

# Aussie News

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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION



ABUJA

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## Message from the High Commissioner

I am delighted to assume the role of High Commissioner to Nigeria, with accreditation to ECOWAS, as well as the Republics of Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Benin, Niger and the Gambia at this important time in our engagement with West Africa. The popularity of our Australia Awards program, our increasing interaction in the mining sector, and our growing officials level exchanges testify to a new and promising period in our presence in Africa. I am very pleased to also be in the region at a time when Australia will be undertaking its role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, for the 2013-14 term. It will be particularly important during this time that we listen to our friends in the region whose views will inform us as we participate in the UNSC deliberations.



This is also something of a homecoming for me to this region, having spent a rewarding period as High Commissioner in Accra, prior to returning to Canberra. I am very excited by this opportunity to continue working in West and Central Africa, a region which contains so much potential, talent and resources.

Finally, to the Australian community throughout the region, I look forward to an early opportunity to meet up with you. In particular, I note the important work of our Honorary Consul in Lagos, Alan Davies, who has done a great job in reaching out to the Australian community in southern Nigeria, and I look forward to soon formalising the appointment of the new Honorary Consul to Cameroon.

With my best wishes  
*Jon Richardson*  
 High Commissioner



*Mr Richardson on a project visit to northern Ghana during his posting as High Commissioner in Accra*

## Farewell message from outgoing High Commissioner Ian McConville

We are sad to be heading away from Nigeria after a memorable posting in this fascinating part of the world. As with any posting, the sweetest memories are with the wonderful people we have met in our work in Abuja, across Nigeria, and more broadly in the region. It has been humbling to see the warmth and hospitality that has been extended to myself, my wife Libby, and our three children on so many occasions. We would particularly like to acknowledge the terrific staff at the Australian High Commission in Abuja. It has indeed been a privilege to work with such a talented, committed and professional team and we will miss them dearly. If we, as Team Australia, have done a small part in opening the door for increased engagement between Australia and the region, then "mission accomplished". We look forward to maintaining contact in the future, and we hope that you have a safe and rewarding 2013.



*Ian McConville with his spouse Libby McCutchan and their three kids Sarah, Kieren and Hamish with the Australian High Commission team and families at their farewell during the end of year celebrations in Abuja*

*Ian McConville*

## Foreign Minister Bob Carr appoints a new High Commissioner - welcome to Jon Richardson



On 1 November 2012, Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr announced Mr Jon Richardson as Australia's next High Commissioner to Nigeria, with non-resident accreditation to the Republics of Benin, Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and the Gambia. Mr Richardson commenced his appointment in January 2013, replacing Mr Ian McConville.

Mr Richardson is a career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and has previously served as High Commissioner to Ghana and Director of the Africa Section in DFAT. He was most recently Director of the Department's Resources and Business Liaison Section, representing Australia in such bodies as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberley Process on conflict diamonds. Mr Richardson has also served as Counsellor at the Australian High Commission in London, working on African and Commonwealth issues, and at Australian Embassies in Moscow and Belgrade.

Mr Richardson holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree from the Australian National University and a Master of Business Administration from Henley Management College in the UK. He speaks French and Russian.

***We at the Australian High Commission wish Mr Richardson a very warm welcome to Abuja and a rewarding posting!***



## Australian development cooperation

Each year, the Australian High Commission in Abuja provides direct funding to local organisations to support development projects in communities throughout Nigeria and to our other countries of accreditation. We currently have two grants programs; the Direct Aid Program (DAP) and the Australia Africa Community Grant Scheme (AACGS).

The **DAP** is a small grants scheme intended for grassroots community groups, small NGOs and individuals involved in non-profit development activities. The DAP is administered by the High Commission. For the 2012-2013 period, we have already

supported 16 projects in Nigeria and one in Niger. Many other projects are currently being assessed. The Australian High Commission in Abuja is always looking for worthy DAP projects to support and welcomes funding applications from Benin, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, The Gambia, Niger and Nigeria.

The **AACGS** provides funding to larger NGOs whose activities contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and directly address inequality. The AACGS is entirely managed by the Australian Agency for International

Development (AusAID) office in Accra, but the Australian High Commission will receive proposals which we will pass on to the relevant contact officer.

Application forms can be requested by email.

