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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
PORT LOUIS



Message From The High Commissioner

It's an exciting time to be representing Australia, as the country notches up a significant first with Ms Julia Gillard becoming the first female Prime Minister of Australia. While perhaps less well-known on the international scene, Ms Gillard has been in federal politics in Australia since 1998 and was appointed Deputy Prime Minister when the Labor Party was elected to office in November 2007. Ms Gillard has managed two significant portfolios since 2007: Education and Workplace Relations.

Of course, it has also been an election year in Mauritius with the Alliance de l'Avenir elected to office and Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam GCSK, FRCP reappointed as Prime Minister. On behalf of the Australian Government, we wish this new Mauritian Government every success.

The Australian High Commission has had a rewarding year, taking forward many small aid projects in the region. Seeing these projects comes to fruition and working with local communities is one the most rewarding aspects of my job - it is such a pleasure to see well-targeted projects making a difference to people's lives.

We have also had the thrill of bringing the Australian Film Festival back to Mauritius and the aboriginal dance group Descendance to Mauritius and Seychelles. Mauritian and Seychellois audiences embrace Australian films and indigenous dance with such enthusiasm. We have some wonderful photos from this tour.

We also report on staff changes at the High Commission. Our wonderful team here wishes you 'bonnes vacances' if you are taking advantage of the long school break. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming months.



High Commissioner with 'Les Bonnes Femmes' in Anjouan, Comoros

Cathy Johnstone

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Welcome Janice and Tania!



From left to right: Janice Mulleneux and Tania Diolle

Noumea, Jakarta, Bali, Hanoi, Geneva and Harare. Before coming to Mauritius, Janice worked in the Europe Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade in Canberra.

We are also pleased to welcome Tania Diolle who joined us in May this year as our new Political and Research Officer.

Before joining the High Commission, Tania worked as a Project Officer for The African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) in Ethiopia and as a researcher for the Mauritius Research Council.

We would like to offer a belated warm welcome to our First Secretary and Consul Janice Mulleneux who arrived at post in August 2009. Janice has been on many overseas postings -



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New Australian Prime Minister

On 24 June 2010, the Hon Julia Gillard was sworn in as Prime Minister by the Governor-General of Australia, succeeding the Hon Kevin Rudd MP.

Ms Gillard was born in Wales, migrating to Australia with her family in 1966. She studied arts and law at university in Adelaide before being elected as national education vice president, and later national president of the Australian Union of Students in 1983.

Ms Gillard worked as a solicitor with the law firm Slater and Gordon, becoming a partner in 1990. In May 1996, she was appointed chief of staff of the then Victorian Opposition leader, John Brumby. Ms Gillard worked with Mr Brumby until her election to Federal Parliament in

1998 (for the electorate of Werribee in Melbourne).

Ms Gillard joined Labor's Shadow (Opposition) Ministry in 2001, serving in a number of Shadow Ministerial portfolios including Population



and Immigration, Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs, Health, Employment and Industrial Relations, and Social Inclusion. Ms Gillard was elected as Labor's Deputy Leader in December 2006.

Following the Federal Election of 24 November 2007, Ms Gillard was sworn in as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, and Minister for Social Inclusion.

Ms Gillard is the first woman to hold the office of Prime Minister in Australia.

Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP with the Governor General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC, at Government House in Canberra



The Australia Africa Partnerships Facility

As part of a continuing program of initiatives to consolidate and expand Australia's re-engagement with Africa, the Australian Government (through its Agency for International Development, AusAID) has established the Australia Africa Partnerships Facility.

The Partnership Facility will be a key mechanism through which the Australian Government will support capacity-building initiatives of African partner governments and institutions. The Facility will focus on those sectors where Australia has the experience and expertise to make a significant contribution: governance for mining and natural resources; agriculture and food security; and public policy (especially economic governance, trade policy and negotiations, and public sector reform).

All African countries are eligible to submit proposals for consideration under the Facility, including the countries of the Indian Ocean region. Proposals for technical assistance may be up to two years in duration and up to AUD1million in value.

