



Twinning Arrangements

This fact sheet explains the Queensland Parliament's twinning arrangements with the Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea National Parliaments.

Background

The parliaments of all six Australian states, as well as of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have entered into twinning relationships with Pacific parliaments under a program brokered by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee in July 2007.

CPA twinned parliaments	
Bougainville - NSW	Samoa - SA
Cook Islands - WA	Solomon Islands - NSW
Fiji - Vic	Tonga - SA
Nauru - Vic	Tuvalu - Vic
Niue - NT	Vanuatu - Qld
Papua New Guinea - Qld	

The twinning program was created to foster greater cooperation and support between Australian and Pacific parliaments. The program has also provided the basis for a range of parliamentary strengthening activities by members and staff of Australian parliaments in conjunction with development agencies such as the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) at the Australian National University and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Queensland Parliament has formalised its twinning arrangement through six-year written agreements with the Parliament of Vanuatu in 2009 and the Parliament of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 2013.

Queensland's commitments under the twinning agreements

Under the twinning agreements, the Queensland Parliament has committed to work actively towards developing friendly relations with the Vanuatu and PNG parliaments through:

- exchanges of information regarding parliamentary work, and on matters of common interest
- regular exchanges and dialogue regarding the

training needs of parliamentarians and staff leading to training activities that promote parliamentary development

- exchanges of visits as a means of fostering links between parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and
- meetings of representatives at conferences or seminars attended by both parliaments.

Vanuatu

The tiny nation of Vanuatu (the Republic of Vanuatu) has a population of 266,000 and covers an archipelago of over 80 islands in the Coral Sea, 2,000 kilometres to the northeast of Brisbane. The three main languages spoken are English, French and Bislama. Over 100 local, tribal languages and immigrant languages are also spoken across Vanuatu. Vanuatu's capital, Port Villa, is located on the island of Efate.



Vanuatu's parliamentary system

Formerly known as the New Hebrides, Vanuatu was jointly governed by British and French administrations before attaining independence on 30 July 1980. Vanuatu's national government and parliament share features of the French presidential and British Westminster systems. In addition to the national government, there are six provincial governments. A National Council of Chiefs is responsible for making recommendations for the preservation and promotion of Vanuatu culture and language.

Vanuatu's unicameral parliament comprises 52-members who are elected for four year terms.



As in other Pacific parliaments, the multi-party Vanuatu Parliament has a more fluid party structure compared to Australian standards. MPs frequently switch parties and allegiances, or form new parties. Since 2008, there have been 21 political parties, eleven of which are still active.

The President and Constitutional Head of State of the Republic of Vanuatu is elected for a five-year term by an electoral college made up of the parliament and the presidents of the six provincial governments.

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has a population of 6.7 million and is Australia's nearest neighbour. The capital of PNG is Port Moresby. The PNG mainland and its six hundred islands cover 463,000 square kilometres. This is around a quarter (26.7 per cent) of the size of Queensland and more than the areas of Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT combined (298,248 square kilometres). Most PNG people are Melanesian, but some are Micronesian or Polynesian. There are over 800 known languages in PNG. English, Tok Pisin (Pidgin), and Hiri Motu (the lingua franca of the Papuan region) are the official languages.

PNG's parliamentary system

Papua New Guinea is a constitutional monarchy. It became an independent nation with a parliamentary democracy on 16 September 1975.



Flag of Papua New Guinea

The Head of State is HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen is represented in PNG by a Governor-General who is elected by Members of the National Parliament.

The PNG National Parliament is a unicameral legislature and its 111 members are elected for five-year terms.

In addition to the national government, PNG has provincial governments with their own assemblies, and local governments.

The main parties in the parliament are the People's National Congress (PNC), the Triumph Heritage Empowerment (THE) Party, the PNG Party, the United Resources Party (URP), the People's Progress Party (PPP), and the People's Party (PP).



Signing of the twinning agreement with the PNG Parliament in 2013. (From left to right) Mr Michael Crandon MP, Member for Coomera; Mr Trevor Ruthenberg MP, Member for Kallangur; Mr Michael Ries, Deputy Clerk of the Queensland Parliament; Hon Fiona Simpson MP, Speaker of the Queensland Parliament; Hon Theo Zurenuoc MP, Speaker of the PNG National Parliament; Mr Vela Konivaro, Clerk of the PNG National Parliament; Her Excellency Ms Deborah Stokes, Australia's High Commissioner to PNG; and Mr Dale Shuttleworth MP, Member for Ferny Grove.