonia.j.dabiri@dfat.gov.au

Tel: +234 9 461 2780

**Mail: Australian High Commission
Oakland Centre
48 Aguiyi Ironsi Street
Maitama, Abuja
Nigeria**

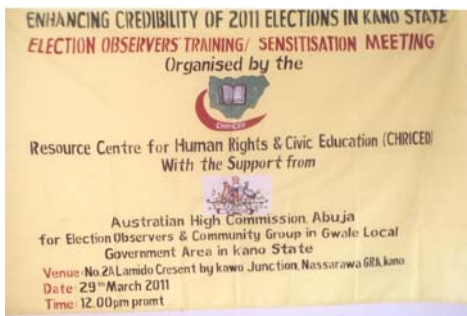


Commissionings of previous projects

The High Commissioner went to Buea region in western Cameroon to inaugurate the BONAVADA Water Rehabilitation Project on 22 February 2011. This project benefits several communities in the region with the provision of potable running water. Pictured is High Commissioner after been given the honorific title of "Mola Njie", which in Bakweri means "road" or "pathfinder" by the Traditional Rulers. Also in attendance was the Mayor of Buea Municipality, Mbella Moki Charles.

The High Commissioner also attended the opening ceremony for the AusAID sponsored Human Rights Small Grants project at Widikum Division in western Cameroon on 24 February 2011. This very moving and successful project was conducted by the NGO, IVFCam, which aimed at strengthening awareness in the communities of the region, including the traditional elders, of the rights of widows. Widows traditionally have been deprived of basic property and other legal entitlements on the loss of their spouse. Pictured are the High Commissioner and male villagers on the defensive in a tug-of-war competition with the widows. The widows, numbering around 90, of course won the contest!





DAP funded the CHRICED Election Observers Training in Kano ahead of the Nigerian general elections in April 2011.



A community school in Ogbese, Ekiti State, also benefited from this year's DAP funds for the renovation of six dilapidated classrooms & the construction of toilets.

A selection of projects funded in 2010-11



The Drill Ranch, located in the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Cross River State, received a AACGS grant for the renovation and expansion of the Nigerian Chimpanzee Centre.



We have continued with our support for the Nigerian Fistula Foundation, enabling another 40 women and girls to receive much needed surgical attention.



The High Commission also provided funds for the Support for a poultry project the establishment of a poultry farm in Imo State.



Mining Indaba 2011

This annual conference for the global mining industry held in Cape Town, South Africa, in February of each year is an excellent forum to showcase Australian mining expertise. It is also an important opportunity for all the Australian Ambassadors and High Commissioners based in Africa to join forces and promote Australian commercial, mining and investment interests. One of the highlights of the event was an Ambassadors' lunch hosted by all the Australian Ambassadors, which included 14 Ministers of Mining, including from Nigeria, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Niger.

Pictured at the Cape Town waterfront is "Team Australia" including all the Australian Ambassadors and High Commissioners located



across Africa (left to right): David Maclennan (Perth Office), Karen Lanyon (Assistant Secretary Africa Branch, DFAT), Geoff Tooth (Nairobi), Billy Williams (Accra), Ann Harrap (Pretoria), Matthew Neuhaus (Harare), Sandra Vegting (Port Louis), Ian McConville (Abuja) and Lisa Filipetto (Addis Ababa).

Visit to Australia of Permanent Secretary, MFA, Ambassador Dr Martin Uhomoibhi

This successful visit in March 2011, sponsored by the Australian Government, provided an important channel of communication between Ambassador Uhomoibhi and his counterpart, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Dennis Richardson, and progressed a number of important bilateral issues. A busy schedule of meetings was conducted in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. One of the highlights was the presentation at the Australian Insti-

tute for International Affairs of a speech on Nigeria's place in Africa and the global community, by Ambassador Uhomoibhi.

