

# Wayne Wetherall – Antithesis of the Kokoda Spirit

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## Preamble

Kokoda provided Wayne Wetherall an opportunity to transform himself from an obscure suburban salesman into a self-proclaimed ‘*adventurer, historian, explorer and philanthropist*’ with a ‘*passion for our soldiers*’ – until he was summoned to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) where he faced a sordid raft of accusations about the dark side of his character.

Evidence during the four-day hearing related to Wetherall bullying, harassing and intimidating his female staff; targeting vulnerable female trekkers; soliciting sexual favours from female staff in Port Moresby; fathering an illegitimate child in PNG; and exploiting his guides and porters on the Kokoda Trail.

*‘Okay. So there were many messages about Mr Wetherall and his girlfriends, and there were many messages of Mr Wetherall trying to get his girlfriends to engage in group sex with many men. There were many messages where Mr Wetherall would try and engage or coerce his current girlfriend into a gangrape situation with five or six men. There were just many messages where he insisted on – initially, (name omitted) a PNG staff member in – who lived in PNG. She was one of our staff and when he was going to PNG, messages would pop up when they were talking that he would insist that she meet him in his hotel room when he arrived, so that she could – she could perform fellatio on him. He wouldn’t use that terminology, and she – her payment for that would be something like a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red. There were – there was much talk about the fact that he would speak to whichever girlfriend it was at the time about how he loved cock. He would refer to – he would – the language was really vulgar and obscene and there’s pornographic – there were many messages, but there was also many photos, and the photos were very graphic of – of people’s – like, women’s vaginas and women’s – men’s penises, of dildoes, of Mr Wetherall performing fellatio on another man.’*

*‘I was sick. I – I was shocked. Really shocked. I was – it bothered me a lot. I was – I was sick in the stomach over it. I – it was unbelievable. I’d never seen anything quite like that, so, yeah, my reaction was absolutely shock and sickness and – I – I just couldn’t – part of my brain just thought it was a joke. I just didn’t – I couldn’t believe it. It made me physically unwell. Like I said – I think I said earlier, there was much talk about, you know, my supposed stomach cancer.’*

*‘Mr Wetherall constantly would try and reduce the wages of the PNG staff and porters and – and so – or their food allowance. We would do what we call trek expenses, so porters are allowed X amount of dollars to buy food for X amount of days on the Kokoda Track, and the way he would reduce his costs is always to take from the locals, whether it be their wages or their food supplements, and I – he would refer to me as either the Irish Union Rep or his Jiminy Cricket, because I would always fight to make sure that they – they didn’t have a pay increase, they just maintained what they should be getting by rights, because I felt that to reduce five kina from these people, which is probably \$2.50 in our terms was a huge amount for them, and meant a lot to them and to us was nothing. So I would always try and keep him honest in that regard, and I guess . . .’*

*‘I’m a mother of four children, and I’ve just learnt you put one foot in front of the other. I was a stay at home mother for a long time, and it didn’t matter whether I was sick or not sick, if I had children that needed me, you just kept going, and I think I just had that mindset. You just got to keep going and put one foot in front of the other and I simply –*

*until I broke down in Dr Harrison's office, I really didn't realise that I was struggling or not coping with what was going on in the office.'*

Extract of evidence in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission by a former female employee

The Brisbane Times reported the outcomes of the QIRC hearing on this link: [Kokoda Tour Employee Wins Appeal over claims boss spat on her during outbursts](#). Transcripts of the QIRC hearings contain more salacious evidence about his modus operandi.

The exposure in the QIRC was certainly the antithesis of the 'Kokoda Spirit' Wayne Wetherall has so shamelessly promoted.

The first hint of his character flaws was raised by one of his trek leaders, a former veteran decorated during the Vietnam war, back in 2011:

*'My anecdotal-based overview of WW, gained inter alia, from a number of reputable sources whose opinion and judgement I would trust, and over the past seven years, is that he is a bullshit merchant of some standing, whose principal position in life seems to be based on a carefully planned programme of self-aggrandisement and self-promotion. Notwithstanding his clever self-marketing skills, his trekking "exploits" both on and off the Track appears to me to lack any real credibility. He seems somehow to survive on a predetermined network of manipulative exploitation of, at best, half-truths, something akin to a shonky second-hand car salesman!!'*

So, Who is Wayne Wetherall? Where did he come from? Was he really a World Athletics Champion? Is he really an explorer? A historian? A philanthropist? An adventurer?

Or is he just a silver-tongued salesman?

His transformation from an obscure suburban salesman to a self-proclaimed Kokoda 'adventurer; explorer; historian and philanthropist' with a 'passion for our diggers' is a compelling tale.



## In the Beginning

According to Wetherall's LinkedIn profile he was a suburban sales manager for companies dealing with refrigeration products at various levels until he '*discovered*' Kokoda in 2004.

The Kokoda Trail was emerging as a popular pilgrimage after Prime Ministers John Howard and PNG's Grand Chief, Sir Michael Somare opened a significant memorial at the Isurava battlesite on the 60th anniversary of the battle in 2002.

It was seen as the complete adventure experience for Australian baby-boomers and young adventurers in a 'land of the unexpected'. It required physical stamina and mental tenacity. The wartime history evoked strong emotions. The unconditional care and support of local PNG guides and villagers is humbling. The environment is rugged, remote and pristine.

Increasing numbers of adventure tour companies were attracted to the opportunity it presented to meet a growing demand.

Among these were a couple of suburban hustlers from South Western Sydney, Wayne Wetherall and Frank Hasiuk.

To find out more about the Kokoda Trail, they booked a trek with [Kokoda Treks and Tours](#) in 2003, a company owned by Mr Frank Taylor. They chose carefully as Taylor was a long-term student of the Kokoda campaign and one of Australia's foremost experts on both the campaign and the Trail due to more than two decades of research and trekking across it.

Within a short period, Wetherall and Hasiuk had copies of all Taylor's administrative documentation, his detailed trek itinerary, and historical information. All they then needed was some local assistance to operate in PNG.

One of the porters on the trek with Taylor was [Defol Jabbar](#), a Research Officer in the National Parliament. During the trek Wetherall and his business partner, Frank Hasiuk, discussed the possibility of establishing a Kokoda tour company in PNG.

Upon their return to Australia, according to Jabbar, they communicated constantly with each other regarding the possibilities and opportunities for establishing a company to lead treks across the Trail and organise 'wild-river' rafting expeditions.

### 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy Expeditions Ltd'

This led to Jabbar registering a company, [Fuzzy Wuzzy Expeditions Ltd](#), with the PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) on 27 January 2004 to organise treks. He then invited Hasiuk and Wetherall back to PNG to continue their discussions.

During this time Jabbar noted that Hasiuk, a South-West Sydney real estate developer, seemed to be funding their research.

In the meantime, Jabbar's PNG company recruited two corporate groups to trek with him – one from the Port Moresby Rotary Club and the other from a Qantas group in Sydney via his local contacts in the Port Moresby office.

During Wetherall's return visit to PNG in October 2004 he made contact with [Colin Taimbari from the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority who reported:](#)

'In fact, rafting or whitewater rafting for that matter has never really taken my fancy until last week when two crazy, adventure seeking Australians strolled into the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority office in downtown Port Moresby. Businessman Wayne Wetherall and property developer Frank Hasiuk, both from Camden in south-west Sydney were eager and all excited about tackling the rugged Vanapa River in Central Province in a raft.'

Taimbari went on to report on their first rafting trip down the [Vanapa River](#):

‘The first chopper lift had Wayne, local guide Allan Malewa, our ever reliable and experienced expedition leader Osborne (Bonn) Bogajiwai and the folded paddle boat raft, which can comfortably take eight people, once fully inflated. I was in the second lift off which also had Frank, TPA’s senior planning officer Nathan Kumin and Defol Jabbar of Fuzzy Wuzzy Expeditions (FWE). Bonn and Allan are also of FWE – a newly established local tour company running treks along the Kokoda Track. Our two-day mission starting that Wednesday morning was more for research, to see if after a 11-year absence, rafting on the Vanapa could be revived, more so as a tourist attraction.’

