

# AussieNews

Issue 30 June 2009



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION  
PORT LOUIS



# Message From The High Commissioner

**W**elcome to our June 2009 Aussie News. This is in fact our first newsletter for the year which we regret, but as you will see, it has been a busy 6 months for the High Commission. The landmark event was the visit of the Governor-General of Australia, HE Ms Quentin Bryce AC. The first visit ever by an Australian Head of State to this part of the world, Mauritius and the Seychelles were part of a nine nation tour in Africa and the Indian Ocean. It was an honour to be able to welcome their Excellencies and the Governor-General found her visit to both countries to be enriching and rewarding. We include a 'photo essay' of the visit in this edition.

In March, we also hosted the fifth Australian Film Festival in Mauritius and the second such Festival in the Seychelles. As with previous festivals, we were thrilled to have a prominent figure from the Australian film industry as a Guest of Honour. Rolf de Heer, Director of the award-winning film *Ten Canoes*, joined us for both festivals. Audiences turned out in force and we received lots of helpful feedback about how we could expand the Festival further. We hope to see you at the movies again in 2010, so watch this space....

**2009 marks the 25th anniversary of resident Australian accreditation in Mauritius** (prior to 1984 Australia was accredited to Mauritius from its High Commission in Tanzania). From our office in Rogers House in Port Louis, we have been able to watch the remarkable progress which Mauritius has made during this time and we look forward to continuing to deepen an already warm bilateral relationship. (However, I have lost the view of the port from my office due to the development of the thriving Caudan precinct– this I regret!)



We celebrated this anniversary at Australia Day on 26 January 2009 at which both the President, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth GCSK, KCMG, PC, QC and the Prime Minister Dr the Hon Navin Ramgoolam GCSK were kind enough to join me in cutting the distinctive cake.

At a community level, I visited the Mauritius Mental Health Association's educational facility in Rose Hill in May to see the extra classroom and extended woodwork department which have been added using funding from the Australian High Commission's Small Activities Scheme. I was impressed by the dedication of the Association's staff who work hard to provide educational opportunities, free of charge, for young mentally-disabled Mauritians who often come from very poor backgrounds. More information on our local aid grant programs is at page 7

As we go to print, Australia's Socceroos are on the point of qualifying for the 2010 World Cup. If matches in June go to plan, Australia will be the first country after South Africa to book its place for Cape Town. Go the Socceroos!

*Cathy Johnstone*



Their Excellencies Ms Quentin Bryce AC and Mr Michael Bryce AM AE with the staff of the Australian High Commission, 17 March 2009

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# Mauritius Welcomes Another Successful Australian Film Festival

**M**arch 23, 2009 marked the launch of the fifth Australian Film Festival in Mauritius, at the Serge Constantin Theatre in Vacoas. This year's program was packed with laughter, tears, suspense and tragedy, a powerful drawcard for Mauritian audiences.

The Guest of Honour for the Festival was Rolf de Heer, respected Australian director and writer, who agreed to open the Festival in both Mauritius and the Seychelles with his award-winning film *Ten Canoes*.

*Ten Canoes* is a singular experience in Australian cinema. The film is set in a remote part of indigenous Australia and focuses on a story told in aboriginal dialects (with English subtitles and over-narration by David Gulpilil). A story within a story, the film challenges – but ultimately engages - the audience in a dreamtime “myth” with themes of family and honour that are truly universal. *Ten Canoes* generated close to full houses on the first two nights of the festival and set the benchmark for strong audiences for the festival.

Mr de Heer was a charming and generous Guest of Honour. With his partner Molly Reynolds, he made the most of his time in Mauritius, including sharing his expertise in a workshop for

local film talents, held in collaboration with the Mauritius Film Development Corporation

*Looking for Alibrandi* was also hugely popular. Set in Sydney, the story of a teenage girl from a migrant family facing tough decisions both at home and at school resonated strongly with the teenagers who attended the school session.

All the feature films at the Festival were preceded by short films to give audiences further exposure to the wealth of talent in Australia's film industry.

The High Commission was so pleased with the success of this year's festival that we are already looking at hosting a Festival in 2010. Feedback from Festival-

goers has made it clear that we need to schedule more daytime sessions next time as we were not able to meet the level of demand this year.