### Contact:

**DAP Committee**  
**Australian High Commission**  
**Oakland Centre**  
**48 Aguiyi Ironsi Street**  
**Maitama, Abuja - Nigeria**  
**Email: [ahc.abuja@dfat.gov.au](mailto:ahc.abuja@dfat.gov.au)**  
**Tel: +234 (0)803 307 3519**

## Projects recently funded through the DAP

### Beekeeping in Kaduna state



The Zaria-based NGO *Beekeeping Extension Society* trained 20 rural women in Anguwan Dan-Asabe, Kaduna state, in modern beekeeping and honey production in commercial quantities. The DAP made this poverty alleviation project possible by funding the necessary equipment including top bar hives, trap hives, bee suits, veils and hats, boots, hand gloves, hive tools, bellow smokers and baiting materials.

### School renovation in Osun state

In Ijebu-Jesa, Osun state, our DAP funds were put to colourful use, assisting the implementing NGO *Bridge Initiative for African Development* with the renovation of four classroom blocks and the construction of two toilets for the students of the community-based Urban Day Grammar school, established in 1978.



## The Australian Lapdesk Project

The lapdesk is a light and durable platform designed to provide a writing surface for children with no access to a classroom desk, and to support their teachers in making writing a central part of the curriculum. Lapdesks can easily be taken home in the evenings and become a point of pride for students. They don't replace good school furniture, but they represent a cost-effective interim solution for children studying in substandard conditions.

The Australian High Commission in Abuja has commissioned *Kommunity Desks* to produce almost 4000 lapdesks to be distributed to schools in the region. This program is jointly funded through the DAP and the AACGS. Each lapdesk is designed with basic facts about Australia and the host country, including maps and national anthems.

Australian-funded lapdesks have already been presented to students

in Niger and the Republic of Congo, and we are working on projects in Benin and Cameroon. Working with World Vision, UNICEF, and Plan International, the High Commission has identified schools in need, and uses the presentation ceremonies to rally community support and draw attention to the shortage of educational equipment in many African schools.

*The Prime Minister's Special Envoy Mr William Fisher and Third Sec Christopher Watkins handing over a lapdesk to Community leaders in Say, Republic of Niger, June 2012*



*Mr Ian McConville; Third Secretary Dr Chris Watkins; Honorary Consul for the Netherlands in Congo, Mrs Hilly-Anne Fumey (left); and UNICEF Country Representative for Congo, Mrs Marianne Flach (right) distributing lapdesks at a UNICEF displaced persons' camp in Brazzaville, June 2012*

## Potable water and sanitary facilities

Leper settlement in Orji River, Enugu state



In the last financial year, our DAP funds enabled Enugu-based co-operative *Chimfumnanya (9th Mile)* to provide a borehole to the Leper settlement in Orji River, Enugu state. This financial year, we further assisted the project by funding the construction of six toilets and bathrooms for the settlement.

## Library and ICT Project

Orozo, Federal Capital Territory

On 13 November 2012, representatives of the Australian High Commission attended the inauguration of the DAP-funded library and ICT project in Orozo, FCT. Items donated include computers, Microsoft packages and other software,



*Courtesy Bamidele Jones/NAN*

a 5kva stabilizer, ceiling fans, a small generator, computer tables, partitioned library desks and chairs, library shelves, as well as literature and story books.



# Prime Minister's Special Envoy William Fisher

visiting Niger, Benin, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo



*Australian delegation after meeting with Congolese Foreign Minister Basile Ikouébé, June 2012*



*Cameroon President Paul Biya receiving Special Envoy William Fisher, October 2012*



*Cameroon Prime Minister Philémon Yang presenting a gift to the Australian delegation, October 2012*

The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for the Francophonie, Mr William Fisher, was a tireless traveller to this region in 2012, and it has been a privilege for the High Commission to participate in all of his program of high-level visits to our francophone countries of accreditation.



*The Australian delegation during the audience with Benin President Dr Thomas Boni Yayi, August 2012*

With recent visits to the Republics of Benin, Congo, Cameroon and Niger, the Special Envoy forged strong bonds with his interlocutors and has left a lasting legacy of substantive engagement with the region.



*Special Envoy William Fisher and departing High Commissioner Ian McConville presenting a lapdesk to HE Mr Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger, June 2012*

## Australia wins seat on UN Security Council

Australia has been elected to serve as a non-permanent member on the United Nations Security Council for 2013 and 2014. For the next two years, Australia will have a direct hand in shaping solutions to the world's most pressing security challenges.

