

# AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS

## PNG COUNTRY BRIEF



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## Purpose

The purpose of this Country Brief is to provide information to volunteers across all Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) programs that will assist in the safe and successful completion of volunteer assignments in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The Brief provides information on important contacts, country background and history, cultural considerations, security guidelines, health and medical issues, transport, and other information for daily living in PNG.

## Contacts

### **Australian High Commission, Port Moresby**

Godwit Road  
Waigani NCD  
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea  
Telephone: +675 325 9333  
Facsimile: +675 325 9183  
Website: <http://www.png.embassy.gov.au>

### **Australian Honorary Consulate, Lae**

Limited consular and passport assistance, (including the lodgement of applications for Australian passports, but not including the issue of emergency travel documents) may be obtained by appointment only.

Room 5, The Professionals Building  
5th Street Lae, Morobe Province  
Papua New Guinea  
Telephone: +675 472 2340  
Mobile: +675 7686 6606  
Fax: +675 472 6038  
Email: [president@lcci.org.pg](mailto:president@lcci.org.pg)

## Emergency Numbers

Police 112

Ambulance 3256822

Fire Brigade 110 / 325 5188

### **AHI Assist:**

24/7 Emergency Hotline: +61 2 9978 6666

Australian Business Volunteers, Policy No: 32089

For other contacts specific to your program please see supplement page at the end of this document.

## Country Profile



Land Area: 452 860 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 7.32 million (2013)

People: 95% Melanesian, 5% Polynesian, Micronesian, Chinese

Language: 833 distinct indigenous languages and two lingua francas (Pidgin and Motu). English is the official language of business and education and is widely spoken.

Time: Papua New Guinea is 10 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), which is the same as AEST. PNG does not observe daylight saving, making it the same time zone as Queensland.

Climate: Tropical; northwest monsoon (December - March), southeast monsoon (May - October); slight seasonal temperature variation.

Religion: 96% Christian, 3% Indigenous religions, and 1% Baha'i

Government: Papua New Guinea has three levels of government - national, provincial and local. The National Parliament is a 111-member unicameral legislature elected for five-year terms by universal suffrage. The Supreme Court, National Court, and local and village courts form an independent justice system.

The Prime Minister: Mr Peter O'Neill (2012)

Governor-General: Mr Michael Ogio (2011)

GDP: 17.07 billion (2011 PPP\$)

GDP per capita: 2,381.9 (2011 PPP\$)

Currency: Papua New Guinea's unit of currency is the Kina, which is divided into 100 toea. Current exchange rates can be found at: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Economy: The country has a vibrant and multifaceted economy with two distinct systems operating side-by-side. The majority of people still use traditional, non-monetary systems of barter that pre-dates European colonisation and provide an agricultural subsistence form of local economy. Co-existing with this traditional system is a modern economy based on mining, petroleum, fishing, forestry and agriculture. PNG is richly endowed with natural mineral and forestry resources, as well as good soils and abundant rainfall to support agricultural production. The development of the resource and agriculture industries is challenged by the rugged terrain and the high cost of developing infrastructure.

## History

Archaeologists believe that humans arrived on Papua New Guinea some 50,000 years ago, presumably by sea from Southeast Asia. A Spanish navigator, Don Jorge de Meneses, is credited with naming it "Papua" a Malay word for the frizziness of Melanesian hair. The term "New Guinea" was applied to the island in 1545 by a Spaniard, Ynigo Ortis de Retez, because of a similarity between the islands' indigenous people and those found on the African Guinea coast.

European traders, adventurers and gold explorers visited in the 16th and 17th centuries, but land claims did not begin until 1828, when the Dutch took control of the western half of New Guinea, now Irian Jaya. Due to the rugged terrain and isolated village communities, the impact of colonization varied throughout the nation.

Prior to World War II, Papua New Guinea was two separate territories. The territory of Papua was a British colony until 1884, and was later ceded to Australia to administer. New Guinea was part of the pre-World War I German Empire, but it, too, was given to Australia to administer at the end of World War I. During World War II, Japanese forces occupied PNG. Following the war, and the expulsion of Japanese forces, the two territories were amalgamated into one, which became known as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

Australia focused its efforts on developing PNG's cash economy and the democratization of the central government. In 1964, the first House of Assembly was established to provide Papua New Guineans a greater role in the country's political decision-making process. With domestic and international pressure for independence mounting, preparations for political independence began in earnest in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1972, Michael Somare became Chief Minister of a democratically elected government, and in 1973 the country was administratively unified and renamed Papua New Guinea. Independence came to the nation on September 16, 1975.

