

Address by Paul Murphy, Consul-General Lae, Papua New Guinea

8 February 2017

Supporting women and families in the workplace

Acknowledgements:

- Lesieli Taviri (Chairperson, BCFW);
- Denga Ilave (Femili PNG)
- Stephen Howes from ANU – and Femili PNG;
- Other distinguished representatives

Honoured to have been invited to address this event to mark this magnificent partnership.

Still new to town, so start by introducing myself.

Career officer with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Spent last five years negotiating Australia's Free Trade Agreements with China, Japan, India, Indonesia and Korea.

Before that, worked in the Australian High Commission Port Moresby.

Responsibility for Economic Issues, Public Diplomacy, and Morobe.

So a lot of experience working with business and look forward to working with business in Morobe, including the PNG Business Coalition for Women.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, announced the plan to establish a Consulate-General in Lae in March last year following consultations with the PNG Government. The decision was welcomed by Prime Minister Peter O'Neill.

Reasons for opening the Consulate-General were:

- Lae is PNG's commercial capital
 - o home of its largest port
 - o the gateway connecting PNG's island and coastal regions to the Highlands
- so a key aim of the Consulate-General will be to strengthen Australia and PNG's growing trade and investment relationship
- the Consulate-General will also strengthen Australia's capacity to oversee aid investments in Morobe
- and, importantly for Australians, we will provide passport services and assistance to Australians in need in Morobe (what we call consular services).

The Consulate-General's temporary office opened on Monday in the Lae International Hotel. We aim for the full office to open in mid-2017.

The Consulate-General will operate in most ways as an extension of the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby.

The decision to open the Consulate-General clearly reflects the prominence of Lae in the minds of Australia's political leaders.

Turning now to the theme for today's event:

Family and sexual violence can have an enormous impact on a person's sense of safety, self-esteem and confidence and can have severe physical and mental health consequences.

Beyond the victim themselves, it can destroy families and social relationships and have negative flow on affects for the wider community - this includes the workplace.

Family and sexual violence can adversely affect productivity, attendance, perceptions of safety and the quality of workplace relationships.

Workplaces can play an important supportive role for employees who are suffering.

The Australian Government is committed to providing a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace for all employees. A central tenet of this is a zero tolerance approach towards family and sexual violence.

Workplaces can provide a person with:

- a safe environment to think about their options;
- access to in-house or community-based counselling and support services and the police; and
- the financial independence to support their decisions.

The role of managers and co-workers is particularly critical in the provision of this supportive environment.

Assisting staff suffering from family and sexual violence is not only the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do.

Helping an employee deal with their abusive relationship not only helps them but will also help the workplace.

It can:

- Reduced costs and lead to increased savings;
- Help to fulfil an employer's duty of care;
- Improve staff health, safety and wellbeing;
- Demonstrates corporate social responsibility; and
- Position the organisation as an employer of choice.

In November 2015, the Secretary of Australian's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade launched a policy document titled 'Guidance on workplaces responses to domestic and family violence'.

This guidance aims to:

- assist officers and managers to understand how staff may be affected by family and sexual violence in the workplace with online information resources on how to approach affected employees in a supportive way;
- encourage the use of existing support services, in particular promoting access to the department's confidential in-house counselling options; and
- provide practical guidance to managers on how to support staff while managing their work unit as best as possible through rehabilitation and return to work plans and security information.

Workplaces, such as the Australian High Commission Port Moresby, have drafted their own policy guidelines to take into account the local context.

But globally, more and more it is the private sector, not Government, which is responsible for delivering services to the public.

I encourage business leaders to consider adopting policies in your own workplaces to support staff affected by family and sexual violence.

It is not just the right thing to do, it brings long term benefits to employers themselves.