

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Samoa democracy strengthened by delivery of University education

Tasmanian academics are delivering courses to Parliamentary officers in Samoa under a program which may be extended to other small democracies in the Pacific region.

Samoan Prime Minister The Hon. Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Neioti Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi delivered the keynote address at a recent graduation of 20 Parliamentary clerks in the island nation.

They completed the University of Tasmania Parliamentary Law, Practice and Procedure Course under a program supported by the Samoan and Australian Governments, and the Parliament of Tasmania.

The course has been delivered as part of a range of initiatives – including education for Samoan Parliamentary Members and officers – which were recommended from a parliamentary needs assessment requested by the United Nations Development Program.

That assessment was carried out by the University of Tasmania's Dr Richard Herr, who is academic co-ordinator for the course and was in Samoa for the graduation, along with Tasmanian MLC Kerry Finch.

“The aim of these activities has been to strengthen institutionally the Parliament of Samoa,” Dr Herr said. “It has been a three-year capacity building and institutional strengthening project.”

“The Samoan Parliamentary Support Project has sought to provide a solid skills development platform for the members and professional development education for the staff of the Parliament.”

Dr Herr said two groups of about 20 had completed the course in Samoa and consideration was being given to extending it to other small democracies in the Pacific region.

“This sort of education builds up the professionalism for people who are responsible for the delivery of good Parliamentary process,” Dr Herr said. “This is particularly important in the Westminster System where so many of the rules are not written down and so depend on the Clerks and parliamentary staff to serve effectively as the corporate knowledge for the Parliament.”