Since independence, no single party has won enough seats to form a government in its own right; all governments have been coalitions. Historically, there has been a high turn-over of parliamentarians at general elections - almost 60 per cent sitting members lost their seats in 2012. With the exception of the 2002-07 and 2007-12 parliamentary terms, changes in government following motions of no-confidence have been a characteristic of Papua New Guinea politics since independence. However, it is hoped that the new legislation recently enacted protecting governments from no-confidence motions for the first half of their 5 year term will improve stability of governments.



## Cultural Considerations

There are four regional cultural and political groups: Papuans (from the south), Highlanders, New Guineans (from the north) and Islanders. Some authorities divide the people into Papuans (predominately descended from the original arrivals) and Melanesians (more closely related to the peoples of the south-western Pacific), though some people (particularly those in the outlying islands) are closer to being pure Polynesian or Micronesian. The dividing lines between these definitions are blurred. There is a limited sense of national unity with most people identifying with their provincial origin, or a regional bias across the four dominant regions, Southern, Highlands, Momase or Islands.

Papuans follow a 'Wantok' culture which means 'one talk' and refers to express patterns of relationships and networks that link people in families, tribes and the same localities. It is an identity concept; association are formed based on this system and wantoks always come first.

Since an overwhelming majority of Papua New Guineans identify as Christians, some Christian traditions are noticed in everyday life, for example, grace at meals and prayers at meetings.



## Dress and Appearance

In most workplaces (government, NGOs, educational institutions) men are expected to wear long trousers at work, such as slacks, cotton drill pants or dress jeans. On top, button-up business shirts or semi-casual shirts are the norm, and collared polo shirts are also commonly worn in workplaces. Neckties are usually only worn by top-level officials and in some high-profile organisations and government departments. Smart casual shoes like boat shoes are fine.

The general rule for women is to dress conservatively. In PNG workplaces women generally wear at least knee-length dresses, skirts and tops or pant suits. People react very positively when foreign women wear the PNG traditional dress, the meri blouse and dress. The wearing of "short" shorts should be avoided by female volunteers as they tend to be associated with promiscuity or being

married to a foreigner. Women should also avoid wearing excessive or unusual jewellery as Papua New Guineans are quite conservative and it may become a barrier to effective communication as well as drawing the attention of thieves.

The most important advice about clothing is to seek advice about what to wear in the tropics. Clothing that is moisture wicking, breathable and durable is recommended as the climate is hot in most places. If you are expecting to visit the highlands such as Mt Hagen and Goroka, you will need to take some items of heavier clothing for the cooler evening and morning weather experienced there.

## **Personal Behaviour**

As a visitor to PNG, ABV volunteers should be aware of and respect local culture and customs. Respect should always be shown for PNG culture and older people. Do not refuse the offer of a gift or food. Permission should be sought before taking photographs of individuals and cultural sites. One should be mindful when walking in public – you should not:

- walk in front of a man or through a group of standing/sitting men;
- walk or jump over a male or an elderly person's personal bag (bilum) as in most cultures, they are the respected members of the family and believed to have ancestral magical powers which they carry around in their bags;
- never put your hands inside or get anything from inside another person's personal bag unless being asked to; and
- women should not step over people or personal belongings as this may lead to the item becoming unclean [it is acceptable to excuse yourself and carefully move his/her stuff out of the way before crossing over].

An alternate route should be chosen if possible to avoid the above situations.

Mixed gender affection should not be shown in public. Avoid holding a long conversation with someone of the opposite sex unless he/she is an ICM, supervisor, counterpart, fellow volunteer or a known friend. After hours, volunteers with supervisors or colleagues of the opposite sex should minimise long, frequent contact. If work trips are required, consider an additional travelling companion.

Adultery is a criminal offence in PNG and punishment may include imprisonment. Homosexual acts are also illegal and punishable by imprisonment. Overt public displays of affection by persons of the same sex should be avoided. Magazines such as 'Playboy' are considered pornographic and are prohibited.

## **Security Risks and Personal Safety**

The DFAT Smart Traveller website has up-to-date information regarding travelling in PNG and current risks to personal safety, and is available at:

[http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Papua\\_New\\_Guinea](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Papua_New_Guinea)

ABV volunteers should read this information prior to departure to PNG and check it regularly while in country [subscription to email updates to this page is available on the above link]. Australian citizens should register with Smart Traveller prior to departure – link to do so is also available on this web page. ABV volunteers are also advised to monitor local media reports while in country to keep abreast of any potential security risks.