High Commissioner Ian McConville, his son Kieren and Ambassador Martin Uhomoibhi at the Australia Day function in Abuja on 27 January 2011



Kevin Joseph (second from right) hosts Stuart Mooney (sixth from left) and his partner Ilona Mäkinen (fifth from right) at the mining site in Kogi State

Australian mining and associated companies are rapidly expanding their business in Africa. More than 220 Australian resource companies have assets in Africa — 200 of these are involved in mining. These companies are responsible for 600 individual projects, spread over 42 countries, and account for \$20 billion of actual investment. Over 47 Australian businesses started projects in Africa for the first time in 2010. One such Australian-affiliated resource company currently operating in Nigeria

Mooney, the Trade and Commercial Attaché for the High Commission, visited the major leases of TGP/KCM Mining Limited mining sites in Kogi State, Nigeria. Stuart was hosted by Kevin Joseph, Director responsible for Nigeria and the Sub-Saharan African Region for TGP and KCM Mining Limited. Mr. Joseph said he and his Australian partners were very optimistic about the commercial possibilities for Australian mining companies in Nigeria and the region. According to Mr. Joseph, "TGP/KCM Mining

Australian Mining in Nigeria

and the West African region is TGP Australia Limited, the major technical and financial investment partner of the Nigerian local entity company, KCM Mining Limited, since its commencement in 2006. In February 2011, Stuart

Limited has expanded its vision geographically to other territories in West and Southern Africa, and to include mining resource projects in addition to oil and gas. A positive and fast improving political environment now shows strong signs of an impending boom in investment. And international interest is noticeably stronger". In support of the commercial activities of Australian resource companies in Nigeria and the region, the High Commission liaises closely with Australian businesses to help them access markets, and works with the Nigerian Government to ensure Australian interests are registered at the appropriate official level. In this way, the High Commission, in conjunction with Australian resource companies, is driving the development of Nigeria's, and the region's, rich supply of solid and liquid mineral resources.

Australian High Commission celebrates Harmony Day

Harmony Day is celebrated on 21 March every year. Its purpose is to celebrate diversity and equity in the workplace and in our broader community, and to remind ourselves that "everyone belongs".

In Australia, this means acknowledging the contribution of our indigenous peoples and migrants to a cohesive and inclusive society of some 22 million people – of which one in four were born overseas, and four million speak a language other than English.

Abuja – the capital of a country with more than 150 million people, hundreds of different language groups and many different religions

– is also an ideal place to celebrate Harmony Day. The Australian High Commission did so with afternoon tea and music which we shared with some members of the wider High Commission family. Once again, our staff adopted the idea of the day in great spirit, many choosing to wear magnificent versions of national dress for the occasion.

The High Commission's 14 staff members come from six different states in Nigeria, and from Canada and Switzerland as well as Australia. We speak a total of ten languages –



Birum, Edo, Hausa, Urhobo, Yoruba, French, German, Swiss-German and Portuguese (and smatterings of Urdu, Bahasa and Mandarin), as well as English.

More information on Harmony Day can be found at:

www.harmony.gov.au

**Happy Harmony Day,
everyone!**

Abuja ANZAC Day



Dawn Memorial Service

ANZAC Day is one of Australia's most important national commemorations. It marks the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War, the 'Gallipoli Campaign', and is a day on which the sacrifices of war are remembered.

To commemorate ANZAC Day in 2011, High Commissioner McConville hosted a dawn service at his residence in Abuja. The event was attended by 90 people, including Australians, New Zealanders, representatives of Australia's key military partners, members of the local diplomatic core, Nigerian officials, and representatives from the Nigerian Armed Forces. During his speech, High Commissioner McConville made special mention of those children present at the commemoration and encouraged them to remember the sacrifices which young men and women have made in the pursuit of peace. The

British High Commissioner to Nigeria, HE Mr Andrew Lloyd, gave a moving reading of The Verse at the Ari Burnu Memorial, Gallipoli, Sarah McConville (15 yrs old) read an Australian bush poem, and we were given a stirring rendition of the Last Post by a Nigerian Army bugler. Following the ceremony, those gathered shared a traditional 'gunfire' breakfast.

Australia has provided more than 65,000 personnel to over 50 UN and other multilateral peace and security operations since 1947. Today, more than 3500 Australians continue to serve in peace operations around the world. Over 100,000 Australians have lost their lives in wars in the last century.

