



The Hon Charlie Lynn MLC

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7 April 2009

Sir Michael Somare MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Waigani NCD
Papua New Guinea

Dear Sir Michael,

Re: Declaration of Kokoda Day to honour the New Guinea Wartime Carriers

I wish to seek your support for the declaration of an official 'Kokoda Day' in Papua New Guinea.

The Wartime Carriers (fuzzy-wuzzy angels) have never been officially recognized for their service during the war in the Pacific. They are the only group never to have received a medal. I have tried to address this issue with a couple of our Prime Ministers but have not been successful. I have attached a copy of my latest submission to our current Prime Minister on the issue. I am hoping he will be more understanding as he has trekked Kokoda and has seriously re-engaged with PNG.

I propose that 3 November be proclaimed as 'Kokoda Day' because this is day when the Australian flag was raised in Kokoda towards the end of the Kokoda campaign.

The symbolism of the raising of the flag is important because it was the culmination of an extraordinary effort against all the odds by American, Australian and PNG naval, army and airforces, the coast-watchers and the New Guinea Wartime Carriers. It represented a turning of the tide against an enemy that had been deemed to be invincible before that.

The aim of 'Kokoda Day' is not celebrate war or our victory over the Japanese. It is to commemorate the spirit of those who served and sacrificed so much for the peace we now enjoy.

I do not propose this as a holiday but as an official day of commemoration dedicated to encourage schools, veteran/community organizations, business and government to reflect on the service and sacrifice of PNG/Australian servicemen and women and PNG Carriers in the New Guinea campaigns during the Pacific War.

I believe the proclamation of such a day in PNG would cause a significant influx of tourists from Australia to attend commemorative ceremonies at Kokoda, Remembrance Park and Bomana War Cemetery.

This year there will be approximately 700 trekkers on the Kokoda Trail during the Anzac period. This is the peak season for trekking as people want to experience the trek and attend dawn services at Bomana and Isurava.

I believe the proclamation of a 'Kokoda Day' in PNG would be even more significant because of the growing awareness of the Kokoda campaign in Australia.

Such a day would also provide a welcome boost to tourism in Oro Province – particularly Kokoda and the surrounding areas. 'Kokoda Day' would comprise a dawn service at Kokoda, a re-enactment of the raising of the flag by schoolchildren, cultural dances, sing-sings and markets. Local tour operators could also organize overnight treks or helicopter tours to the Isurava Memorial as part of the activity.

The following day people would return to Port Moresby for an official service at Remembrance Park and a later 'beating of the retreat' at Bomana.

I have no doubt that such a format would see 'Kokoda Day' becoming more popular than Anzac Day in PNG.

I would be happy to work with you, the RSL and PNG Tourism to help plan and promote such a day in PNG.

I would appreciate your consideration of the proposal.

Yours sincerely,



CHARLIE LYNN MLC

Cc:

- The Hon Charles Abel MP, Minister for Culture and Tourism
- The Hon Suckling Tamanabae MP, Governor of Oro Province
- H.E. Chris Moraitis, Australian High Commissioner
- H.E. Charles Lepani, PNG High Commissioner
- Sir Frederick Reiher KBE CMG