Australia greatly appreciates the strong support of our African and global partners in the October election and the confidence they have shown in Australia.

Australia will play a constructive role across the breadth of the Council's peace and security agenda. Apart from Africa, other key priorities will include Afghanistan, Syria, Iran and North Korea. Australia will also work to ensure the effectiveness of various sanctions regimes, including those targeting individuals associated with Al-Qaida.



*Foreign Minister Bob Carr casting Australia's vote in New York*

*"It's countries saying 'we like Australia. We think Australia's role is good and positive and we want to see Australia provide leadership'." - Foreign Minister Bob Carr*

## Departing High Commissioner's farewell visits

The former High Commissioner Mr Ian McConville undertook a "bitter sweet" farewell tour of his countries of non-resident accreditation in the final few months of 2012. While he (and his family) have a heavy heart at having to say farewell, it was also an opportunity to reflect on the significant advances that have been achieved in the bilateral relationships with all the countries in the region. He and the family look forward to an opportunity to savour the joys of West and Central Africa at a different pace in the future...perhaps even as tourists! But that's another story!



**Ian McConville meeting with Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba in Libreville, September 2012**



**Ian McConville and his spouse Libby McCutchan with Congolese Mines Minister Pierre Oba, September 2012**



**Ian McConville with Gambian President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh in Banjul, October 2012**

## Senior officials visit Abuja

21-22 November 2012

Assistant Secretary of DFAT's Africa Branch, Dave Sharma, conducted a successful two day visit to Abuja. Apart from high level calls on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other highlights included discussions with National Security Adviser Alhaji Sambo Dasuki and key ECOWAS officials. Also in the delegation was Ashton Robinson, Assistant Director General, Office of National Assessments.



**Ashton Robinson and Ian McConville during a courtesy visit to the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr Kadré Désiré Ouedraogo**

**Photo on the right: Mr Sharma cutting the welcome cake at the Australian High Commission.**



## ASOHOM

Association of Spouses of Heads of Mission

In December 2012, Ms Libby McCutchan completed a challenging but very rewarding two-year term as Chair of the Association of Spouses of Heads of Mission (ASOHOM). Over 40 embassies are members of this group. Apart from ASOHOM's significant fundraising role through the annual International Charity Bazaar, ASOHOM has supported over 15 community aid projects in the last two years, focusing on women and children in need in Nigeria. ASOHOM has conducted a range of high level calls to discuss ways of promoting local charities, including on the First Lady, Dame Patience Jonathan, and the spouse of the Minister for the Federal Capital Territory.

At the Bazaar this year, Team Australia's fund raising through meat pies, sausage sandwiches and busking garnered nearly \$600 towards an overall ASOHOM total of \$33,750. The Minister for Women's Affairs and Social Development was the Guest of Honour at the Bazaar.



**Mrs Libby McCutchan, Vice Chair Mrs Odette Toure, Mrs Rosemary Hua (First Step Action for Children Initiative) and Mrs Verena Hodel (spouse of Swiss Ambassador) during the commissioning of a borehole in Tyomu village, Benue State**



## Bilateral relations

Australia signs MoUs with Nigeria, Benin and The Gambia

**Prime Minister's  
Special Envoy  
William Fisher  
and Beninese  
Foreign Minister  
Nassirou Bako-  
Arifari after the  
signing of the  
Australia-Benin  
MoU in Cotonou**



**Amb. Martin  
Uhomoibhi  
and Mr Dennis  
Richardson  
during the  
Australia-Nigeria  
MoU signing in  
Canberra**

On 5 September 2012, the Permanent Secretaries of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU provides a framework for future cooperation, including regular consultations on bilateral and international issues of mutual interest.

Australia has also recently signed MoUs with the Government of The Gambia on 13 July 2012, and the Government of Benin on 17 August 2012.

## Australia's counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Guinea

The rise in the incidences of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has emerged as a pressing regional problem. These attacks threaten the security and economic prosperity of West and Central African nations, with flow-on effects for landlocked states. Australia has considerable expertise in managing maritime issues and is committed to assisting African states and institutions to respond to this problem.

In July 2012, Australia hosted a Counter-Piracy Conference in Perth. The conference, which included participants from Benin and Nigeria, explored the lessons learned from addressing the problem of piracy in South-East Asia, and how these might be applied to piracy off the

coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea. The conference was followed-up with a counter-piracy workshop in New York, co-hosted by the United Nations missions of Australia and Benin.