Examples of assistance already provided through the Facility include:

- Collaboration between the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the Government of Botswana on bushfire management
- Funding the attendance of five African officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Trade Policy Course in Canberra;
- Support for the participation of 15 senior Ethiopian officials in a Masters Degree in Interna-

tional Customs Law and Revenue Administration delivered by the University of Canberra; and

- Deployment of an Australian Treasury officer to the Seychelles Government for 12 months.

Enquiries about the Australia Africa Partnerships Facility should, in the first instance, be directed to the Australian High Commission Port Louis through [ahc.portlouis@dfat.gov.au](mailto:portlouis@dfat.gov.au).



Australian High Commissioner, H.E. Cathy Johnstone hands over a certificate to Mr Narainduth Boodhoo (Mauritian MFA) for his participation in the DFAT Trade Policy Course, April 2010.



Sixth Australian Film Festival in Mauritius



Descendance's performance at Alexandra House Primary School, Mauritius

The Australian High Commission held its sixth Australian Film Festival in Mauritius from 17 to 23 May 2010. A total of 10 feature films and 6 short films were shown at the Serge Constantin Theatre in Vacoas which told stories from both contemporary Australia as well as from Australia's history, including Australia's indigenous history.

The 2010 Australian Film Festival opened with a performance by the Australian Aboriginal Dance Group, Descendance, at an official reception. After the reception, the award-winning feature film *The Black Balloon* was screened.

The Black Balloon which has an outstanding cast led by Toni Collette, portrays the life of a teenager who lives with an autistic brother. Writer-Director Elissa Downs drew on her own experience of growing up with two autistic brothers, but the film has a light touch and is, to quote *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "a tender portrait of love under pressure. It is also illuminated by the kind of helpless laughter that can save the day

when things are at their most desperate".

Following several requests from schools and community groups after the 2009 film festival, special morning and afternoon screenings were held for these groups this year. The High Commission also held special Classics screenings which showed Australian Classics such as *The Man from Snowy River* (1982) and *Breaker Morant* (1980) which tell stories from different eras of Australian history and legend. These daytime sessions proved to be very popular and the schools sessions in particular attracted full houses.

During their visit to Mauritius, Descendance gave a number of public performances across the island including at schools, a performance at the Caudan Waterfront and at a special Australian night at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Ebene.

After Mauritius, Descendance travelled to the Seychelles, where the group performed at Le



Meridien Fisherman's Cove Hotel and drew crowds at Bazar Victoria in an open air public performance.

The hosting of an Australian Film Festival again in Mauritius in 2010 as well as the visit of Descendance



Descendance's performance at Loreto Convent Vacoas Primary School, Mauritius



The Australian Aboriginal Dance Group, Descendance in Mauritius and in Seychelles

represented the Australian Government’s contribution to the Mauritian Government’s program in 2010 of bicentenary celebrations of the Battle of Grand Port.

As usual, the Mauritian community responded with enthusiasm and interest to both the Film Festival and Descendance’s performances. Both events received excellent media coverage, including a short documentary aired on MBC.

This year’s Australian Film Festival and the visit of Descendance would of course not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors and collaborators: The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Screen Australia, the Mauritian Ministry of Arts & Culture, Air Mauritius, Four Points by Sheraton, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, and and L’Express Samedi, Air Seychelles, the Seychelles Ministry of Community Development, Youth, Sports and Culture, the Office of the Mayor of Victoria, Le Meridien Fisherman’s Cove, Rhodes Trust Group, Palm Cars & Hibiscus Car Hire, C’est La Vie, Prime Paints, Hi-Tech Graphics, Solahart and Mahé Shipping.



Australian High Commission Consular Wardens in the Seychelles with Descendance and High Commissioner HE Cathy Johnstone



Descendance invite Seychelles Designated Minister and Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sport, Hon Vincent Meriton, to play the didgeridoo.



Austrade News

From 1 July 2010, responsibility for the international promotion and marketing of education in Australia has been transferred from Australian Education International (AEI) to Austrade.

Austrade, AEI and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) will continue to work closely together to promote the merits of study in Australia and ensure that rigorous standards of care are maintained.