Please take note of the following advice for personal safety while in country:

- don't increase your vulnerability by excess alcohol drinking;

- as most crime is opportunistic, consider carrying fewer personal possessions in public, including cash and expensive jewellery/watches;
- it is dangerous to walk alone at night and caution should be taken in all locations during the day – seek local and up-to-date advice on locations to be avoided;
- women should not travel alone in PNG, unless accompanied by a national;
- if walking alone, let someone know your intended destination and estimated arrival time.

The Smart Traveller website link above also has further information which it is useful to become familiar with prior to travel – especially the ‘Safety and Security’, ‘Local Travel’, and ‘Laws’ tabs.

PNG is prone to earth tremors or earthquakes – the local name being ‘guria’ – as well as volcanic eruptions, cyclones, tsunamis and large-scale landslides.



## **No-Go Zones**

ABV volunteers are advised not to enter the following locations in Port Moresby:

- all settlements;
- all local food markets;
- Gerehu – large residential suburb to the north of the city;
- Morata – large suburb to the north of the city;
- Six mile – a community on the eastern edge of the city;
- Parliament Haus precinct on weekends; and
- Koki pedestrian crossing.

Villages are where ABV volunteers should only venture if with a PNG colleague from that area. Volunteers are also advised not to be out of their homes or driving after midnight. This is not an enforced curfew but a strong advisory precaution.

In Madang, Goroka, Alotau, Kavieng, Kokopo, Buka, ABV volunteers are advised not to enter any settlements and not to walk after dark.

## Health and Medical

ABV volunteers may find attitudes to personal health by Papua New Guineans quite different to those found in Australia. There is a widespread lack of awareness regarding risk-related and health-promoting behaviour, and little involvement by local communities in health-promoting activities. Key risks include behaviour and environments that increase the risks of communicable disease and non-communicable disease (such as chewing betel nut and smoking tobacco), and the risks associated with unsafe sexual behaviour.

Malaria, dengue fever and other mosquito-borne diseases are a risk throughout PNG. Certification of vaccination against yellow fever or cholera is required for travellers over one year of age coming from or through infected areas. ABV volunteers are encouraged to take prophylaxis against malaria where necessary and take measures to avoid mosquito bites, including using insect repellent at all times. HIV/AIDs is a critical health issue in PNG and volunteers should take appropriate steps to minimise exposure. Any potential risk of exposure should be immediately reported to your emergency assistance provider and the ICM.

Local water supplies can be interrupted or polluted. Food-borne, water-borne and other infectious diseases (including tuberculosis, typhoid and hepatitis) are common. You are advised to boil all drinking water or drink bottled water, avoid ice cubes and raw and undercooked food. Swimmers should also be aware that water-borne parasites (and crocodiles) pose a risk in many of PNG's rivers. Seek medical advice and call your emergency assistance provider if you have a fever or are suffering from diarrhoea.

By Australian standards, health care facilities in PNG are poor. Facilities in large towns are usually adequate for routine problems and some emergencies, however health facilities in rural areas are very basic and often long distances apart. Reasonable quality health care is available in Port Moresby with a number of private clinics operating there. ABV suggests the following medical centres in Port Moresby, although volunteers should confirm with the ICM upon arrival in country:

Port Moresby Specialist Centre  
Taurama Road  
(behind Port Moresby General Hospital)  
Port Moresby  
+675 325 0709

Paradise Private Hospital  
Taurama Rd  
(across from Port Moresby General Hospital)  
Port Moresby  
+675 325 6022

In an emergency situation, swift contact with your ICM is highly recommended, or for Emergency Medical Assistance contact your emergency assistance provider.

## Transport and Accommodation

All ABV volunteers will need a valid visa to enter PNG. Depending on your circumstances ABV will arrange either a 60 days multiple entry business visa or a longer term Aid worker visa prior to scheduled travel. All volunteers applying for the PNG visa must have an appropriate passport, valid for at least 6 months from the date of departure.



## **Flying and Airport Information**

Jackson's International Airport is the gateway to Papua New Guinea, situated about 8km away from the main town centre of Port Moresby. All baggages must be cleared in Port Moresby. A transfer desk is located within the restricted area of the arrival hall just after Customs for passengers flying to other centres in PNG, so there is no need to push your baggage all the way down to the domestic terminal, which is within walking distance of the international terminal. Air Niugini and Airlines PNG both fly from the domestic terminal. For transfers on other smaller airlines (eg MAF) you will need to take a taxi to the hangers at the other end of the airport.