Australia is supporting the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the development of an integrated maritime strategy. The strategy will provide a comprehensive response to the threats facing the ECOWAS maritime domain, including piracy and armed robbery, drug trafficking and transnational crime, illegal fishing, and environmental degradation.

Australia also provided training to combat piracy during a four-week



**Escalating piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea (Courtesy: Piracy Watch)**

Ocean Governance and Maritime Security Course held in Wollongong during November 2012. The Course brought together 30 naval and maritime experts from across West Africa, including three from Benin, two from Cameroon, and four from Nigeria.





## Australia appoints new Trade Commissioner for West Africa

In 2012, Austrade appointed Gordon Chakaodza as the inaugural Trade Commissioner for Accra, Ghana, as part of its broader expansion in the growth areas of West Africa. Mr Chakaodza has extensive commercial experience and was formerly Austrade's National Manager, Mining and Resources. He will work with the Australian High Commissions in Abuja and Accra on developing Australia's growing trade and investment ties with West Africa, and promoting Australian education and training.

Austrade is the Australian Government's trade and investment development agency. Austrade can help companies around the world to source goods and services from Australia by:

- ⇒ Helping you identify and contact Australian suppliers;
- ⇒ Providing insight on Australian capabilities; and
- ⇒ Alerting you to the latest products and services out of Australia to help you grow your business.

Austrade also helps international companies establish and build their business in Australia. Austrade provide the expertise required to make good investment decisions, including:

- ⇒ Initial coordination of all investment enquiries and assistance;
- ⇒ Information on the Australian business and regulatory environment; and
- ⇒ Market intelligence and investment opportunities.

**Trade related enquiries can be addressed to Austrade in Accra:**

**Ms Yvonne Ablorh-Quarcoo**  
Business Development Manager  
Austrade Accra

c/o Australian High Commission  
2 Second Rangoon Close  
(Cnr Josef B. Tito Avenue)  
Cantonments Accra  
Ghana

Tel: +233 302 216 400/430

Fax: +233 302 777 080

Email: [info@austrade.gov.au](mailto:info@austrade.gov.au)

[yvonne.ablorh-quarcoo@austrade.gov.au](mailto:yvonne.ablorh-quarcoo@austrade.gov.au)

Web: <http://www.austrade.gov.au>

Foreign Minister Bob Carr announced on Human Rights Day that Australia will join the *Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights* initiative. As a country with renowned expertise in responsible mining, Australia is proud to join the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Colombia and Switzerland in this initiative.

## Australia to join global human rights and mining initiative

Senator Carr emphasised that Australian mining companies are expanding overseas and that the *Voluntary Principles* provide practical guidance to these mining, oil and gas companies on lowering risks and managing mine security in a way that respects the human rights and freedoms of local communities and prevents conflict.

Many Australian companies, such as BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto, already use the *Voluntary Principles* and the number is expected to grow as more companies realise the benefits.

The *Voluntary Principles* provide guidance to companies on:

- ⇒ conducting assessments of human rights risks associated with security;
- ⇒ screening/training public and private security forces in human rights issues;
- ⇒ ensuring that the use of force is proportional and lawful; and
- ⇒ developing systems for reporting and investigating allegations of human rights abuses.

For more information please visit [www.voluntaryprinciples.org](http://www.voluntaryprinciples.org)



Courtesy: Kogi Iron Limited

## Mining development



### Middle Island RESOURCES LIMITED

In the words of its Managing Director, Rick Yeates, while

Middle Island Resources (MDI) may only be a small Australian gold exploration company, it has big aspirations and a big heart. Listed on the ASX in December 2010, the company's objective is to build a minimum 1.1 million ounce resource base. MDI is currently exploring in three West African countries: Burkina Faso, Liberia and the Republic of Niger.

While only at the exploration stage, the company directors are convinced that building solid and meaningful relationships with the local community from the outset is essential. To this end, the company dedicates 5% of their exploration budget to support local development projects. The projects must be locally-owned, sustainable by the community and implemented through partnerships drawing on local skills and expertise.



Courtesy: Middle Island Resources Ltd

In Niger, MDI has its exploration base in the Tillabéry region where the Perth-based explorer holds interests of between 70 and 100 per cent in eight granted permits and applications. The company has partnered with French-based NGO Eau Vive and the Australian High Commission in Abuja to construct a school with latrines and a hand pump for the local community of Koutougou where MDI has its base camp.