Austrade has begun the process of updating its website, www.austrade.gov.au, to reflect its new international education marketing and promotion responsibilities. In addition Austrade will assume responsibility for the Study in Australia website, www.studyinaustralia.gov.au. Changes to the technical platform and look and feel of the website will occur gradually. International students will also be able to subscribe to an e-newsletter from this website to receive information on the Australian education system.

Austrade will be holding meetings with stakeholders overseas to provide information on the changes brought on this transition process.

...AND IN MAURITIUS

Education is one of Australia's most productive service export sectors and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been a long-standing contributor to this success. Notwithstanding its size in relation to mainland Africa, Mauritius is Australia's largest source of students from the SSA region, providing 40 percent of total SSA enrolments and commencements in 2009.

In February this year, Austrade Port Louis and Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) officers from the Australian High Commission in Pretoria joined forces to host an information session on Studies in Australia at the annual Rotary Overseas Study Fair.

The aims of the workshop were to outline the reasons why Australia is a quality and attractive destination with world-class facilities for students, and explain why DIAC carries out the range of checks that it does on student visa applications, including to ensure that students and their families are fully prepared for the financial costs of living in Australia

Over 10,000 visitors attended the 3-day exhibition and we received positive feedback about the dedicated Australian information session. Austrade and DIAC plan to host further information session

not only for prospective students, but also for education agents in Mauritius.

Congratulations Romina !

We would like to congratulate our colleague, Austrade Business Development Manager Romina Panray who was awarded Austrade's Client Service Recognition Award in recognition for the top quality client service she has provided to clients over the past year in Mauritius and the region

Romina received the prestigious award in April this year at the annual Austrade Conference in Seeheim, Germany with Austrade representatives from Europe, the Middle East and Africa attending.



Romina Panray with her Client Service Recognition Award



The Australian High Commission's Community Aid Programs

The Australian High Commission has had a busy and rewarding year with the two small grants schemes it operates in the Indian Ocean region (Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros).

The Direct Aid Program (DAP) supports small-scale development projects which involve local communities. Special consideration is given to the needs of women, children and other disadvantaged groups such as the disabled.

The Small Activities Scheme (SAS) is a larger-scale scheme which supports community-based activities being implemented by non-government organisations to promote sustainable economic and social development.

In 2009-10, with an increased DAP budget of AUD170,000, the High Commission funded 10 projects in the region:

- The construction of a primary school in the village of Ambohimanandray in **Madagascar**. With this new primary school, many more village children have access to a basic education.
- The purchase of equipment and materials for the Care-Co rehabilitation and production workshop in **Rodrigues**. This local NGO provides training and employment to young people with disabilities or learning difficulties, who would otherwise find it difficult to enter the job market.
- Funding for construction materials to build a pre-primary school in Cite Flamboyant Richelieu, **Mauritius**.
- Upgrading the public toilet

facilities for outpatients and their families at the General Hospital in Tulear, **Madagascar**.

- Installation of a clean and safe drinking water system in the village of Ambohitrinilahy, **Madagascar**. Before this project, villagers collected water from springs near the village.
- The purchase of 8 ventilators for the young patients of the Muscular Dystrophy Association in **Mauritius**. The machines will assist patients with their breathing difficulties and improve their health and quality of life.
- Purchase of a paediatric cystoscope for Flacq hospital in **Mauritius**. This specialised equipment will be used in operations on children who have renal and urinary problems.
- Purchase of a solar water heater for the Pensioners Welfare Association's Residential Care Centre in Vacoas, **Mauritius**.
- Purchase of tools and equipments for Centre Technique Montfort, Port Louis **Mauritius**. This Centre helps young people from vulnerable and marginalised groups. Students receive a wide range of vocational training.
- Donation of reading and educational books to the Beau Bassin Women's Prison, **Mauritius** for literacy classes.

With an increased SAS budget of AUD200,000 this year, the High Commission was able to fund additional projects:

- Support for the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation's restoration and reforestation project in the Grand Montagne Nature Reserve in **Rodrigues**.