This year's Australian Film Festival would of course not have been possible without the support of our sponsors and collaborators: The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, the Mauritian Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources, Screen Australia, the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, Air Mauritius, Naiade Resorts, Quality Beverages Ltd, La Sentinelle Ltd, Showbizz Entertainment Ltd, Radio One, Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, La Vanille Reserve des Mascareignes, and Urban Cinefile.

See you all at the movies next year!



Rolf de Heer shares his expertise with local film directors and students in Mauritius.

## ...And the Festival Goes to the Seychelles

**A**fter the Australian Film Festival opened in Mauritius on 23 March, the High Commission then took an abridged version to the Seychelles from 27–29 March 2009 held at the Deepam Cinema in Victoria. The films shown were *Ten Canoes*, *Romulus My Father* and *The Caterpillar Wish*.

Australian Writer/Director, Rolf de Heer who was the High Commission's Guest of Honour for the film festival travelled to the Seychelles to open the festival with his film *Ten Canoes*. In collaboration with the Seychelles Ministry of Culture, Mr de Heer also conducted a workshop with local film directors and students.

The official opening of the festival on 27 March was celebrated in typical Australian style with special attention given to ensure that the entire evening was 100 per cent 'Aussie', from the décor to the

music, right to the food and wine which was brought in from Australia.

The success of the film festival would not have been possible without our sponsors: Screen Australia, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Seychelles Ministry of Community Development, Youth, Sports and Culture, Air Seychelles, Hilton Hotel, Deepam Cinema, Seychelles Tourism Board, Rhodes Trust Group, Palm Cars, Hibiscus Car Hire, Primetime, Solahart, Rapid Roofing, Cest La Vie, Hi Tech Graphics, Massons Travel and Urban Cinefile.

The High Commission thanks these sponsors for their invaluable support and looks forward to working with them again in the future on other exciting projects.

The High Commission has received requests from movie-goers in the Seychelles to stage another festival next year, but even bigger and better. We'll do our best and look forward to working with the enthusiastic Aussie community in the Seychelles to make it happen!





## Official Visit to Mauritius and Seychelles by Their Excellencies



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor-General of Australia with Dr the Hon Navin Ramgoolam GCSK, MNA, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius*

*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC with the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth GCSK, KCMG, PC, QC and Lady Sarojini Jugnauth*



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC and the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Paul Berenger GCSK*



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC plants a tree at the SSR Botanical Gardens*



# Ms Quentin Bryce AC and Mr Michael Bryce AM AE



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC with Australian High Commissioner HE Cathy Johnstone and Mauritian MP Hon Nita Deerpalsing at a reception for prominent Mauritian women on 18 March 2009*



*Departing motorcade of Australian Governor-General and delegation. 19 March 2009*



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC with the President of the Republic of the Seychelles, HE Mr James A Michel at the arrival ceremony in the Seychelles, 1 April 2009*



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC meets the President of the Republic of the Seychelles, HE Mr James A Michel*



*H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC visits the Roche Caiman bridge with the Minister of Environment, Natural Resources & Transport, the Hon Joel Morgan. The bridge was reconstructed after the 2004 tsunami with international funds, including from Australia.*



## Anzac Day 2009

On Saturday 25 April 2009, the High Commission once again commemorated Anzac Day. As has become tradition, the High Commis-



Consular Warden Mrs Ida Coombes and Charge d'Affaires Mr Peter Cantwell

sion held a memorial service at the High Commissioner's residence in Floreal. In the absence of the High Commissioner who was in Australia on official mid-term consultations, Chargé d'Affaires Peter Cantwell hosted the event.

Committed Australians, New Zealanders as well as many other nationalities attend the service. This year, over 60 people came from all over the island to attend the 7.00am Saturday morning service, which took place in glorious early morning sunshine (to the relief of all who know the vagaries of Floreal weather!)

Mr Cantwell, opened the service of commemoration with a welcome speech which was followed by the Prayer of Remembrance read by the British High Commissioner **H.E. Dr John Murton**. Consular Warden **Mrs Ida Coombes**

read the poem *We Shall Keep the Faith*, and then local New Zealander **Mr Blair Harden** laid a wreath at the foot of the flagpole to commemorate both New Zealand and Australian servicemen and women who have died in times of war.

**Mr Jean Blattes** from the French Embassy recited The Ode. As always, a **Bugler** from the Mauritius Police Force Band ends the service with The Last Post. After a minute's silence, the Bugler plays The Rouse while the Australian flag is raised. This year, Consular Wardens **Mr Owen Griffiths and Ms Wendy Austin** raised the flag.