### Exploring golden frontiers in Niger

### Iron project in the Republic of Congo



Equatorial Resources Limited is an ASX listed iron ore exploration and development company with two 100% owned large-scale iron ore projects in the Republic of Congo. The company's Mayoko-

Moussondji Iron Project in the South-West region and Badondo Iron Project in the North-West region are both highly prospective with significant scale potential. Equatorial Resources is accelerating drilling and development activity with the ambition to become a major African iron company. The company has its head office in Perth, Western Australia, and a country office in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo.



Courtesy: Equatorial Resources

## AFRICA DOWNUNDER

29 - 31 August 2012 | Perth, Western Australia

Pan Pacific Perth & Novotel Perth Langley



The tenth annual Africa Down Under (ADU) mining conference was held in Perth from 29 to 31 August. The conference, which included 180 exhibition booths and more than 80 presentations, attracted around 2500 delegates including 18 mining ministers. Among them were Mr Régis Immongault (Gabon), Arc. Musa Mohammed Sada (Nigeria), Mr Omar H. Tchiana (Niger) and Mr Pierre Oba (Republic of Congo).

The conference provided a valuable opportunity for members of industry, government, finance, and the media from Australia and Africa to discuss the burgeoning resources relations between the two continents.

There are over 200 Australian companies involved in 650 projects in 37 countries across Africa, with A\$50 billion in current and prospective investment.



Foreign Minister Bob Carr (centre) surrounded by Australian Heads of Missions in Africa at ADU (from left to right): Matthew Neuhaus (Harare); Ann Harrap (Pretoria); Sandra Vegting (Port Louis); Billy Williams (Accra); Graham Wilson (HOM designate to Pretoria); and Ian McConville (Abuja)



## Mining study tours

The Australian Government continues to provide training, study tours, short-term advisory support and funding for capacity building programs, particularly in the areas of mining governance, agriculture and food security and public policy reform, to African governments through the Australia-Africa Partnerships Facility (AAPF).

The mining sector is a significant contributor to economic growth with considerable potential to help reduce poverty and accelerate human development. Australia is sharing its expertise in mining by funding a large number of mining related study tours, with 30 participants from Nigeria, Niger, Gabon and Cameroon in 2012. Below are impressions of some of the mining study tours that took place in the last few months.

### Women in Mining

26 October - 9 November 2012, South Africa & Australia



Woodside employees **Brenda Njeru** and **Narelle Dale** with participants from **Madagascar, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo**



Gabonese participants **Hélène Ada Bekale Essia** and **Sandra Cheyi Satisse** with colleagues during the team building exercise at **University of Queensland Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI)**

### Uranium study tour

12-18 August 2012, Australia

**Ranger Mine Supervisor Mike Stone** with **Boureima Yacouba (Niger)**, **Alphonse Bikulamchi (Tanzania)** and **Mpumzi Bonga (Zambia)** at the **Kakadu National Park**



**Ace Barulaganye (Botswana)**, **Peter Chilumanga (Malawi)** and **Ali Ari Tchougoune (Niger)** posing with **Aboriginal dancers** at the **Territory Wildlife Park, Darwin**



### Alumni Forum

12-16 November 2012, Mozambique



**Niger alumni Oumaraou Kane** (second from left) during the tour of the **Medium Institute of Geology and Mining in Moatize, Mozambique**



**Nigerian alumni Dauda A. Awojobi** (second from left) with other participants inspecting coal at the **Minas Moatize LDA mine**

## Training opportunities in Australia

Every year, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) invites a number of international junior diplomats to participate in the department's graduate program.

From 6 August to 5 October 2012, 51 DFAT Graduate Trainees and one New Zealand Exchange Officer were joined by 26 international participants from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Latin America and for a training program known as 'International Participation in Graduate Training' (IPGT). Among them were **Ms Jennifer Zidon Mshelia** and **Mr Victor Nwaoba Itumo** from Nigeria, as well as Gabonese official **Mr Ludwig Ipouta-Oroumbongany**.



**Victor, Ludwig and Jennifer with international participants from Cambodia, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Malaysia, East Timor, Indonesia and South Sudan**

The IPGT aims to develop the professional skills and knowledge of junior diplomats as well as build strong and enduring personal and professional links between participants.

