

PAPUA NEW GUINEA-AUSTRALIA JOINT DECLARATION ON THE PRESERVATION OF THE KOKODA TRACK REGION



1. Papua New Guinea and Australia today decided to extend beyond 2015, the current arrangement for the sustainable development of the Owen Stanley Ranges, Brown River Catchment and Kokoda Track region and protection of its special natural, cultural and historic values.
2. This decision recognises our shared history through participation in World War II and its role in strengthening our modern bilateral partnership and people-to-people relationships.
3. We decided that our cooperation for the preservation of the Kokoda Track region will be an enduring partnership which recognises the significance of the Kokoda Track as a monument to friendship, courage, endurance and sacrifice that both countries demonstrated during World War II in defence of our shared values.

4. We recognise that over seventy years after our people fought together in the region, the Kokoda Track continues to be an important meeting place where we can reflect on the virtues demonstrated by Papua New Guineans and Australians in times of hardship.
5. We recognise the iconic nature of the Kokoda Track region and its symbolism for the modern Papua New Guinea-Australia relationship. We therefore commit to the Track continuing to remain open, safe, well-managed and preserved as shared heritage.
6. We recognise that the communities living in the Kokoda Track region are custodians of a land that has spiritual connections for both Papua New Guineans and Australians. We acknowledge their development needs, including in service delivery and improved economic opportunities.
7. We acknowledge that the people of the Kokoda Track region have a rich and long history with this land and that the broader Owen Stanley Ranges is home to an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals. We commit to protection of the environment, biodiversity and cultural heritage, and for Australia to support working towards international recognition of the region through a World Heritage listing if Papua New Guinea was to seek such a listing.
8. While Papua New Guinea's National Government will continue to play a lead role, we recognise the importance of working in partnership at all levels of government and with communities, churches, the trekking industry, non-government organisations and the private sector, to achieve our shared vision for the Kokoda Track and the region.
9. We make this declaration in the spirit of the Joint Declaration for a New Papua New Guinea-Australia Partnership signed in May 2013 which among other things, commits us to promote economic and social development; support Papua New Guinea's efforts to improve the quality of life of all its citizens; and environmental protection and sharing of expertise in the sustainable management of natural resources.
10. The Kokoda Initiative Committee, with representation from Papua New Guinea and Australia, will provide guidance and direction on the activities to be funded by the Papua New Guinea and Australian Governments under this declaration.

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon Peter O'Neill CMG MP
Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

Signed at Port Moresby, this tenth day of September 2015