### **Kokoda Spirit Pty Limited**

On Wetherall’s return to Australia he registered ‘[Kokoda Spirit Pty Ltd with ASIC on 28 October 2004](#). Around the same time, he contacted the Qantas group after acquiring their details from Jabbar who assumed they had a partnership. Wetherall later arranged for the Qantas group to book through his Australian company and quietly recruited Osborne Bogajiwa from Jabbar’s company, Fuzzy Wuzzy Expeditions, without his knowledge.

He returned to PNG in early January 2005 to conduct a rafting expedition down the [Angabanga River](#).

Soon after, unbeknown to Jabbar, he visited LLLG Lawyers to arrange the purchase of a PNG shelf company, Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd which was registered on 26 January 2005.

When Jabbar enquired about the status of the trek with Qantas staff in Port Moresby, he was advised they were dealing with another company in Australia. He was not aware of any further arrangements until he saw the group, with Bogajiwa and Wetherall, at Bomana War Cemetery after their trek on Anzac Day 2005.

### **Whitewater Rafting Tragedy**

The following month a rafting expedition organised by Neharot Expedition on the Watut River was led by Wetherall’s Chief Raft Master, Osborne Bogajiwa. [The expedition turned to tragedy when three Israeli rafters were drowned](#). This created a diplomatic incident between Israel and PNG at the time and there were allegations that no reparations were made for the boats that were damaged on the expedition. This caused Wetherall to focus on the Kokoda Trail as it was not considered safe for him to return to Lae.

During the period 2003-2006, [according to his LinkedIn profile](#), Wetherall was the National Sales Manager for Refrigeration Equipment Supplies.

At the same time, according to his Kokoda Spirit website, his company was:

[‘at the forefront of new adventures in PNG. . . We are also opening up trips to Alotau at Milne bay and Buna and Gona on the North Coast. Kokoda Spirit has offices in both Sydney and Port Moresby.](#)

They were also running ‘small group trips to explore the history and sites of Sri Lanka , Thailand , Vietnam , China and Borneo’.

According to Annual Returns lodged with the PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) for Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd at the time the company had NIL employees.

In Australia, until March 2006, the Australian office and operations comprised two people, Wayne Wetherall and Frank Husiuk. The post advised they were both:

[‘passionate about the Kokoda Track, the Australian history, the people and the culture’ and were ‘setting up trusts to supply much needed supplies of School \(sic\) books and equipment.’](#)

[In June 2006 Husiuk ‘passion’ seems to have evaporated](#) as he was replaced by Wetherall’s wife Michelle, who was described as:



‘the boss of Kokoda Spirit, her enthusiasm, organisation and administration skills ensure that all facets of the business run smoothly . . . She has a wealth of knowledge about the Kokoda Track and travels frequently to PNG.’

In the early stages of his business in PNG, he proved to be ruthless in his engagement of PNG head guides. According to Jabbar:

‘he dumped Bonny then used Gideon, Alan and Jeff. Then he dumped Gideon and ran with Alan, Jeff and Sai. Now he dropped Alan and Jeff and he is running with Sai Lami as a head guide’.

Wetherall then declared:

‘Kokoda Spirit is passionately committed to the legacy and Spirit (sic) that our Australian Soldiers (sic) and their Papuan (sic) New Guinea Brothers (sic) have left for us on the Kokoda Track (sic). The Courage (sic), Endurance (sic), Mateship (sic) and Sacrifice (sic) on this sacred track have become legend. Kokoda Spirit are dedicated to providing our Trekkers (sic) and Rafters (sic) with the Experience (sic) of a Lifetime (sic), to Experience & Adventure (sic), to Experience (sic) the Spirit (sic), to Experience (sic) the Culture (sic) and Experience (sic) the People (sic) this wonderful, fascinating and awe inspiring country provides’.

Apart from his mangled prose he has never explained the connection between the ‘legacy and spirit’ of the trail – and rafting! Or even his own connection with the spirit of Kokoda. Many trekkers are inspired by a family connection – a grandfather, an uncle, a ‘friend of a friend’ - or a desire as the result of a book, a documentary or a teacher. In the case of Wetherall, it would seem that this ‘passionate commitment’ was related to the business opportunity it presented.

The boast that they were ‘setting up trusts to supply much needed supplies of School (sic) books and equipment’ proved to be the first of many unverifiable claims (some of these are alleged to be bogus). There are no records of any ‘trusts’ ever being established in PNG or Australia (nor registration of charities with the ACNC in Australia).

Wetherall’s sales and marketing skills were paying dividends as Kokoda Spirit emerged as the leading trekking company on the Trail.

### **True Spirit Adventures**

In 2010 he established a separate business, True Spirit Adventures, with one of his female trekkers from Melbourne – together they ‘identified an opportunity in the market to provide Elite (sic), life-changing and empowering adventures for Charity (sic), Corporate (sic), Teams (sic), Defence Forces (sic) and Schools (sic).

In the meantime, he was also running his other company, Kokoda Spirit, with his wife Michelle, from the Queensland Sunshine Coast.

‘Wayne and Michelle had a dream to share the story of the courageous and heroic diggers on the Kokoda Track with fellow Australians’ he gushed on his website. ‘Immerse yourself in the cultures of traditional village life, marvel at the size and magnitude of the rainforests and mountains, enjoy the adventure of crossing swift flowing rivers to discover waterfalls, and people living in harmony with their land. Come with us on a journey to experience the Spirit of Kokoda and Papua New Guinea.’

Their business partnership ended after the break-up of their marriage in 2013.

This was followed by an acrimonious business and relationship bust-up with his female partner from True Spirit Adventures.

### **Marketing ‘Without Borders’**

As trekker number increased rapidly from 2005 Wetherall appeared to take advantage of the fact that PNG authorities did not have the expertise, resources, or interest in monitoring copyright transgressions or truth in advertising (conduct that would be referred to as “misleading and deceptive” under Australian consumer law) – there were no borders!

His marketing strategy was therefore based on creating his own myth, plagiarising material from other websites with impunity, and making fallacious statements (the veracity of which were never proven) to enhance his reputation.

### ‘Click-Bait’ Marketing

Wetherall was a pioneer of ‘click-bait’ marketing. He quickly realised his target market knew little about the Kokoda campaign or Papua New Guinea. He therefore utilised social media to make unsubstantiated statements supporting his claims to be an:

*‘Adventurer, Businessman, Founder and Owner of Life Changing Adventure Companies; as well as an ‘expert trekker and passionate historian’ who ‘sees things as an explorer, historian and adventurer that military trekking companies cannot’; that he ‘has been instrumental in some of the great discoveries along the famous Kokoda Track’; that ‘No white man had trekked this toughest section of the track’ on Sandakan since the war; that ‘he has become a voice for the thousands of brave Aussie Men who never came home’; and has ‘set up trusts’ to help village schools’ etc, etc. etc.*

He also advises that *‘Wayne’s expertise in Business, IT and Tourism provides the professional support and infrastructure to our teams in the countries we operate.’*

What Wetherall fails to mention is that prior to his ‘discovery’ of the Kokoda Trail in 2004 he was a suburban air-conditioning salesman in Sydney with no previous record of military service, any connections with veterans organisations, and no accreditation as an adventurer, explorer, historian, or philanthropist.

However he is aware that whenever he is called out, or questions are asked, he can simply amend or remove the information, and move!