The program includes a range of academic short courses, professional skills training and case study exercises relevant to the work of junior diplomats. In addition to the training provided in Canberra, participants are also given the opportunity to travel to regional areas of Australia to better their understanding of contemporary foreign and trade policy issues affecting Australia.

### International Participation in Graduate Training (IPGT) 2012



**Former DFAT Secretary Mr Dennis Richardson presenting Ms Mshelia with her course certificate**

*"The IPGT training was a life rewarding experience for me" - Jennifer Mshelia*

*"The IPGT program is unique and provides an unparalleled avenue for professional diplomatic, academic, social and cultural integration at an international level, which holds multiple benefits for the host country and participants not only for the present, but also for the future" - Victor Itumo*

From 15 to 17 October 2012, the Australian Office of Trade Negotiations offered a Trade Policy Course bringing together both Australian and international participants from government and industry. The objectives of the course were to introduce the basic instruments of trade policy; introduce the global trading environment in which Australia's trade policy and negotiations operate; and equip participants with practical skills to help them operate effectively on



trade policy issues overseas or in their agency headquarters.

International participants were also invited to attend an additional two-

day program involving development-focused discussions and engagement with relevant counterparts from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

*"An insightful course on the nitty-gritty of trade policy, with practical exposure to negotiations and its vagaries. Quite a memorable experience, bringing to bear the cultural idiosyncrasy of participants in practical negotiations" - Ubelejit R. Ikuru*

### Trade Policy Course

15-19 October 2012, Canberra

Among this year's international participants were Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials **Mr Adamou Amadou** (Niger, pictured left); **Mr Adjignon A. Ame-Agboviar** (Benin, below); and **Mr Ubelejit Renner Ikuru** (Nigeria, below).





## Australia Awards DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

As part of its commitment to increase its engagement with African nations, the Australian Government has increased its development assistance program across the region almost four-fold since 2009. A major component of this program is an ambitious, pan-African program of development scholarships and fellowships: Australia Awards in Africa (AAA).

Over the past three years, the number of scholarships available for African professionals has increased ten-fold to a total of 1,000 development awards annually. One quarter of all Australian development scholarships are now directed to Africa.

Australia Awards comprises four categories of scholarships:

1. Short Course Awards (SCA): Targeted professional development opportunities in a specialised field. The SCA range in duration from one to three months. Training is delivered in Australia as well as in Africa.
2. Australian Development Scholarships Long-Term Awards (LTA): Postgraduate scholarships leading to an academic qualification from an Australian university, usually at Master level. Twenty PhD Awards are also available each year in Agriculture.
3. Australian Leadership Award Scholarships (ALAS): Competitive supplementary award for high-achieving LTA recipients aiming at addressing priority development areas by enhancing leadership capacity.
4. Australian Leadership Award Fellowships (ALAF): These support Africans to study or carry out specific research with an Australian institution that will directly benefit their work back home.

For more details on eligibility criteria and how to apply please refer to [www.adsafrica.com.au](http://www.adsafrica.com.au)

*Promoting  
development  
through education*



## AAA pre-departure briefing 2012 for LTA awardees from Nigeria, Cameroon and The Gambia

For 2013, a total of 52 scholars from Nigeria (31), Cameroon (12) and The Gambia (9) have been awarded post graduate scholarships under the AAA program. Two Nigerian Master-level awardees were also selected for an Australian Leadership Awards Scholarship.

From 18 to 19 October 2012, the Australian Government hosted the scholarship awardees at a pre-departure briefing in Abuja. The workshop provided essential information, including how to successfully relocate as well as advice about living and studying in Australia, and their obligation to return to their home country for a minimum period of two years after completing the scholarship. Moreover, they had a chance to meet AAA alumni who shared their valuable experiences at a farewell function at the official residence in Abuja.



**Left:** Two Nigerian awardees conveying thanks to the organisers; **Right:** Group picture incl. representatives of the Australian High Commission in Abuja, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), AAA managing contractor GRM, awardees and alumni from Nigeria, Cameroon and The Gambia as well as Government representatives from the three countries

# Touring art exhibition

Message Stick - Indigenous Identity in Urban Australia



From 10 to 21 August 2012, the Australian High Commission hosted the touring Indigenous Australian art exhibition 'Message Stick: Indigenous Identity in Urban Australia' in Abuja.

The exhibition was held in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art, was generously hosted by the Transcorp Hilton Hotel and sponsored by the Australian-Nigerian firms DeltaAfrik Engineering Ltd/Worley Parsons as well as KCM Mining Ltd.

