

Thursday 28 June 2006

Rt Hon Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary General

To be read out: a message to the opening session of the Commonwealth Study Conferences (Australia) Emerging Pacific Leaders' Dialogue

Brisbane, Australia (then roundabout in Pacific region before ending in Auckland, NZ on 12<sup>th</sup> July)

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From London: greetings to all of you at the start of the Emerging Pacific Leaders' Dialogue in Brisbane today.

My congratulations to those far-sighted few who decided that this event should be born as an offshoot of our Commonwealth Study Conferences, and who have done so much to make that happen ...

... my thanks to all those throughout the Pacific Region who have given the idea their moral and practical support...

.... and above all my warmest good wishes to you 120 or so young men and women from 19 countries in the region, who have been selected on merit to be part of this great enterprise – you people *for* whom this represents such a wonderful opportunity to learn, share and grow; and to whom we will be looking, in years to come, for strong and principled leadership.

I am delighted that an idea and programme that is half a century old is as fresh today as ever, and that it has now taken on new form in the Pacific Region.

The Commonwealth is a family and a network that *shares*: its values, its language, its institutions – and its best practice. You can only lead if you know the people that you're leading and the challenges that they are facing: and there's no better way of coming to know this than by seeing with your own eyes and sharing best practice on study tours. You will see for yourselves the way that different people in different cultures react to the challenges of good governance, education, health, environment and enterprise that are the cornerstones of all our societies. I hope the tours will be by turns instructive, humbling, and inspiring. I know they will be fun.

Democratic societies are based first and foremost not on leaders but on individual human beings and their values. From values come votes and democratic institutions – and from institutions comes the hard work that makes systems function. But democratic societies need leaders, too: gifted men and women helping others share and enact a vision for the way things should be.

In the past, Commonwealth leaders led struggles for independence, struggles against racism, struggles to get their societies on their feet. They continue to struggle to establish real democracy and real development both at home and in the family of nations. Be part of that struggle; see leadership for what it is – positive service.

Good luck and very best wishes ..... from Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon