

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Tasmanian support for bolstering of Samoan democracy

The Australian Government has committed nearly \$900,000 over three years towards implementing the recommendations of a legislative needs assessment of the Parliament of Samoa by the University of Tasmania's Dr Richard Herr.

Last year Dr Herr, Academic Program Director for the Law Faculty's Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure course, was asked by the United Nations Development Program's Pacific Centre in Suva to assess institutional strengthening for the Samoan Parliament, which comprises a Legislative Assembly of 49 members, 47 of whom are *matai* (traditional heads of families).

The subsequent report was accepted by the Samoan Parliament almost in its entirety and on the basis of that, the UNDP put together a project support document for implementing the recommendations.

The agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid program, AusAID, is supporting this initiative with \$870,000 and the UNDP is seeking another \$500,000 from other international donors. The funding will allow substantial upgrading of facilities, as well as professional development for staff and members.

Dr Herr's report advocated bolstering the role of women in the Parliament, fostering a more effective formal Opposition and also developing an outreach program both through the extension of the committee system and public education.

He has just returned from the Samoan capital, Apia, where he discussed with parliamentary staff aspects of the implementation of the report, under the auspices of the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and the Parliament of Tasmania, which is twinned with the Samoan Parliament.

The project support document will be launched as part of the 50th anniversary of Samoan independence on June 1.

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