The official opening on 10 August was well-attended with about 200 guests. Remarks were given by then High Commissioner Ian McConville and Mr George Ufot, Director of Culture, representing the Minister of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation. A didgeridoo performance by London-based trumpet/didgeridoo player Mr Chris Williams, and a performance of traditional Nigerian dancing and drumming by the dance troupe of the

Nike Centre for Art and Culture complemented the event.

Message Stick formed the centrepiece of a broader program of cultural diplomacy linking the Indigenous Australian and Nigerian cultures. Part of this was a half day children's art and music workshop including didgeridoo music, Nigerian dance, dot paintings and tie-dye, which was attended by more than 70 children from local and international schools in Abuja.

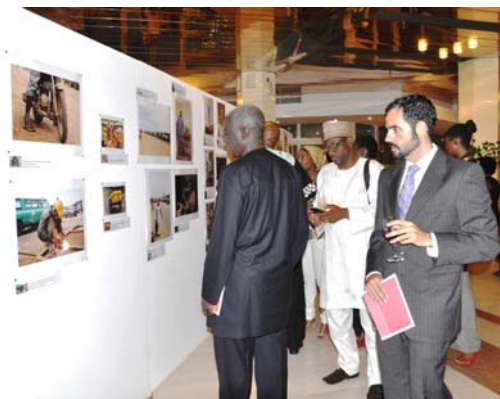
## Photography workshop

The Message Stick exhibition was complemented by a side exhibition of 31 images of 'Urban Life in Nigeria' by young, Abuja-based photographers.

These images were the product of a three-day photography workshop funded by the Australian High Commission and conducted by Australian filmmaker Jolyon Hoff in May 2012.

Depicting everyday life in Mpape, an Abuja satellite settlement, the photographs provided an excellent link to the theme of Urban Indigenous identity in Message Stick. The images were also a timely reflection on changes in Nigeria's urban environment, with Mpape slated for demolition to make way for a new housing development.

The ten workshop participants were presented with their certificates jointly by the High Commissioner, the Director of Culture, and the Director General of the National Gallery of Art during the opening reception (pictured below left).



Courtesy: Amina Muhtar

Left and middle: opening of the exhibition; right: photograph by Amina Muhtar, selected for the photography exhibition



## Visa information

As a multicultural and open country, Australia welcomes people from all places to either visit or make Australia their home for good. In either case, if you are not an Australian citizen, you must remember to obtain a visa before you travel.

Visa application process for Nigerian citizens:

- 1) Visit the website of the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to find the appropriate visa ([www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)).
- 2) Visit the websites of VFS in Nigeria ([www.vfsglobal.com/australia/nigeria](http://www.vfsglobal.com/australia/nigeria)) and the Australian High Commission in Pretoria, South Africa ([www.southafrica.highcommission.gov.au](http://www.southafrica.highcommission.gov.au)) to obtain information on visa requirements and application process.
- 3) Submit your complete visa application attaching all required documents to the VFS centre in Lagos or Abuja.
- 4) The visa processing takes an average of 20 working days – make sure you lodge your application early enough.

Note: You can track your application by entering your receipt number and your last name on the VFS website!

**VFS in Lagos:**  
No.16, Billings Way  
Ground Floor  
Orgun  
Ikeja, Lagos

**VFS in Abuja:**  
No. 38, Lobito Crescent,  
Wuse II  
Abuja  
FCT

**Website:** [www.vfsglobal.com/australia/nigeria](http://www.vfsglobal.com/australia/nigeria)

**Via email:** [info.ausng@vfshelpline.com](mailto:info.ausng@vfshelpline.com)

**By phone:** 09 8701519

**Opening hours:** 08.00 – 15.00, Monday to Friday

Visa applications from Nigeria, Benin and The Gambia are being processed by the **Australian High Commission in Pretoria, South Africa** (for more information on application process: [www.southafrica.highcommission.gov.au](http://www.southafrica.highcommission.gov.au))

Visa applications from Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and the Republic of Congo are being processed by the **Australian High Commission in Nairobi, Kenya** (for more information on application process: [www.kenya.highcommission.gov.au](http://www.kenya.highcommission.gov.au))

## Consular information

An important function of the Australian High Commission is to protect the interests of Australians overseas and to assist in ensuring their welfare. As such, we are committed to providing effective, prompt and courteous consular services, delivered in an equitable way, to all Australians requiring them. In order to assist Australians abroad, it is important that you register with us so that we can contact you in an emergency.