### Copy-Cat Marketing

On 2 February 2011 I wrote to the CEO of the KTA to express my concern over a number of claims contained on the Kokoda Spirit website. I advised him of my belief they were false and misleading and the proprietor of Kokoda Spirit, Wayne Wetherall, ‘was a plagiarist and a hoaxer’.

*‘When he first established the Kokoda Spirit website in 2004 he sought credibility by claiming he was a world record holder and copied material directly from our Adventure Kokoda website onto his website. He never explained the nature of his world record or the source of the material he copied.*

*‘He also plagiarised other websites in regard to the history of the Kokoda campaign. He did not reference any of these sources and now claims to be a ‘historian’. His material has been carefully crafted and presented to create this impression.’*

No action was taken by Rod Hillman who was besotted by Wetherall’s charm by 2011 – he later wrote him a glowing personal reference.

Wetherall knew he had a free pass to plagiarise other websites as he did with impunity.

| Extract from Adventure Kokoda blog at: <a href="http://blog.kokodatreks.com/2011/05/13/kokoda-spirit-or-kokoda-copy-cat/">http://blog.kokodatreks.com/2011/05/13/kokoda-spirit-or-kokoda-copy-cat/</a>   |  |
|--|--|
| Adventure Kokoda   | Kokoda Spirit  |
| Original Trek Itinerary (Extract 1)<br>‘Continue to Naduri Village – meet Ovoru Indiki, one of the few surviving ‘fuzzy-wuzzy angels’. Ovoru was in Port Moresby when the Japanese first bombed the city. He did not understand what was going on and he fled to the bush in fear. Over the next couple of days Ovoru made his way back to his village – | Kokoda Spirit Copy-Cat Itinerary (Extract 1A)<br>‘Continue to Naduri Village – meet Ovoru Indiki, one of the few surviving ‘Fuzzy-Wuzzy angels’. Ovoru was in Port Moresby when the Japanese first bombed the city. He did not understand what was going on and he fled to the bush in fear. Over the next couple of days Ovoru made his way back to his village – |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| only moving at night because of fear. He told his people what had happened and they began to make arrangements to 'go bush'. Lieutenant Bert Kniezle of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit eventually came to the village and enlisted Ovoru and the other men in the village to help the Australians. Ovoru then spent the next three months carrying supplies forward to our troops and carrying our wounded back across the track. It is a great honour to meet the few remaining carriers such as Ovoru during the trek.' | <i>only moving at night because of fear. He told his people what had happened and they began to make arrangements to 'go bush'. Lieutenant Bert Kienzle of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit eventually came to the village and enlisted Ovoru and the other men in the village to help the Australians. Ovoru then spent the next three months carrying supplies forward to our troops and carrying our wounded back across the track. It is a great honour to meet the few remaining carriers such as Ovoru during the trek.'</i> |
| Adventure Kokoda Original Itinerary (Extract 2)<br>'... the forming-up place for the Japanese attack on Brigade Hill – 6000 fanatical Japanese soldiers prepared to attack 1000 Australian defenders in what was to be the biggest battle of the Kokoda campaign – the Japanese referred to it as the 'battle of the Owen Stanley Range' – the Australians refer to it as the 'battle for Brigade Hill' – follow the wartime track to Efogi Creek then climb to our campsite at Efogi village.'  | Kokoda Spirit Copy-Cat Itinerary (Extract 2A)<br>'... the forming-up place for the Japanese attack on Brigade Hill – 6000 fanatical Japanese soldiers attacked 1000 Australian defenders in what was to be the biggest battle of the Kokoda campaign – the Japanese referred to it as the battle of the Owen Stanley Range – The Australians refer to it as 'the battle for Brigade Hill' – trek down to Efogi Village to guest house for the night.'   |
| Adventure Kokoda Original Itinerary (Extract 3)<br>'Follow track to the Nauro swamp area -cross the Brown River – climb to the campsite at the village of Nauro. The village of Nauro has only recently been moved to the current location on the Maguli Range. It was previously on the Nauro River with a good airfield but some say fear of sorcery caused the villagers to move up the mountain.'  | Kokoda Spirit Copycat Itinerary (Extract 3A)<br>'Follow track to the Nauro swamp area -cross the Brown River – climb to the campsite at the village of Nauro. The village of Nauro has only recently been moved to the current location on the Maguli Range. It was previously on the Nauro River with a good airfield but some say fear of sorcery caused the villagers to move up the mountain.'  |
| Adventure Kokoda Original Itinerary (Extract 4)<br>'Climb the mighty Maguli Range to the top at Mogolonumu – follow track south – inspect Japanese delaying defensive position with weapon pits and communication trenches. Your trek leader will give a briefing at this point – continue down to your campsite on Ofi Creek.'  | Kokoda Spirit Copycat Itinerary (Extract 4A)<br>'Climb the mighty Maguli Range to the top at Mogolonumu – follow track south – inspect Japanese delaying defensive position with weapon pits and communication trenches. Your trek leader will give a briefing at this point – continue down to your campsite on Ofi Creek.'  |

## Bogus Claim re World and National Athletic Records

In early 2005 he published details of an athletics record that should have made him a household name in Australia for his accomplishments:

'Wayne has enjoyed athletics his whole life and in addition to being an adventure athlete he has also achieved considerable success in the world of athletic competition'.

He went on to list his athletic accomplishments which included:

- One (1) world athletic record;
- One (1) Australian athletic record;
- Four (4) New South Wales athletic records;
- One (1) Trans-Tasman athletics championship;
- 26 New South Wales athletic championships; and
- One (1) Australian cycling championship

He then modestly added 'You might say Wayne is a pretty fit bloke!'



These claims were published from 2006-2007.

### Spurious Trek Claims

Wetherall's latest strategy to enhance his reputation is to market his imminent 100<sup>th</sup> trek.

However, a review of the [Internet Archive Wayback Machine](#) reveals a web of schizophrenic claims in regard to the number of treks he has completed along with the number of clients who have trekked with his company, Kokoda Spirit. A snapshot of these anomalies reveals the following spurious claims:

- On [11 August 2018](#) he claimed to have completed 82 treks with Kokoda Spirit leading a 7700 trekkers since the company began operations in 2004.
- Three months later, on [9 January 2019](#) he claimed to have completed 91 treks with Kokoda Spirit leading 8400 trekkers.
- On [12 August 2020](#) he claimed to have led 85 treks with Kokoda Spirit leading 8900 trekkers and two months later on 30 October he claimed to have completed 80 treks with Kokoda Spirit leading 8500 trekkers.
- On [19 September 2021](#), when trekking was suspended due to Covid, he claimed to have completed 95 treks with Kokoda Spirit leading 8900 trekkers.
- Three months later, on [4 December 2021](#), he claimed to have completed *'more than 90 crossings of the Kokoda Track'*.
- On [19 August 2022](#) he claimed to have completed 95 treks and *'So far...we have seen over 10000 trekkers come on some extraordinary adventures with us!'*.
- On [27 February 2024](#) he claims to have completed *'more than 99 crossings of the Kokoda Track'*.
- On [18 May 2024](#) he claimed to have *'trekked Kokoda in excess of 95 times'*.
- A month later on [2 June 2024](#) he claimed *'trekked Kokoda in excess of 90 times'*.
- On [1 September 2024](#) he claims to have completed *'more than 99 crossings of the Kokoda Track'*. On the same date, in different sections of his website he claims to have completed *'95 crossings of the Kokoda Track'* and to *'have seen over 8900 trekkers successfully cross the track!'*.

Wetherall fails to explain how he could have led 11 treks across the Kokoda Trail when it was closed during Covid and there were no flights between Australian and PNG!

A table titled 'Trolling for the Truth' on page 30 below details the claims he has made regarding the number of trekkers his company has led and the number of times he has claimed to have trekked it.

