



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MOTIONS

Youth With a Mission Medical Ships Australia

SPEECH

Monday, 17 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Monday, 17 August 2015
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Questioner
Speaker Prentice, Jane, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:34): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that the MV *YWAM PNG* was commissioned by Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, the Hon. Peter O'Neill MP, on 21 April 2015;

(2) notes that the ship has been tasked with providing health care and medical training to remote coastal villages in Western Province and Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea;

(3) understands that the new ship will allow Youth with a Mission Medical Ships Australia (YWAM MSA) to reach more villages and to deliver more timely treatment in a more appropriate clinical setting;

(4) recognises the tireless efforts of YWAM MSA to raise awareness of the need for funds to support the work of the ship and its crew of volunteers; and

(5) notes that the Australian Government has contributed funding of \$2 million over four years towards this worthy project.

Papua New Guinea is Australia's nearest neighbour. It is a young and developing nation and, like many developing nations, its 7.3 million residents suffer from a critical lack of public infrastructure. Papua New Guinea's challenges are compounded by its difficult geography. Thick jungle, wide rivers and rugged mountains make roads expensive to build and maintain. Consequently, even many large regional towns do not have road access to the capital, Port Moresby. This makes the delivery of other public services even more challenging. In particular, the provision of health care to the estimated 80 to 85 per cent of residents who live in traditional rural communities is patchy and at times non-existent. As a result, health outcomes in Papua New Guinea are poor by regional standards. Life expectancy is shorter and infant mortality is higher than in most neighbouring Pacific countries. The prevalence of deadly preventable diseases such HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria remains a concern.

At government level, the Australian government provides around \$500 million per annum in official development assistance to PNG, making Papua New Guinea the largest recipient of Australian foreign aid. But government aid only tells part of the story. There are also committed Australian NGOs and volunteers who are determined to make a positive difference to the health of Papua New Guineans who live in rural and remote areas. One of the most successful of these groups is Youth With a Mission Medical Ships Australia—also known by their acronym, YWAM MSA. YWAM MSA are a great example of what can happen when a group of dedicated and determined people join forces to work for the common good.

Since their founding in 2010, YWAM MSA have been providing primary health services from their base in Townsville to remote, isolated coastal communities in Papua New Guinea's Western Province. In the absence of any road or air links, they do this in unique fashion, via their custom-modified medical ship. Recently, YWAM MSA were able to fundraise for the purchase of a new, larger ship to replace their previous vessel, which was 35 years old. The new ship, the MV *YWAM PNG*, was launched in April this year and commissioned by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon. Peter O'Neill. It is a catamaran vessel that was converted from a cruise ship for the purposes of providing a fully self-sufficient floating medical facility. The ship can accommodate up to 100 volunteers—twice the capacity of the previous ship—and will eventually accommodate a dentistry clinic, operating theatre, laboratory and infrastructure to carry up to four small boats that can be launched to reach extremely remote communities.

This ship plays a vital role in the delivery of health services to communities in the Western Province. Without YWAM MSA, many of these communities would lack any form of medical coverage at all. YWAM MSA ships

are crewed entirely by volunteers. Medical and other professionals give freely and generously of their time to work onboard the vessel. Services are provided with the support of the PNG National Department of Health, which signed a memorandum of understanding with YWAM MSA in 2011. In addition to providing medical treatment, YWAM MSA volunteers do important work in the communities they serve by providing education on basic health and first aid so that locals have the skills and knowledge to deal with medical emergencies.

In just a few short years of operation, YWAM MSA have managed to raise substantial funding from an impressive array of corporate and NGO partners. To assist with fundraising efforts, the coalition government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister Julie Bishop, has committed \$2 million over four years towards YWAM MSA operations in the Gulf and Western provinces. The foreign minister travelled to Townsville in early April to make the announcement alongside the member for Herbert.

YWAM MSA is a great example of what can be achieved with goodwill, hard work, persistence and a great cause to rally around. The House congratulates all YWAM MSA volunteers for their ongoing efforts to improve the lives of people living in remote communities in Papua New Guinea. I acknowledge the work of the member for Leichhardt and his wife in their support, and I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Entsch: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.