The 'Aussies and Friends in Lagos'

The Aussies and Friends in Lagos are scattered throughout a wide array of businesses and activities in this mega city. We warmly welcome everyone to join in on any of the activities in

which we involve ourselves. If you would like to join the Aussies, Kiwis and Birds of Paradise who are already on our group mailing list, please send an email to:

Tirscha McPherson at
tmacca72@gmail.com

or Barry Phipps at
bphipps@aislagos.com

Small World Made a World of Difference

In February, the fund raising event "Small World" was held on Victoria Island, Lagos. A small but dedicated band of "Oceania" locals worked hard and donated their time, cooking skills and dry ingredients to make the Oceania stand a great success. The evening was great fun and proved to be a tremendous charity fund raiser. Our share of the profits, one million Naira (around 6700 Australia dollars), has and will be distributed to the charities of our choice.

The Methodist School on the mainland at Ibeshe is one such char-

ity. A local school serving the community was in desperate need of water and we were able to construct and install a water bore and storage tank for the school and surrounding community to use. Our second recipient of funds is the Victoria Island Junior Secondary School on Victoria Island, where we were able to supply 75 student desks and chairs for use in the classrooms, better than sitting on the floor!

Both projects will, hopefully, go a long way in encouraging students to keep the "green" light switched on in their education.



Working hard: The 'Aussies and Friends in Lagos' Team at Small world, with Second Secretary Stuart Mooney and his partner Ilona Mäkinen



David McPherson MC'ing

The ANZACs...Lest We Forget!

ANZAC Day in Lagos was a lovely evening during which we all remembered the sacrifices of Aussies and Kiwis, and others in our region who have helped in the spreading of peace across the globe. Many people from across our small community here in Lagos attended. Dave McPherson MC'd the occasion and we had Father Jerry, Albie, and Janis help with the ceremony. The event finished off with a BBQ, a catch up and lots of

play in the pool from the children. A great night was had by all, including our guests Stuart Mooney, from the Australian High Commission in Abuja, and his partner Ilona Mäkinen. Stuart attended on behalf of the High Commissioner McConville. According to Stuart, "we shared a really special night. It was a genuine, heartfelt and honest ceremony, and everyone was touched by the singing by Albie and Father Jerry, and MC'ing by Dave."

**Australian Direct Aid Program
Funding: making a difference at
the grass roots level in Lagos**

A small local school at Owode on the mainland is another school that has benefitted from contact with Australia. This school supports both the local community as well as underprivileged youth who reside in a residential rehabilitation facility for street boys. Through Direct Aid Program

funding provided by the Australian High Commission in Abuja, we have been able to provide student desks for the primary school and colorful tables and chairs for the nursery department. Like the project work listed above, the furniture for the Owode School project was manufactured by local manufacturers, who support the educational development

of underprivileged youth, through apprenticeship programs.



Commonwealth War Graves: Osogbo in Osun State, Nigeria



There are a number of Australian servicemen buried in Commonwealth Graves throughout Nigeria. One grave is at Kano, where last year for Remembrance Day the High Commissioner laid a wreath in memory of two Australian servicemen buried there. Another site is at Osogbo, the capital of Osun State. An Australian living in Lagos, Barry Phipps, made a journey to the Osogbo Military Cemetery earlier in the year. He wrote of his journey: "A day off sparked a 'road trip' in search of the

last resting place for three Aussies who were killed in a plane crash on 19 August 1942. On the fateful day, RAF Takoradi Blenheim V BA597 with Sgt. F.B. Borrett RAAF, F/S. J.A. Bowditch RAAF and Sgt. R.F. Henderson RAAF took off from Lagos on a delivery flight heading towards the Middle East, but failed to respond when the convoy leader ordered a return to base because of an impending storm. The plane spun into ground 9 km north of Osogbo, after entering the storm with no survivors. All of the crew were buried in Osogbo War Cemetery, along with 35 West Africans, seven British, one Canadian and two Polish servicemen." Barry noted that the cemetery was in a "small and well-kept com-

pound" and that a trip there from Lagos would "probably be too much for a single day trip for an ANZAC ceremony or memorial service. However, if the visit to the Military Cemetery was added to a weekend in the



Graves of three Royal Australian Air Force members

Osogbo area, visiting the town and its important sites would be quite an enjoyable and manageable journey." If you have any information on other Commonwealth War Graves in Nigeria, the High Commission would be interested to hear from you.