### Bogus Claim re Kokoda Book Publication

Around the same period, he advertised the imminent arrival of his Kokoda Spirit book, *'In the footsteps of Hero's (sic)–In the footsteps of my Brothers'* which would include:

'Stories of our Australian Soldiers(sic) and the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels who assisted them during World War II; Trekking the Kokoda Trail information, pictures, maps, past trekkers information and advice, personal experiences; and a close and personal look at the ancestors of the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels their triumphs, challengers (sic) and opportunities.'

He modestly advised:

'This book is a must for those that have an interest in PNG, the Kokoda Trail and our PNG brothers. Sign up here! and we will notify you when Kokoda is available.'

### Bogus Claim re discovery of 'Wartime Kokoda Track'

In an endeavour to establish his credentials as a Kokoda *'explorer and historian'* Wetherall on 10 March 2008 Wetherall claimed to have [rediscovered the 'Wartime Kokoda Track'](#):

*'The Kokoda Track is one of the World's great treks, surrounded by impenetrable jungle, raging rivers that have cut deep into the brooding mountains and then plunge into ragged, tortuous valleys that crisscross the track.*

*'There has been recent media attention regarding mining along the track and claims from "Track Historians" and "Kokoda Track Specialists," that parts of the Kokoda Track are not original "War Time" tracks but merely easier "Tourist Tracks". I also had reservations about the authenticity of the track that we were walking on and decided to investigate deeper.*

*'We engaged the assistance of the local Koiari landowners, Village Elders and our local PNG Trek Masters to ascertain their understanding of the location of the "Original War Time Kokoda Track." We also spoke to Lt Nicholas Walsh, Engineer in Charge of Owers Corner. This local knowledge was backed up with my recent survey of the area by helicopter, World War 11 maps, survey maps from 1966 and 1973 and Global positioning technology.*

*'Armed with my trusted band of guides, landowners, Elders, GPS and World War 11 maps, survey maps and my recent fly over of the area we set off to put the discussions to rest.*

*'It has a surreal feel as we veer off the ridgeline into the partially cleared former village.*

*'Our search of the area revealed numerous war artefacts including, metal boxes, containers, Dixies, water bottles, ammunition, weapon pits and cable.'*

He followed this up with another post on 12 March 2008 where he advised 'It is important to remember that there is (sic) many alternative routes across Kokoda' as if he need to convince himself!

On 11 October 2008 he announced he had discovered the original Wartime Kokoda Track which ad been 'hidden under 66 years of dense Jungle growth'.

He went on to claim:

*'Original sections of the Kokoda Track have been recently discovered by Historian (sic) and Adventurer (sic) Wayne Wetherall from specialist trekking company Kokoda Spirit. After extensive research of old survey maps, WW11 maps, and a extensive helicopter survey, Wayne finally cut and trekked through the Jungle (sic) to discover sections of the original "Golden Stairs" across Imita Ridge not seen since the bloody battles of 1942 . . .'*

Wetherall neglected to mention that organised groups had been trekking across the section known as the 'Golden Staircase' for more than 20 years before his 'discovery'. He also failed to provide any GPS data to support his claim.

On 15 October 2008 he set out to differentiate himself against tour companies led my former servicemen by advising that he saw 'things as an explorer that tourist and Military trekking companies cannot.'

He continued with a rant:

*'There is some (sic) Kokoda trekking Companies (sic), that pump their chests and tell you how good they are, how professional they are and how they are the only ones that have true Military Leaders (sic) as guides and the only ones to walk the original Wartime Track (sic). These same companies walk you in 'Platoon' (sic) size (33 trekkers plus) to give you the real military (sic) feel. Multiply these trekker numbers with nearly twice as many porters and you have a huge congo (sic) line through the Jungle (sic)! They also walk you on occasions (sic) at night, what a dangerous thing to be doing! (sic) Not sure how you can take in the ambience and scenery of the Kokoda Track when you cannot see two feet in front. They also charge you a huge price for the privilege (sic)!*

Wetherall used a similar approach to establish his credentials in his 're-discovery' of the original Sandakan Death March Route three years later in 2011 (see Sandakan Death March Route Controversy' below). He denigrates the view of military historians who had been trekking across the

Kokoda Trail for at least two decades prior to his ‘discovery’ and disregards the fact that their articles reflect a learned understanding of military strategy, tactics, and the significance of ‘ground’.

A review of Wetherall’s writings relate to a subjective vibe as opposed to historical fact. To him the jungle includes ‘*brooding mountains*’ which have a ‘*surreal feel*’ where he could ‘*feel the energy coming out of the ground*’ akin to ‘*entering a lost world*’.

By the end 2008 Wetherall’s marketing strategies paid dividends as Kokoda Spirit emerged as the leading tour company on the Kokoda Trail. He was then able to quietly remove his unverified claims as an international athlete and dispense with the advertisement for his book, which never materialised, as the myth surrounding his self-proclaimed ‘*adventurer, explorer, historian*’ status had been established.

### **Bogus Claim re Charitable ‘Spirit Foundation’**

Wetherall’s next venture to add to his self-proclaimed status of ‘*adventurer, explorer, historian*’ was directed towards being seen as ‘*philanthropist*’. [With this in mind he announced the establishment of a Kokoda ‘Spirit Foundation’<sup>ii</sup> in 2008:](#)

#### **Spirit Foundation**

‘The Spirit Foundation principle focus is on the development of education programs and education opportunities for the people along Kokoda and Papua New Guinea.

‘The Spirit foundation believes that investment in education is essential for social and economic change in PNG. Over ninety five percent (95%) of PNG children/students drop out of the PNG education system. Our focus is to identify and assist these students to have access to education and employment skills.

‘The Spirit Foundation was created with a desire to assist the people along the track with real and achievable educational and vocational opportunities. The Foundation is supported by the management of Kokoda Spirit and a large number of trekkers who have walked the track. These trekkers have returned from PNG with a real desire to put something back into the country and the people along the track.

‘The Spirit Foundation provides scholarships to children in PNG predominantly from the Kokoda Track, Oro and Central Provinces region and of Kiorai or Orokaivan descent to help them to attend elementary, primary and secondary school. The Spirit Foundation will also continue funding and support of the students as they progress through University, College or Vocational training. The selected students are those whose families cannot normally afford to send them to school but who have demonstrated promising academic progress in their studies thus far. Scholarship students are selected on a basis of need, effort and achievement.

‘The Spirit Foundation is also providing school resources and supplies to all of the primary and elementary schools along the Kokoda Track. The Spirit Foundation will also support the "School Mates Reading Program" in the Villages along the Kokoda Track. The "School Mates Reading Program" is a home reader style program where trekkers are invited to support an hour of their time on their trek to read to the children in the Villagers.

‘The Spirit Foundation will also be providing funding for educational programs and resources to selected secondary schools. The secondary schools that the Spirit Foundation will sponsor provide education to more than 2800 students throughout the Oro and Central provinces whilst the primary and elementary schools service over 800 local village children when the schools are operating effectively.

‘The Spirit Foundation will fund a new scholarship program for students that show outstanding potential in education and leadership. This sponsorship will carry on throughout their senior high school and university years and they will be given a number of

leadership , educational and community oriented opportunities. The aim of this new project is to discover and foster PNG's future leaders.

‘The Spirit Foundation is committed to ensuring that the people of PNG and predominantly the people along the Kokoda Track have an ongoing opportunity for access to education and vocational training. These opportunities are essential for the ongoing development of social and economic change along the track and in PNG.

‘For more information regarding the Spirit Foundation check out our web site or Contact Wayne at Kokoda Spirit [kokodaspirit@bigpond.com](mailto:kokodaspirit@bigpond.com) or Contact Kevin at [Kevin@kokodaspirit.com](mailto:Kevin@kokodaspirit.com) 07 54452758’

Visit <http://www.kokodaspirit.com>

Labels: Spirit Foundation

POSTED BY WAYNE'S KOKODA SPIRIT BLOG AT 8:36 AM [0 comments](#)

It was undoubtedly seen as a noble initiative however a fact check with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) revealed the Spirit Foundation was a phantom enterprise – it did not exist! After this was exposed Wetherall simply removed the claim from his website and moved on!