The Anzac Day service is simple but always moving. After the service, participants then relax over a gunfire breakfast. The High Commission thanks everyone for their participation in the event, including the Mauritius Police Force Band.



## Farewell Wendy and Thomas

The High Commission has bid farewell to one of its long serving Consular Wardens, Wendy Austin and her husband Thomas Oswin. Wendy and Thomas arrived in Mauritius in November 1989 when Thomas joined Air Mauritius as a pilot.

We are sure that they will miss the beauties of the south of the island as well as the many friends they made over 20

years in Mauritius. The High Commission would like to say thank you to Wendy and Thomas for the support they have given to the High Commission over the years.

We wish Wendy and Thomas and their family of beloved pets 'bon voyage' and the very best for their new life in Hobart, Tasmania.

H E Ms Quentin Bryce AC talks to Consular Warden Ms Wendy Austin and Mr Thomas Oswin



## Anniversaries...

The celebration at Australia Day 2009 of the 25th Anniversary of Australian resident accreditation in Mauritius marked another significant anniversary. Marie-Anne Joson notched up 25 years of service with the High Commission as well. Marie-Anne joined as a maid for the High Commissioner's Residence in 1984 and has stayed on ever since.

In fact working at the Residence has been a family affair. Marie-Anne's mother, Therese Ramalingum also worked at the Residence as Housekeeper from 1984 until May 2002 when she retired. Marie-Anne was promoted to the Housekeeper position after her mother's retirement. As Housekeeper and now Functions Man-

ager for events catered at the Residence, Marie-Anne has become an essential part of the High Commission's team.

Marie-Anne still thrives on the daily challenges of her job, one of which was to arrange for the design and production of the '25' cake in both the Australian and Mauritian flags for Australia Day !

Even though now at the grand age of 80, Therese continues to help out. The Anzac biscuits presented on Anzac Day each year are made by Therese, and they always disappear in a trice.

Thank you to Marie-Anne and Therese for their years of dedication, patience and good humour!





## Small-Scale Direct Aid Projects Make A Difference

Every year, the Australian High Commission funds a number of direct aid projects in Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles and Mauritius through two small grants schemes.

**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 that promote sustainable economic and social development.**

In 2008-09, with a small DAP budget of AUD75,000, the High Commission supported the following initiatives:

- books for the school library at



HE Cathy Johnstone with students of the Mauritius Mental Health Association



Classroom at the Mauritius Mental Health Association built using DAP funds

Windsor College in Rose Belle (Mauritius);

- a survey into the low rate of return to school of young teenage mothers in the Seychelles, with the goal of identifying ways to support completion of secondary schooling;
- the construction of an extension and the renovation of classrooms at the Morafeno primary school in Anjoma Ramartina, Mandoto (Madagascar); and
- the renovation of classrooms at the Ambatondradama primary school in the district of Mandoto (Madagascar).

With SAS funding of AUD150, 000 in 2008-09, the High Commission supported:

- the construction of a classroom and extension of the woodwork department at the Mauritius Mental Health Association in Rose Hill (Mauritius);
- the construction of public latrines and the development of coastal amenities in

Amparihy, Fort Dauphin (with Azafady, Madagascar);

- the rehabilitation and sustainable management of soil and forest resources by diversifying agricultural plots for market gardening in Anjouan (with UNDP, Comoros); and
- the promotion of environmental education for women and youth in Moheli (with UNDP, Comoros).

These projects represent the range of initiatives which the High Commission takes forward each year. We always receive more projects than can possibly be approved, but we welcome submissions. For more information on these small grants schemes, please visit the High Commission's website: [www.mauritius.embassy.gov.au](http://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.



HE Cathy Johnstone hands over books to the Headmistress of Windsor College, Mrs Beebejaun

## Australia's International Development Assistance Program 2009-2010: Africa

The Australian Government will provide an estimated AUD163.9 million in development assistance to Africa in 2009-10, with a particular emphasis on helping partner countries to address the impacts of the global recession.