High Commissioner's visit to The Gambia



High Commissioner with Mr Dawda Fadera and Ms Safie Lowereesay in Mr Fadera's office in Banjul

In March 2011, High Commissioner and Second Secretary Mooney paid a courtesy call on the Gambian Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation and Gambians

Abroad, H.E Mamadou Tangara They also met with Mr Dawda Fadera, Permanent Secretary, and Ms Safie Lowereesay, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Office of the President Personnel Management Office (both pictured), who are our key points of contact for the Australia Awards Program. The Gambia secured eight long term award Masters Scholarships for study in Australia in 2010, and a further seven long term awards in 2011 under this program.

Also, the High Commission team visited the Fajara War Cemetery in Banjul where

212 service men and women from World War II are buried, including Flight Sergeant Bruce Evans, Royal Australian Air Force, 22/09/1943.

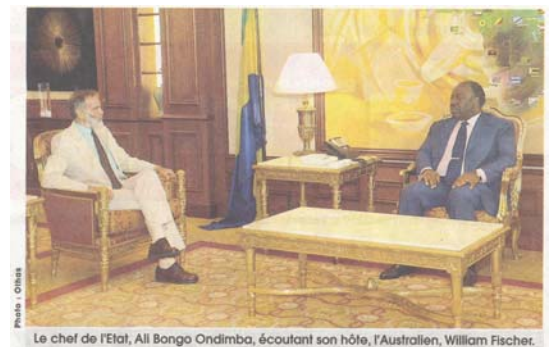


Second Secretary Stuart Mooney and the High Commissioner at the Fajara War Cemetery

Visit of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to La Francophonie, His Excellency Mr Bill Fisher

We were honoured to organise the visit to Gabon, the Republic of Congo and Cameroon of the PM's Special Envoy to La Francophonie and to accompany His Excellency Mr Bill Fisher on his trips. The purpose of the visit was to promote Australian interests in La Francophonie as well as to underline Australia's close engagement with Africa on United Nations Security Council issues. Australia's growing interests in the mining sector of all

three countries was a key focus of bilateral discussions. H.E Mr Fisher, along with the High Commissioner and Second Secretary Edye, met with the President of the Republic of Gabon, H.E Mr Ali Bongo Ondimba, as well as the Minister for External Relations in Cameroon, H.E Mr Henri Ayissi, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation for the Republic of Congo, H.E Mr Basile Ikouébé. The visit



H.E Mr William Fisher and Gabonese President H.E Mr Ali Bongo Ondimba in Libreville

attracted widespread print and electronic media interest.

Vendredi 18 Mars 2011

2 Politique

Diplomatie

Un officiel australien chez Ali Bongo Ondimba

L'union

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)



CHOGM 2011
PERTH, AUSTRALIA

In October this year, the Queen of the Commonwealth, over 50 heads of Government, 4000 members of international delegations, international business and the media will descend on Perth, Australia, for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The Commonwealth is one of the most important global forums, of which Australia was a founding member. CHOGM is held every two years to provide an opportu-

nity for Commonwealth leaders to discuss global and Commonwealth issues. The High Commission is working closely with Australia's Commonwealth partners in the region - Nigeria, The Gambia and Cameroon - to ensure CHOGM is a forum in which the leaders of all countries can express their views and collaborate in supporting democracy, good governance and the rule of law. The High Commissioner launched the Commonwealth

Business Forum at the Residence in Abuja on 8 June at a well attended reception. We will be working closely with the Commonwealth Business Council, the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission and Image Affairs Nigeria to ensure Nigeria is well represented at CHOGM and the CBF. President Goodluck Jonathan has been invited to Chair a Roundtable on Nigeria-Australia investment.

CHOGM is the biggest gathering of world leaders Australia has ever witnessed!

Media Release on Budget Announcement

Abuja 12 May - The Australian High Commissioner in Abuja, Ian McConville, was delighted to announce the increase in Australia's development assistance to West Africa arising from the budget of 10 May. Australia will increase its development assistance to Africa by a further AUD \$90 million in 2011-2012 bringing its total to AUD\$291.3 million.