### **Bogus Claim re ‘Opening-up of Long Tan Battlefield’**

His marketing bravado was boundless as he then claimed to have assisted in ‘*opening up*’ Long Tan in Vietnam (purportedly to enhance his credibility with the veteran community).

A fact check revealed that access to Long Tan had been negotiated by veterans from the 6th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment who had fought in the battle.

Wetherall was not involved in any of the sensitive diplomatic negotiations which led to the erection of a Long Tan Cross at the battlefield on 18 August 1969 and its restoration in 2000. It is interesting to note that Wetherall was born on 3 May 1965, a year after the battle. He was just 4-years of age when the Long Tan Cross was first dedicated in 1969; and a 35-year-old manager for a suburban refrigeration and air-conditioning company when access to the site was granted by the Vietnam Government in 2000.

When these facts were revealed, he amended his claims, and moved on!

## Bogus Bushfire Appeal



According to his office staff the funds received were not passed onto the appeal. Wetherall should be asked to provide receipts as this is quite a serious issue.



## Bogus Claim to be 'the Anzac Spirit'

By the end of 2010 Kokoda Spirit had emerged as the leading Kokoda tour company as a result of Wetherall's aggressive marketing albeit on false premises.

On 11 November 2010 he brazenly claimed to be the 'Anzac Spirit' despite having never served in the armed forces or had any association with the veteran community prior to his discovery of the business opportunities associated with the Kokoda Trail in 2005. The essay was Supporting his assertion was a compilation of historical drivel.

## Sandakan Death March Route Controversy

Wetherall also saw a business opportunity to promote similar tours along the Sandakan Death March Route in Borneo. He registered 'Sandakan Spirit' in 2006 and adopted similar techniques to the development of his Kokoda Spirit business by claiming to have opened up Sandakan and '*discovering part of the original death march route*'.

On 11 February 2009 he advised '*I am also this month trekking in the deep jungles of Borneo and will be offering on my return exclusive adrenalin pumping adventures in this beautiful region for our trekkers.*'

Within years he self-identified as an '*intrepid explorer*', an '*adventurer*' and a '*historian*' and used his professional sales skills to 'sell' his version of history to the media. The following article was published in Brisbane's Courier Mail by the Courier Mail on 7 August 2011:

### Sandakan's deadly past

'A Sippy Downs adventurer and historian says he has found missing links to Australia's greatest single World War II tragedy, the Sandakan Death March . . .

"Wayne Wetherall, of tour group Sandakan Spirit, says research, interviews, maps and journals have led him to discover 20km of track lost for more than 65 years . . .

'Now, Mr Wetherall is adamant he has discovered the "correct" track, with 20km previously unknown across the Maitland ranges between the post-war relocated villages of Mangkakai and Miruru (Milulu).

**"You can feel the energy coming out of the ground.** This is a significant part of our history," he said.

"It is imperative that the recording of the history of this track is correct. We hope this can be shared with other historians and other people to get a truer picture of what happened out here.

"On our last few trips there we've come to realise that tracks run in different directions."

'Mr Wetherall said he expected his claims to cause controversy in the history community.

"Some of the information in the past has been quite sketchy," he said. "There will be some controversy involved, no question, but we believe this is a new section of track.

"We're not saying that anyone else is wrong, just that we want to get this track right.

"It's an evolving track and we're finding out more and more about it."

'He said he used documents including Japanese records and death certificates of POWs to put the jigsaw together.

'He also interviewed carriers on the original track, now aged in their 90s.

"This has all helped us put together the missing pieces," he said.

"They spoke about the way the track ran and what they witnessed. They have very descriptive stories.

"Carriers were under threat of death if they assisted POWs in those days."

'Mr Wetherall and his team will return this Friday to investigate another new section of the track at Lalosing, a dense forest that was once a Japanese camp and POW site during the second world war.

'He will be led by an original carrier from the Death March, named Ambugang, and his son, the chief of Miruru village.

"We will be the first to go into Lalosing since the war," Mr Wetherall said.

"It's part of the state forest now, we had to seek permission from the Malaysian Government to do it."

'He said Sabah Tourism, the Malaysian Government's tourism office, supported his claims of the new track.

"The history and correct route that these courageous POW walked need to be documented correctly so future generations of Australians can walk in the footsteps of these heroes," he said.

“We also have a small window of opportunity to interview the surviving locals who witnessed the atrocities before they take this knowledge to the grave.”  
‘He said these locals collaborated with him twice.  
‘Next week is also an important day in the history of the Death March.  
‘The Sandakan Day Memorial, on August 15, commemorates those who died and suffered on the Death March.’

Wetherall’s self-proclaimed ‘*historian*’ status was betrayed by his statement that he ‘*could feel the energy coming out of the ground*’. He was obviously unaware that ‘history’ is more than a vibe!

He also failed to acknowledge the extensive research of [Mrs. Lynnette Silver AM](#) had conducted on Sandakan over the previous decade. Mrs. Silver is the official historian to the 8<sup>th</sup> Division Association. Her research was published in her book ‘[Sandakan – A Conspiracy of Silence](#)’, a decade before Wetherall’s ‘discovery’ of the place.

Mrs. Silver contested Wetherall’s claims in the following blog:

**[‘Beware of bogus claims](#)**

‘The death march track opened up by Tham Yau Kong and Lynette Silver in 2005 follows as closely as is practically possible the route taken by the POWs, retraced and recorded by an Australian Army War Graves team in 1945. The original hand-drawn map plotting this path was given to Lynette in 1995 by Corporal G Robertson, the soldier who drew it. A copy, based on the original, is preserved in Australian Archives and is on public display at the Australian Government Commemorative Pavilion at the Sandakan Memorial Park. A copy of Lynette’s original map is displayed at the Kundasang War Memorial.

‘In August 2011, Wayne Wetherall, an Australian tour operator, claimed in media reports that the route being followed by trekking parties was incorrect, and that the POW route had deviated into the Liwagu Valley, to pass through the village of Miruru. He also claimed he had ‘discovered’ a ‘lost’ section of the track, deep in primary jungle.

‘Following this announcement, a letter by a Sabahan ‘History Buff’, concerned by the veracity of these claims, was published in Sabah’s Daily Express, initiating a public debate. Lynette’s statement, compiled at the request of the newspaper editor, can be accessed at <http://www.dailyexpress.com.my/read.cfm?NewsID=750>. Further transcript and additional commentary is at <http://blog.kokodatreks.com>

‘Reports and body-recovery documentation, the copy of Robertson’s map and wartime maps prepared from intelligence gathered during hostilities by secret agents are held in Australian Archives. This material, coupled with first-hand knowledge provided by several local people, who had walked the track many times while ferrying supplies for the Japanese, show that the POW route did not, at any stage, enter the Liwagu Valley or pass anywhere near Miruru village.

**‘This research, carried out by Lynette in the 1990s, and re-checked in 2005, was confirmed in early 2012 by Army historians and mapping experts who, following the 2011 claims, were given the task of making an independent assessment based on all the archival and other evidence. In April 2012, the Australian Government formally released an official map showing that the death march track followed the route plotted by Robertson. No evidence was found to support the 2011 claim that the track had deviated into the Liwagu Valley or passed through the village of Miruru.**

**‘Furthermore, the ‘lost’ section had never been lost.** It is highly protected Class 1 Forest Reserve, entry to which is prohibited without special permission. It is also in a high risk ‘flash flood’ zone. In the interests of safety, and for environmental and conservation reasons, trekking groups have always used a nearby alternate path, which is safer and far less environmentally-intrusive route.