If travelling on domestic flights within PNG you should always arrive for check-in 2-3 hours early to secure your seat.

It is advised that if you are waiting for your transport/or someone to pick you up from the POM airport, that you do not leave the departure area until they have arrived as once you are out of the departure area, you will not be able to return and safety outside the terminal is not assured.

## **Taxis and Public Transport**

You are advised not to use taxis in Port Moresby. Sourcing a taxi via your hotel could be a safe option but please be guided by the hotel staff. If traveling by a taxi, please ensure that the meter is turned on at the beginning of the journey.

Ark taxis operate in Madang. Where taxis are available in other towns, ask for guidance from your local colleagues, before using a particular service or driver. Make sure that you always travel with someone else until you have established knowledge of trustworthy drivers and how to contact them.

Public Motor Vehicles (PMVs) are the only form of public transport in PNG. PMVs are not to be used in Port Moresby and Goroka. In other areas advice should be sought from the ICM.

ABV strongly recommends against volunteers driving private vehicles while in PNG or using water transports.

## **Work Travel**

All volunteers must advise their Project Manager/ICM of any work/leisure travel in a timely manner, and ensure that any required travel forms are completed prior to the trip. Information required may include:

- date of travel;
- destination and route;
- details of any travel companions; and
- contact details whilst travelling (eg. travel accommodation telephone numbers and mobile telephone details).

Host organisations are expected to provide transport to and from your accommodation to work.



## Accommodation

ABV volunteers may be accommodated in a hotel, a furnished apartment or a furnished house. All accommodation has been security reviewed against a standard set by ABV (DFAT for AVID volunteers). In all cases accommodation will be secure, clean and waterproof with sound walls and floors. The following items are the standard volunteers can expect from their accommodation at their assignment location unless otherwise advised by the ICM or Project Manager:

- Beds with mattress, pillows, sheets and towels;
- Bathroom with running water in the shower or bath and a toilet;
- Air conditioning or ceiling fans;
- Lockable windows with insect screens and curtains;
- Some form of electricity;
- A small refrigerator;
- Table and chair;
- Cooking facilities where available;

Personal charges such as international telephone calls, mini bar or room service are the responsibility of the volunteer.

You should be aware of the difference in living standards between a country like Australia and a developing country like PNG. Through our ICM teams, we ensure that accommodation provided is secure and clean, however many facilities taken for granted in Australia – air conditioning, hot water, television, western food - are not a given. In addition, roads are generally of poorer quality, footpaths are uncommon, power supplies may be disrupted from time to time and, domesticated live stock may be kept in streets and around your buildings near your accommodation.

## Daily Life



Major Banks in PNG are:

- ANZ Bank -- <http://www.anz.com.au/png>
- Westpac Bank - <http://www.westpac.com.pg/>
- Bank South Pacific -- <http://www.bsp.com.pg>

Bank South Pacific represent Western Union although the distinctive Yellow/Black signs will probably only be found in the major towns.

It is recommended that you inform your bank when you will be traveling overseas, and:

- activate internet banking to facilitate transfer of funds between savings and credit card accounts; and
- check on any extra charges associated with withdrawing funds from accounts whilst overseas.

Most of the supermarkets and other shops are hooked up to an EFTPOS and credit card system linked to BSP, Westpac and ANZ accounts, and accept all major credit cards, although VISA, and to a lesser extent Mastercard are most popular. The EFTPOS system is quite reliable and you can get cash-out up to K50-K100 with purchases at most outlets. For safety reasons, it is recommended you use ATM machines inside buildings/bank foyers. You should consider keeping K100-200 on hand for emergency situations.

Tipping is not customary anywhere in PNG. The listed price is what you'll be expected to pay.

Business hours are:

- Banks hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am – 3.00pm Friday 8.45am – 4.00pm

- Commercial firms: Monday to Friday 8.00am – 4.30pm or 5.00pm Saturday 8.00am – 12.00noon
- Government hours: Monday to Friday 7.45am – 4.00pm

Main public holidays are celebrated as follows:

- 1st January – New Year's Day
- Good Friday/Easter Monday
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in June – Queens Birthday
- 23<sup>rd</sup> July – Remembrance Day
- 26<sup>th</sup> August – Repentance Day
- 16<sup>th</sup> September – Papua New Guinea Independence Day
- 25<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Day
- 26<sup>th</sup> December – Boxing Day

Electrical current on the national grid is 240 volts AG 50 Hz. Australian plugs are standard. Power surges and outages are common in nearly all centres so some form of surge protection is highly recommended for valuable electrical equipment and computers.