"I am particularly pleased that the Australian Awards program as well as other assistance through the Australia Africa Partnership Facility (AAPF) will continue to expand and build on existing activities in Nigeria," His Excellency Mr McConville said in Abuja today. "This is a clear indication of Australia's commitment to the West

Africa region and to our Africa Engagement Strategy."

During 2011, 29 Nigerians will study on long and short development scholarships in Australia. These Awards are aligned to the priorities of the Nigerian Government and its institutions to strengthen their human resource capacity. A major benefit to West African countries, including Nigeria, from today's announcement will be an expansion of the Australia Awards Program which will offer more than 750 Australia Awards (scholarships) to at least 40 African countries in 2012. The Australian Government is also very pleased to support other sectors in Nigeria in 2011, including Public Sector Reform, and support for

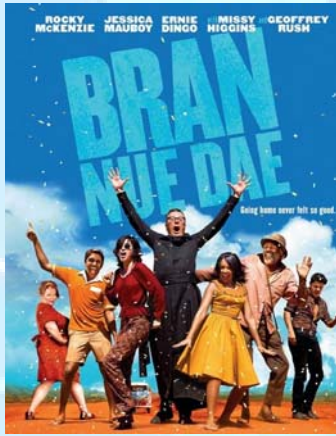
regional programs within ECOWAS through the AAPF.

Australia will also maintain strong support for humanitarian needs on the continent including assistance to the crises in Ivory Coast, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Australian Government announcement reaffirms Australia's ongoing commitment to scale up its development assistance program to 0.5 percent of Gross National Income by 2015-16 and increase its assistance to Africa. The Australian Government remains committed to ensuring that every dollar spent on aid has the maximum impact on poverty and economic development.

Australia announces it will increase development assistance to Africa by 45%

Public Diplomacy Event: Australian film promotion – ‘Bran Nue Dae’



The Australian High Commission was delighted to present the first “Australian Film Festival” on 31 May 2011 at Silverbird Cinema in Abuja.

Set on Australia’s west coast in the summer of 1969, “Bran Nue Dae”, is a charming, romantic musical comedy, starring the Australian Academy Award winner Geoffrey Rush, who bursts onto the screen with unbridled energy as Father Benedictus. Based on one of Australia’s most beloved and popular musicals, “Bran Nue Dae” is a foot stomping tour-de-force centring on the romantic adventures of a young Aboriginal couple, Willie and Rosie, set against a spectacular and beautiful Australian backdrop.



The High Commissioner (front), Jolyon Hoff (back left) and Stuart Mooney (back right) with the workshop participants at the cocktail function

Picture: Courtesy of Silverbird Cinemas

The event coincided with “Reconciliation Week” in Australia which commemorated the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum and Mabo Day which brings together indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to understand our shared history. One of the most recent landmarks in recent efforts to promote unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians was the formal apology given by the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, on 13 February 2008, apologising to Indigenous people, particularly the Stolen Generation, and their families and community, for laws and policies which had inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these, our fellow Australians. There are some 455,031 Australians who identify themselves as of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and currently around 145 languages spoken.

It was heartening to see the evening so well attended with about 150 people from the Nigerian film



Two of the film workshop participants on location at Apo Mechanics village

Picture: Courtesy of Jolyon Hoff

industry, government authorities, diplomatic representatives and the Australian community in Abuja. A special thanks to the Sheraton Hotel for their assistance in the catering for the event.

One of the highlights of the event was the film production workshop sponsored by the High Commission, led by the experienced Australian film producer, Jolyon Hoff, involving a terrific group of 12 young enthusiastic Nigerian film makers. The result of this workshop was an 8 minute short film of the very local Apo Mechanics village which was screened prior to “Bran Nue Dae”.

Well done to Emeka Uwakwe, Nam Abban, Bem Pever, Jerusalem Dzuamo, Roberta Miller, Jenevieve Aken, Flora Fatima Daniel, Tom Saater, Tobi Williams, Michael Allison, Emamodeviefie Edosio and Jerry Adesewo, presented with a certificate by the Director of Culture from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on the night.