‘For an investigation of the death march route, go to [THE ROUTE OF THE SANDAKAN DEATH MARCH](#)’.

Mrs. Silver’s confirmation that the ‘lost’ section of the Sandakan Death March Route has never been lost could be applied to Wetherall’s previous claims of lost and forgotten battlefields along the Kokoda Trail which have also never been ‘forgotten’ or ‘lost’.

Mrs. Lynette Silver’s extensive research on the route of the Sandakan death march route can be read on this link: [The Sandakan-Ramai Death March Track](#)

In the article Mrs. Silver advises:

*‘The official documents used to compile this article are all held in Australian National Archives or the Australian War Memorial Collection. **The transcripts of interviews, along with the videoed and audio recordings with local people, are preserved in the Silver Papers. A fully referenced version of this paper is held in the Archives of the Sabah State Museum.***

However, this did not deter Wetherall from belittling Mrs. Silver’s research by advising:

#### **Sandakan - Borneo**

‘After 79 years, you can walk the Sandakan Death March track in the footsteps of those heroes.

‘With Sandakan Spirit as your trekking company, you’ll be participating in both a personal discovery experience and an historic Borneo adventure.

‘That’s because our treks across the Sandakan Death March follow the original route as closely as possible. We avoid using “short cut”, “eco” or alternative tracks that are logistically easier, ensuring that you see the real Borneo, and the original Sandakan Death March Route. . .

‘We avoid using short cut or alternative treks that are logistically easier to ensure you see the real Borneo, the real Sandakan Death March Route. We use a variety of accommodation on our treks including camping next to Rainforest Rivers and staying in traditional Dusun Villages along the way, this gives you a great chance to embrace the traditional culture and mix with the locals and hear firsthand the stories of their forefathers.

‘If you are comparing Sandakan trekking companies, make sure you are on the correct route.’

In an article titled ‘[The route to great cruelty](#)’ the New Strait times in Sabah reported:

*‘He (Wetherall) said the lost route was discovered based on information from various sources such as the Australian War Graves, grave recovery maps, National Archives and Australian War Memorial.*

*"Some of the most compelling intelligence that we have gathered came from local people along the route, including the village chiefs of Taviu, Mankadai and Miruru in Ranau," Wetherall said.*

Unlike Mrs. Silver, Wayne Wetherall does not reference any of the ‘compelling intelligence’ he gathered from village chiefs and does not provide any GPS readings to support his ‘research’ as would be normally expected of a ‘passionate historian’ as he claims to be.

The following letter published in the Daily Express (East Malaysia) by ‘History Buff’ on 25 September 2011 indicates that Wetherall adopted the same ambush marketing strategy on the Sandakan Death March route as he used to develop his business along the Kokoda Trail:

#### **Profit motive in new Death March**

‘A so-called ‘expert’ has lately surfaced making claims about newly-discovered ‘lost tracks’ of the infamous Death March route of World War Two.

‘He has made claims he has spoken to villagers and the original route used by the POW’s and the Japanese near the village of Miruru when this is not the case.

‘**A number of villagers interviewed in the Miruru area deny ever speaking to him** and the Sabah Society research of 2005-2006 concluded the route did cut through the Miruru area before the prisoners had to wade across a major river to get to Tampias.

‘The issue, however, was if they carried on through the marshland to get to the river before crossing over or went up the top of the ridge and back down to cross over. This has never really been proven even till today.

‘The Sabah Society’s findings differ from author Lynette Silver and her research but this has not caused problems thus far as most experts agree it is hard to determine the actual route given there were several marches between Sandakan and Ranau and because prisoners were executed and marched along different parts of the section in question during that period of time.

‘So it is impossible to prove anything beyond reasonable doubt.

‘**Much of what this Australian ‘expert’ claimed appears to be old news as the Sabah Society and Tham Yau Kong had done much of the work in 2005 establishing the actual route and the use of Miruru during the actual march before this Australian even got to Sabah and walked the route with Tham several years later . . .**

**‘We now have a situation where an Australian is now claiming to have made dramatic discoveries when it clearly isn’t the case and is using this to gain media mileage at the expense of Sabahans.’**

A review of Wetherall’s writings regarding his ‘discovery’ of Sandakan are similar to the approach he used to differentiate himself from other tour operators in the development of his Kokoda Spirit business six years earlier [via his website blogs](#)<sup>iii</sup>. Unlike Lynette Silver he does not reference any conversations he has supposedly had with individuals along his version of the Sandakan Death March Route, nor does he provide any GPS readings to support his assertions.

In a Media Release of 3 August 2011 he described himself as an ‘**expert trekker, passionate adventurer, and passionate historian**. He then goes on to describe his ‘discovery’ of Sandakan as the result of years of research and hard slog through the Borneo Jungle:

*‘it was like entering a lost world, the jungle was thick, dark, steamy and brooding. The track was steep, slippery, brutal and unforgiving, it was difficult staying upright. No white man had trekked this toughest section of the track since the POW’s marched it 66 years ago . . . This is an important find and is now part of our standard itineraries for our treks. . . We avoid using “short cut”, “eco” or alternative tracks that are logistically easier to ensure you see the real Borneo, the real Sandakan Death March Route.*

In a condescending slight to Sandakan historian, Mrs. Lynette Silver, he wrote:

*‘It was great to read the article in the Sydney Morning Herald of the continued involvement of Military (sic) Historian and Veteran (sic) Trekker (sic) Lynette Ramsay Silvers (sic) association of walking and leading treks across the Sandakan Death March this year with Tham Yau Kong.*

*‘It is also interesting that it is possible to pay extra for Lynette Silver to accompany you on a TYK trek.’*

A review of Wetherall’s Kokoda Spirit website reveals that he adopts the same method on his treks across the Kokoda Trail as locally led treks are cheaper than those he leads!

On 3 August 2011 he issued a Media Release title he advised it was ‘[Every Aussie has a right to know!](#)’ where he proclaimed:

‘CORRECTING AUSTRALIAN WAR TIME HISTORY  
[Parts of the Lost Death March Track in Sabah Borneo uncovered](#)

'Trekking now on the right Track. The Sandakan "death march" is the greatest single World War 2 tragedy in Australia's History. Yet this story remains virtually unknown to so many.

'Wayne Wetherall an expert trekker and passionate historian has uncovered the lost sections of the "Death March Track" of Sandakan, he has become a voice for the thousands of brave Aussie Men who never came home.

This claim was contradicted by 'History Buff' in the Daily Express (East Malaysia) on 25 September 2011 (see above) who advised:

'We now have a situation where an Australian (Wayne Wetherall) is now claiming to have made dramatic discoveries when it clearly isn't the case and is using this to gain media mileage at the expense of Sabahans.'

On 21 November 2011 Wetherall posted a blog titled '[Borneo Track Claim](#)'

In the blog he attempted to justify his claim of to have discovered two new sections of the Sandakan Death March Route 'after intensive research and interviews with those who witnessed the attacks on Australian soldiers'. According to Wetherall:

*'The real answers for us have been actually walking through the jungle and talking to the local people aged in their 90s now who were the carriers.'*

*'His research also included piecing together information from the Australian Office of War Graves recovery maps, Japanese death certificates and the Australian War Memorial archives.'*

He went on to explain:

*"We were the first people to actually go into this section of the forest called Lolosing and **it was primary Borneo jungle deep, dark, with vines coming down everywhere,**" he said. "We had with us an **80-year-old who was a carrier for the Japanese,** and he was showing us where the commander's building used to be and where he saw an Australian soldier killed.*

*"**It was chilling stuff to be there with him.** It's going to be an ongoing project because there is still much more left to discover."*

*'Over the past two journeys he and Jerome and his team of local Dusun's, who are direct descendents of the carriers and villagers along the track have meticulously, **using the latest in GPS mapping technology** and old fashion hard work we were able to faithfully piece together as close as what they believe to be the original route.'*

He then fell back on the familiar mantra he used soon after he 'discovered' the Kokoda Trail six years earlier that **'We see things as an explorer, historian and adventurer.'**

He closed his blog with the expected advertisement for his business:

*'When you trek the Sandakan Death March with Sandakan Spirit, you're participating in a personal discovery experience; you are truly living and participating in an historic and monumental Borneo adventure.'*

*'After sixty six years, you too can now walk the Sandakan Death March track in the footsteps of the Sandakan Death March heroes.'*

The last word goes to Mrs, Lynette Silver:

'The Sabah Society walk, led by Tham Yau Kong in 2005, went the wrong way because author Kevin Smith, whom Wayne Wetherall relies upon, had produced a 'map' of the death march showing the track going through Miruru and Mangkadai villages.