The Australian Government is broadening and deepening engagement in Africa including through increased development assistance. Australia will support Africa's progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in areas where Australia has a comparative advantage and has already invested. The development assistance will focus on the following areas:

- Supporting food security initiatives particularly under the African Union's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). Australia's assistance will be devoted to agricultural research, particularly in dryland farming and natural resource management, and on increased trade, private sector participation and regional market integration.
- Collaborating with partners on water and sanitation initiatives. This will include support to multilateral organisations for regional analytic and advisory work and investment in water and sanitation services in small towns; support through the United Nations for school sanitation and health initiatives, and funding to Australian NGOs

for community-level initiatives.

- Continued assistance for maternal and child health, including support to HIV orphans and vulnerable children, training for birth attendants, and initiatives to reduce obstetric fistula.
- Building Africa's human resource capacity through long- and short-term scholarships. Australia's scholarship program will increase to 1,000 per year across Africa by 2013. As the program is implemented, five new countries will be offered scholarships in the 2010 intake, with the number of scholarships almost doubling to 200.

## A Helping Hand... For Green Fingers

In these current turbulent global times, a return to the basics is increasingly important. The importance of proper care for our environment and providing extra time for horticultural production is being felt, translating into growing interest in this field of study.

**Horticultural Skills Australia is a specialist college** based in the centre of Melbourne, with another campus situated in Werribee, approximately 35 km from Melbourne. Werribee is a key horticultural district in Victoria specialising in the production and supply

of fresh produce for local, interstate and overseas markets.

The specialist college provides industry-based programs leading to nationally recognized Australian qualifications. Courses offered specialise in various forms of horticulture, ranging from nurseries to

turf, landscaping, parks and gardens. The training programs meet Australian industry standards and ensure that investment in these courses will lead to real jobs.

**The academic coordinator of the college will soon be in Mauritius to conduct a series of information sessions for prospective students interested in courses on horticulture in Australia.**

For more information, please visit: [www.hortskills.com.au](http://www.hortskills.com.au) or contact [romina.panray@austrade.gov.au](mailto:romina.panray@austrade.gov.au)



## Essendon Looks Out For International Students

The Essendon Football Club GLOBALL Program aims to help the international students in Melbourne to have a more positive and active experience and to develop a sense of belonging while studying in Australia.

The pilot program launched in early 2009, aims to use Australian Football to break down the barriers to social inclusion often faced by international students.

"Australian Rules Football is ingrained in the culture of this country and we believe that by introducing International students to our game and developing relationships with supporters we can play an important role in promoting social cohesion,"

**Essendon managing director Peter Jackson said.**

The program, developed in conjunction with the City of Melbourne, RMIT and the Australian Federation of International Students brings international students to

the Essendon Football Club as an introduction to the game and then follows up by inviting them along to their first AFL experience on game day. Students are also involved in learning how to play Australian Rules Football through a system of modified skill and game clinics and will be participating in an upcoming careers session hosted by Essendon staff.

Students are then paired with Essendon members as 'buddies' to create some on-going connection and attendance at future games. So far, over 10 buddy relationships have been established, which also includes a developing relationship with members of the Essendon cheer squad.

"It is a unique social and cultural experience for international students while they study in Melbourne. It can serve as an equally important program for our members," Jackson said.



### Did you know

Innovation drives productivity and economic growth and Australians are adept at innovation, in fact, many Australian innovations and inventions are of world significance.

For example, secondary school age girls around the world are being treated with the world's first cancer vaccine, protecting against most types of cervical cancer. The vaccine was developed in Australia. Its co-developer, Professor Ian Frazer received the 2008 Prime Minister's Prize for Science and the 2008 International Balzan Prize for Preventive Medicine.

Other Australian ground-breaking inventions include the Cochlear implant for the hearing impaired; the ultrasound scanner; the first influenza drug, and the original heart pacemaker.

The program has received very positive feedback from participants, educational institutions and community organisations. The GLOBALL Program has also exceeded its initial 100 participant target in 2009 and is well placed to expand beyond this year.

## Registration Of Australian Citizens

**The High Commission is updating its register of Australian citizens in Mauritius, Seychelles, Reunion and Madagascar. We invite all Australians to update their details. To do this, all you need to do is log on to [www.orao.dfat.gov.au](http://www.orao.dfat.gov.au).**

**While we encourage Australian citizens to register, it is not compulsory. The registration information provided by you will help us to find you in an emergency - whether it is a natural disaster, civil disturbance or a family emergency. It may also be used to convey other information to you such as new travel advisories, notice of elections and information on other matters relevant to travellers and expatriates.**