Visa Information in Nigeria

Australia, as a multicultural and open country, welcomes people from all places to either visit or make Australia their home for good. In either case, if you aren't an Australian citizen, you must remember to obtain a visa before you travel. To ensure people in Nigeria* are able to submit visa applications more efficiently, from 1 June 2010 the High Commission announced **new arrangements for the handling of visa applications in Nigeria**. It is important to note that the High Commission does not accept ordinary visa applications for travel to Australia. Instead, those wishing to travel to Australia should lodge applications for visas directly with **VFS Global**, with which the High Commission has entered into an

agreement to assist with the facilitation of visa applications to **Australia's High Commission in Pretoria, South Africa**, where they are considered. Many other countries in Nigeria use VFS to streamline the visa issuing process.

VFS is located in **Abuja** at:

**Plot Number 42
Door No 38
Lobito Crescent
Wuse 2**

and in **Ikeja, Lagos** at:

**No 16, Billings Way
Ground and 1st Floor
Oregon Industrial Area**

VFS is open between 0800 and 1500 Monday to Friday. You can find more information here:

**website: www.vfsglobal.com/australia/nigeria/
via email: info.ausng@vfshelpline.com
by phone: 09 8701519**

* Citizens of **Benin** and **The Gambia** also apply for visas via Australia's High Commission in Pretoria, South Africa (more info: www.southafrica.embassy.gov.au)

Citizens of **Cameroon, Gabon, Niger** and the **Republic of Congo** apply for visas via Australia's High Commission in Nairobi, Kenya (more info: www.kenya.embassy.gov.au)

Consular Information

An important function of the High Commission is to protect the legitimate interests of Australians overseas and to assist in ensuring their welfare. As such we are committed to providing effective, prompt and courteous consular services, delivered in an equitable way, to all Australians requiring them. In order for us to help Australians, it is important that they register with us so that we can contact them in an emergency.

Registering is EASY via the 'smartraveller' website, at <http://smartraveller.gov.au>

Through the smartraveller website Australians can also find information about travelling overseas and on the consular services the High Commission can provide. Importantly, there is also a link to the travel advisories for Nigeria and the other countries for which we are responsible. These adviso-



ries are updated regularly, so we suggest that those interested in receiving updates subscribe, again via the smartraveller website, to receive advice as to when these are amended. If consular assistance is required, we recommend in the first instance calling the **dedicated 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre hotline**, which can be reached at **+61 2 6261 3305**.



High Commissioner Ian McConville, Spouse Libby McCutchan and Second Secretary Alison Edey with former leader of the Australian Democratic Party, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja (middle) and Bodunrim Adebo from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) during Ms Despoja's visit to Nigeria as one of the co-leaders of the NDI International Election Observer Mission

Registration Info for Australians abroad

Registering with us is easy:

Go to the Australian Government's travel advisory and consular information service (<http://smartraveller.gov.au>) and follow the link to register.

And please provide an email and a postal address so we can send you a copy of the newsletter!

Good to know...

The difference between an Embassy and a High Commission

A permanent diplomatic mission is a group of people from one state or inter-governmental organisation (such as the UN) present in another state (usually the capital) to represent the sending state/organisation in the receiving state.

A permanent diplomatic mission is commonly known as an *Embassy* and the person in charge of the mission is the *Ambassador*. Diplomatic missions between **Commonwealth Countries**, however, are known as *High Commissions* and their heads as *High Commissioners*. This is because ambassadors are exchanged between *foreign* countries, but Commonwealth member countries nominally maintain that they are not foreign to one another.

So, while Mr Ian McConville is a High Commissioner to the three Commonwealth countries Nigeria, Cameroon and The Gambia, he is an Ambassador to the other accredited countries, namely Benin, Gabon, Niger and the Republic of Congo.



Australian High Commission

5th Floor, Oakland Centre
48 Aguiyi Ironsi Street
Maitama, Abuja
Nigeria

Office Phone: (+234) (0)9 461 2780
Office Mobile: (+234) (0)803 307 3519
E-mail: ahc.abuja@dfat.gov.au
www.nigeria.embassy.gov.au