'He had latched onto the words Miruru and Mangkadai because I had given these places as places of death for POWS, as shown on Japanese wartime documents which Smith had never seen.'



‘Well, when you appropriate someone else's research you need to know what you are stealing.

‘Miruru was the name given by the Japanese to the climb up Taviu Hill, and Mangkadai to a stretch to the east.

‘The reason for the naming was because the entire area was unexplored and uninhabited.

‘They had to bring in labour from villages in another valley, along the Labuk River.

‘These villages, Miruru and Mangkadai, were far away, with Miruru on the far side of the Labuk.

‘However, when a road was built linking Ranau to Sandakan in the 1970s, the villages moved to be closer to the new road, as they were no longer dependent on river travel.

‘Smith latched onto the words Miruru and Mangkadai and assumed they went through the modern day villages. He then published his shonky map in his book and it was taken at face value.

‘It was not until I asked why the Sabah Society had gone into the wrong valley that Tham Yau Kong found that Smith's map was completely wrong.

‘When I produced the original 1945 map, drawn by the recovery teams, we were able to follow the rivers marked, crossing the numerous marked tributaries, to identify where the track went. The route was confirmed by at least five locals who had worked for the Japanese as coolies and had walked the track many times. They physically showed us where it went.

‘Wayne Wetherall got hold of Smith's bogus map, and announced that he had found the correct path. His groups and those associated with him go completely the wrong way.

‘When challenged, Wetherall claimed that there was an 'alternate' route, despite the fact that villagers refute his story entirely. Business is business is the credo and unfortunately local business interests tainted by Wetherall's claims have no interest in historical facts.

When you ascertain where old Miruru and old Mangkadai were, the absurdity of this claim becomes even more obvious.

Can you believe that a local guide took 100 serving members of the Australian Defence force on a so called death march trek very recently, following the bogus route? In September Wetherall also took a group of students along the same route now promoted as the Sandakan Memorial Track.

Very embarrassing, given that the Australian defence experts produced the official map, with the Australian Coat of Arms on it, which was launched in 2016 to put an end to all this nonsense.

AND, someone connected to Smith (now deceased) has ALTERED the official map on display at Ranau to show the 'alternate' route. It is behind glass, so I can't rectify it.

To the uninformed It looks as if the government and defence agree that there is a second route, no matter how stupid that idea is.

In his December 2011 blog Wetherall reinforced his description of himself as an:

*‘ Adventurer, Businessman, Founder and Owner of Life Changing Adventure Companies, Passionate Australian . . . Wayne Wetherall has also been involved in uncovering the missing links of the Sandakan Death March track, which is described as Australia's worst Military Tragedy of WW2.*

### **Bogus Claim re ‘Village Reader’ Project**

On 8 May 2010 Wetherall announced a [‘Village Reader Program’](#):

*‘Our Village Reader program is also gaining momentum. This simple scheme is to teach the mothers of the Villagers along the Kokoda Track how to read and how to teach their children to read. We have had some great success in Efogi and Menari. We are also creating an information and reading resource Library for the school in Menari. In Australia we now take for granted access to answers and knowledge on the*

*internet. Our plan is to allow students along the Kokoda Track to gain knowledge through reading of resource books including encyclopaedias and technical information. It may not be the internet but it certainly will help the kids to learn and develop. Hopefully the Village Reader program will continue to grow and been a source of learning for the people along the track.'*

According to the headmasters of both schools at Menari and Efogi no such program has ever been introduced at either school. Wetherall never published any follow up articles to prove the program existed. Having created an impression of noble work on village project he moved on!

### **Bogus Claim re 'Village Garden Project'**

Wetherall also announced a ['Village Garden Project'](#) along with his 'Village Reader Program on 8 May 2010:

*'It has been an exciting start to the new trekking year for myself and the Kokoda Spirit Staff. Our long awaited Village Garden Project has produced its first yield of vegetables on the track!'*

*'Our Village Garden project started with a vision by Kokoda Spirit Managing Director Wayne Wetherall in early 2009 to improve the quality and variety of vegetables available to the villagers along the track. The village gardens can be a long way from the village and sometimes perched on steep ground that is difficult to access and even harder to cultivate.'*

*'Our simple project was to build smaller raised vegetable gardens next to their village homes or guesthouse. With the help of the villages we were able to improve the quality of the soil and mulch the gardens to improve the yield. We certainly had some learning to do about what grows in PNG, the villagers certainly have green thumbs.'*

*'The Menari School has also taken on the project to teach the kids and parents about small vegie gardens and to assess what grows best in the area. With their experience we are hopeful that the knowledge gained by the school will allow greater awareness of the benefits of smaller scale gardening. The village of Iorabaiwa (Sic) has also adopteded (sic) the Village Garden project and is developing some great gardens. We will also be developing and rolling out the project along the track over our next treks.'*

His former trek leader was given a packet of tomato seeds to take up and put in a planter box. He was uncomfortable trying to get them through customs so he left them behind and brought a packet in Port Moresby to go through with the charade and report accordingly to Wetherall. He advised the villagers politely accepted the packet of seeds but there was no project as such.

His claim could also be tested against the fact that Kokoda Trail villagers have lived a subsistence lifestyle for generations. They are devout Seventh Day Adventist followers and are vegetarian. They are therefore well versed in establishing crops and rotating gardens to meet their needs.

In 2009 the Australian funded Kokoda Initiative introduced a \$1.3 million 'Village Livelihoods Project' which was conceived in Canberra without consultation with the PNG Department of Community Development, the Kokoda Track Authority or Kokoda tour operators who generate the income for Kokoda tourism. As a result the program failed and as soon as the funds were expended villagers reverted to their traditional methods of gardening.

Wetherall's former trek leader did arrange for his trekkers to bring some books and school supplies to present to the school as do the majority of other tour companies.

No further posts were published on the program. Having created an impression of another noble village project, he moved on!

### **Wild Spirit Adventures**

[On 7 April 2010 Wetherall announced the establishment of a new company, Wild Spirit Adventures:](#)

*'Wayne and Michelle Wetherall run our Australian office and operation.'*

*'Wayne is passionate about people and the culture of the people in the areas we visit. He has developed a successful trekking operation in many countries after initiating a rafting and trekking business in the remote areas of Papua New Guinea. **Wayne has been exploring PNG since 2002 and has been instrumental in some of the great discoveries along the famous Kokoda Track.** He has also written a number of stories on the history and his experiences in Papua New Guinea.*

*'He has established strong bonds with local villagers, **setting up trusts to supply much needed supplies of Schoolbooks (sic) and equipment.** He has initiated this same sense of responsibility in our other Wild Spirit venues.*

*'Wayne's expertise in Business, IT and Tourism provides the professional support and infrastructure to our teams in the countries we operate. Wayne has always been exploring and has an intimate knowledge and passion for the Australian war history His enthusiasm and knowledge will give you an insight into the culture and customs of our Wild Spirit destinations.*

*'Wayne has successfully led exploration treks and tours into Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, Thailand, Borneo China, Germany, Italy and France. **Wayne has assisted in opening up the Sandakan track for Tourism in Borneo and Long Tan in Vietnam.** Wayne has also successfully climbed Mt Wilhelm in PNG and Mt Kinabalu in Borneo twice including the World's highest "Via Ferrata".'*

These claims cannot be justified. Wetherall's 'rafting business in PNG ended after three Israeli's were drowned on one of his expeditions. There is no evidence of any 'trusts' ever having been established for the provision of school supplies. He fails to mention that his 'expertise in Business and IT was related to his job as a sales manager for an air-conditioning company before he 'discovered' Kokoda. Both 'Sandakan' and 'Long Tan' had been 'opened up' more than a decade before he became aware of their existence.