On the *Smartraveller* website, Australians can also find information about travelling overseas and on the consular services the High Commission can provide. Importantly, there is also a link to the travel advisories

for Nigeria and the other countries for which we are responsible. These advisories are updated regularly, so we suggest that those interested in receiving updates subscribe by registering their travels on the *Smartraveller* website.

Also note that all Australians travelling abroad can enter the “Travel Tales” competition (on the *Smartraveller* website) to win a share of \$6000 in travel vouchers for overseas adventures.

Finally, if consular assistance is required, we recommend you contact the **dedicated 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre hotline** on **+61 2 6261 3305**.



“Smartraveller knew I was nearby when the bomb went off. Luckily I’d registered my travel plans with them. Smartraveller contacted me to make sure I was safe.”

**REGISTER**  
your travel plans



“Thanks to Smartraveller’s updates on volcanic ash delays, we were able to change our flights, avoiding financial and airport traumas.”

**SUBSCRIBE**  
to travel advice updates



“I didn’t think I could afford travel insurance but Smartraveller convinced me that I couldn’t afford not to. Without insurance I would now have a \$32,000 debt.”

**INSURE**  
yourself and your belongings

**For all Australian living or travelling abroad please remember to register with your Embassy or High Commission on the following link: <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>**

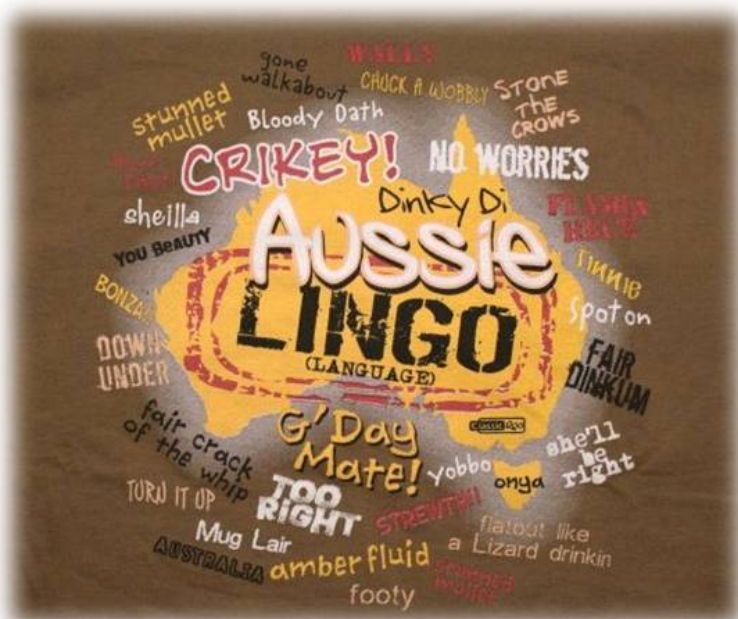
## The Australian team at *Message Stick*



Back row (L to R): Hamish McConville, Third Secretary Chris Watkins, Senior Admin Officer and Deputy Head of Mission Neil Sanderson, Third Secretary Tom Beamish, didgeridoo performer Chris Williams, PA to the High Commissioner Jane Heatherington with Lucille Okeji, Accountant Femi Esan, Property Manager Hakeem Lawal with daughter Mariam, Honorary Consul Alan Davies, Accountant Patricia Okeji with daughter Bernice

Front row (L to R): Head of Mission Driver David Davou, Research Officer Mirella Mahlstein Ajibade, former High Commissioner Ian McConville and youngest son Kieren, Admin Officer Sandy Costagliola

Absent: Admin and Consular Officer Latonia Dabiri-Mpamugo, Drivers Emmanuel Affon and Alfred Okesokun



### Australian High Commission

5th Floor, Oakland Centre

48 Aguiyi Ironsi Street

Maitama, Abuja

Nigeria

Office Phone: (+234) (0)9 461 2780

Office Mobile: (+234) (0)803 307 3519

(+234) (0)818 434 1046

(+234) (0)705 890 9230

E-mail: [ahc.abuja@dfat.gov.au](mailto:ahc.abuja@dfat.gov.au)

[www.nigeria.highcommission.gov.au](http://www.nigeria.highcommission.gov.au)