- Disaster relief to victims of tropical storm Hubert that caused widespread damage and homelessness in **Madagascar** in early 2010.
- The installation of clean and safe drinking water systems in the villages of Andoharano, Andafiatsimo and Ambohibary and the Fokontany of Iankarina, **Madagascar**.

The High Commission has also approved projects in **Comoros**, working with UNDP, improving fishing conditions in the village of Barakani in Moheli, the installation of a water source for vegetable production in the village of Bahani in Anjouan and the construction of a warehouse in Nindri-Pomoni, Anjouan. Funding will be disbursed in the coming months.

The High Commission continues to operate these two small grants schemes and we welcome proposals from NGOs and community groups.

For more information, please visit our website: www.mauritius.embassy.gov.au. All queries and project proposals should be sent to: The DAP/SAS Committee, Australian High Commission, 2nd Floor Rogers House, President John Kennedy Street, Port Louis.



High Commissioner HE Cathy Johnstone with patients and members of the Administration of the Muscular Dystrophy Association

Regional Visits to Aid Projects

Wherever possible, the High Commission endeavours to visit the projects it funds through the Direct Aid Program and Small Activities Scheme.

In late 2009, High Commissioner Cathy Johnstone visited community projects in Comoros and First Secretary and Consul Janice Mulleneux visited community projects in Madagascar

On the Comoran island of Anjouan, the High Commissioner received a very warm welcome from 'les bonnes femmes' (as they are known locally) from the villages of Pomoni and Lingoni and from those who worked near the Ntringui Mount Park. These hardy women work the steep and tough agricultural lands of Anjouan to support their families.

Thanks to funds received from the Australian High Commission through UNDP, these women were trained in more efficient farming practices to minimise soil erosion. Simple pipe systems were installed to bring water from remote sources, thus removing the need for the women

to walk several miles each day to fill containers of water to irrigate their lands. With a guaranteed water supply, 'les bonnes femmes' have now converted their lands to market gardens and are selling their crops locally, contributing to the development of their community.

Ms Mulleneux's first visit to Madagascar took her to Fort Dauphin in the south. The Australian High Commission had provided local NGO Azafady with funding to construct public latrines and a public garden and recreational area in the Amparihy Quartier to help promote a healthy living environment for the local community.

Ms Mulleneux attended the opening of the public latrines which are the very first in the area. Putting aside the inevitable jokes about such a project, the local community worked hard with Azafady to complete the project. Apart from public health issues, the project will improve the local beach which Fort Dauphin is keen to promote as a tourist destination.



Above: First Secretary and Consul Janice Mulleneux with representatives from Azafady and the Fort Dauphin commune

Below: High Commissioner HE Cathy Johnstone, Public Affairs Officer Yasmina Hosanoo (centre) and 'les Bonnes Femmes' from Pomoni and Lingoni



The Australian Government funds the first Professional Life Saver Program in Mauritius

On 19 March 2010, the Australian High Commissioner, Ms Cathy Johnstone, and local dignitaries attended an award ceremony in Quatres Bornes for the first 20 Mauritian graduates from the 'Water Safety & Aquatic Leadership Development Program', a professional life saver course funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Sports Outreach Program (ASOP) for a total of MUR 936,000.

ASOP aims to increase community participation in sport and physical activity, and through that activity also address broader community issues such as health awareness, leadership and social cohesion.

The 'Water Safety & Aquatic Leadership Development Program' is run over a two year period in Mauritius by the Chisholm Institute in Melbourne in collaboration with Australian International Education (Mauritius).



High Commissioner HE Cathy Johnstone congratulates an award recipient.

The program gives participants accredited Lifesaving & Basic Water Rescue skills and introduces them to running and officiating junior lifesaving sports activities.

The participants who received their certificates and awards had completed the first course of Chisholm Institute's program in late 2009 and spoke enthusiastically of the benefits of the training they had received. The 20 recipients came from the Mauritius Police Force, the National Coast Guard, the Mauritius Fire Services, the Ministry of Youth & Sports, the National Transport Authority. Physical education teachers/trainers from private and public schools and the hotel industry also participated.