PNG has a good digital mobile system that covers all of the major centres in the country. You can bring your own unlocked phone and get it connected to a PNG mobile provider or you can buy a mobile phone and connection package. A basic mobile phone costs about AUD\$20 to buy in country. Major mobile phone companies are Digicel (preferred by volunteers as it has the best coverage), BeMobile, and Citifon. A data-enabled SIM card can be purchased and used in a smart-phone to provide mobile and internet services, though this may be costly for significant usage. There is a Digicel office at the airport.

There are 5 or 6 internet service providers in PNG of which the major ones are Digicel, Datec, Daltron Electronics. Most people now use Digicel or Telikom wireless internet which have decent coverage in all of the main centres in PNG. Your Host Organisation may provide you with an e-mail address but it is recommended that you also maintain a web-based e-mail address (eg Gmail, Hotmail or Yahoo) during your time in PNG which is especially useful for private after hours use.

The postal service in PNG can be quite unpredictable. Letters from Australia could take anywhere from 10 days to 10 weeks to be delivered in PNG and vice-a-versa. Anything of value that anyone sends you from Australia (eg CDs, DVDs, electronic gadgets etc) will be subject to import duty and your parcel can be held up for weeks in the Customs office waiting for you to supply an invoice indicating the value.

Food. There are quite a number of restaurants in Port Moresby, and few in other urban centres of Madang, Kavieng, Kokopo, Buka, Alotau and Goroka – many are owned by expats or Asians. A full course menu can range from K50/person to K70/person. Volunteers in Port Moresby are not restricted from dining out within the allowed movement hours as per the in-country code of conduct but restaurants in locations regarded unsafe must be avoided at all times for security reasons. Please ask your ICM to suggest details of suitable “eat out” locations .

In Provincial centres, dinning-out may involve having local fresh seafood and vegetables with rice at the only guest house in town. Often volunteers get invited to family dinners by friends and workmates. There are adequate vegetables and fruits in Papua New Guinea. For Port Moresby based volunteers, local and imported vegetables can be bought from local supermarkets, noting that imported food can be very expensive. Volunteers are not encouraged to visit local markets for security reasons. Provincial based volunteers will find local markets more satisfying than shops as



most vegetables are sold at local markets. Information on suitable markets can be obtained upon commencement of assignment with Host Organisations.

What to bring. You should consider bringing enough supplies of toiletries and sunscreen for your entire stay as all brands may not be available in PNG. Also consider bringing books, hobbies, music devices or laptop computer to fill in any spare time you have as you may not have access to what Australians consider usual forms of entertainment, or be able to come and go as you please during to security concerns. It is also recommended that you bring a surge protection device for any electronic devices you bring.



## Previous Volunteer Contacts

The following is a list of volunteers who have recently been on an ABV assignment to PNG and who have agreed to be contacted to provide information to other volunteers. You should feel free to contact any of these people as first hand practical advice will no doubt assist you in your preparation for your assignment as well as for the country.

Volunteer	Contact Email
Rick Nehmy	ricknehmy@hotmail.com
Bevan Sharp	bevansharp@hotmail.com
Jan Norton	janxmiller@gmail.com
Michelle Bonnici	bonnici_michelle@yahoo.com.au
Tim Barker	barkert41@hotmail.com
Bob Howarth	bhowarth@onthenet.com.au

## Further Information

The following websites may be useful sources of more information, including tourist information:

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/>

<http://www.png.embassy.gov.au/pmsb/home.html>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/papua-new-guinea>

<http://www.papuanewguinea.travel/australia>

# **AVID Program Supplement**

## **In Country Manager**

Jonathan Glenne  
Scope Global  
Level 6, Monian Tower  
Douglas Street, Town, Port Moresby  
PO Box 1130, Port Moresby  
Papua New Guinea  
P: +675 321 3077  
M: +675 7334 0966  
Email: PNG.ICM@scopeglobal.com

## **ABV**

Canberra Office: +61 2 6151 9999

Project Manager: Jude Blacklock, +61 2 6151 9908

## **Travel Policy**

Please see additional procedures for travel at 'AVID Program Travel Guidelines for ABV Volunteers'

## **Security Plan**

ABV volunteers undertaking assignments under the AVID program are required to complete a 'Personal Safety and Security Plan' upon arrival in country. Details of this plan, including the proforma are available in Scope Global's PNG Country Safety and Security Plan.