### **Bogus Claim re Partnership with the Kokoda Track Foundation Charity**

Wetherall then claimed to be a '[Gold Trek Operating Partner](#)' to the Kokoda Track Foundation. There is no record of any type of partnership - gold, silver, bronze or co-delivery listed on the [Kokoda Track Foundation website](#).

### **Bogus Claim re 'Discovery' of 'Kokoda's Forgotten Battelfields'**

Over the next two years he went on to make spurious claims to have rediscovered [Kokoda's Forgotten Battlefields](#) (which have never been forgotten or 'lost') to enhance his status as a *historian*, and to have 'discovered' [original sections of the trail](#) to enhance his 'explorer' status. After it was found these claims could not be validated, he moved on!

A blog article regarding his claim to have rediscovered a *forgotten* battlefield claimed:

*'Had the 39th Battalion and Templeton's men in B Company failed in the initial fighting at Awala, Wairopi, Gorari (sic) and Oivi, then the course of the Kokoda Trail Campaign and Australia's history could be very different. They took on the might of the Japanese Army and inflicted physical, logistical and psychological wounds on them that would eventually become terminal to the Japanese.'*

This is an outrageous misinterpretation of historical fact.

The 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion were gallant in their actions between Awala, Kokoda and Isurava from 23<sup>rd</sup> July to the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1942, and later at Buna and Gona during the battles for the beachheads.

However, their initial contacts with the Japanese advance party forward of Kokoda at Awala did nothing to stop or delay their advance towards the Trail. To suggest that they '*took on the might of the Japanese Army and inflicted physical, logistical and psychological wounds on them that would eventually become terminal to the Japanese*' is pure, embellished fiction.

## **Bogus Claim re discovery of Captain Sam Templeton's body**

In 2010 Wetherall made an extraordinary claim to have solved '[\*the 68-year-old mystery of the disappearance of Captain Sam Templeton\*](#)'. The claim caused significant distress to the Templeton family and resulted in the hospitalisation of his then elderly son, Reg, after it was the subject of a national television story.

A blog article, '[\*Destiny - Move Out!\*](#)' was vintage Wetherall hyperbole:

*'The booming voice of Captain Sam Templeton reverberates through the early morning mist.*

*'With these two words the lives, destiny and course of history of Captain Sam Templeton the 39th Battalion and those that would follow them across the rugged Owen Stanley Ranges would be changed forever.*

*'Until then only New Guinea locals, patrol officers and other old New Guinea hands were able to make it across this living breathing, pulsating and evolving Track, surrounded by seemingly impenetrable jungle, raging rivers and stunning waterfalls. The Track crossed deep into the brooding mist covered mountains then swept down into beautiful, lush green mystical valleys. This was truly Gods own land, his private garden of Eden. But never again would this sweet smelling track ever be the same, forever the Kokoda Track will be soaked in blood of young Australians. They didn't know it yet but the 39th Battalion was heading for big trouble...*

*'The young soldiers of B Company were full of excitement and vigor that morning, itching to start this great adventure. They showed little concern for what lay ahead, their ignorance was bliss.*

*'They had every reason to be confident; they were being led by Captain Sam Templeton a man of unquestionable, moral courage and a man of great physical and mental strength.'*

He goes on to advise that he:

*'sometimes get asked why Captain Sam Templeton and the 39th Battalion are so important to our Australian History and why his disappearance is important. Captain Sam Templeton holds a special place in Australian history. He commanded the first Australian Company to cross the Kokoda Track, he was the first Australian Officer to lead his men into battle and he was the first Australian Officer to die in battle on the track.*

*'Sam instilled in his men great confidence and resolves to repel the voracious Japanese tiger heading their way.'*

It is worth noting there are no official references to the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion repelling '*the voracious Japanese tiger*' in more sober historical publications.

[An analysis of the validity of the claim is outlined on this link.](#)

On the basis that the claims could not be substantiated, and were unable to be by the Army Unrecovered War Graves Unit and Department of Veterans Affairs, it can easily be concluded it was an elaborate publicity stunt.

However, Wetherall's claims achieved their purpose in cultivating a myth as an '*explorer*', '*adventurer*', '*historian*' and '*philanthropist*', obsessed with a '*passion for our soldiers*' which resulted in his trekker numbers increasing exponentially. His previous life as a sales manager for an air conditioning company had been airbrushed from his CV and archived.

## **Kokoda – The New Black!**

Within five years of Wetherall's claimed '*discovery*' of Kokoda, trekking across it had become the fashionable '*new black*' for Australian bucket-listers and baby-boomers with numbers increasing by 255% – from 1,584 in 2003 to 5,621 in 2008.

## Kokoda Trail Management Authority Limitations

The management authority put in place by the PNG Government in 2004 was limited to a CEO with a part-time assistant. The office was soon overwhelmed with their responsibilities for licensing new trek operators; issuing trek permits; developing campsites; maintaining the trail and meeting the increasing demands of traditional landowners.

The CEO of the authority, Warren Bartlett, was a former Australian kiap. He had worked in PNG for 40 years as a Government Administrator, was fluent in Tok-Pisin and understood the complexities of Papuan culture. The feedback he was receiving from villagers along the trail in 2008 indicated there were many more trekkers than trek permits (although this feedback was anecdotal).

Bartlett quietly appointed a local ranger, Mr Landy Noel of Efogi village, which is half-way along the trail, to audit the number of trekkers with each company as they passed through. Noel used a simple technique of seeking information from the local guides and carriers in Tok-Pisin then relaying the figures back to Bartlett via VHF radio.

When Bartlett reconciled the figures at the end of 2008, he discovered that Wetherall's company, Kokoda Spirit, had applied for 378 trek permits – but Landy Noel had counted 855 trekkers passing through his village of Efogi!

through his village of Elogi.

|    |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
|----|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|--------------------------|-------|----------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 1  | KOKODA TRACK AUTHORITY  | **** Confidential for 2008 Listed Tour/Trek Operators, PNGTPA, DEC Kokoda Task Force, Aust HighCom **** |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 2  |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 3  | Kokoda Track Permit Holder Trekking Statistics at 31 December, 2008                         |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 4  |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 5  | For Trekkers Trek Permits Applications, Paid and Unpaid with KTA identified 2008 Defaulters |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 6  |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 7  |   | Year  | Year  | Year  | Year  | Year  | Year  | Year  | Year  | Year 2008 |       |                          |       |          |       |                |       |
| 8  | Tour Operator   | 2001  | 2002  | 2003  | 2004  | 2005  |       | 2006  |       | 2007      |       | Applications Paid/Unpaid |       | Defaults |       | Adjusted Total |       |
| 9  |   | Trkrs   | Trkrs | Trkrs | Trkrs | Trkrs | Trkrs | Trkrs | Trkrs | Trkrs     | Trkrs | Trkrs                    | Trkrs | Trkrs    | Trkrs | Trkrs          | Trkrs |
| 10 | Adventure Kokoda  |   |       |       | 26    | 332   | 25    | 507   | 22    | 731       | 30    | 753                      | 36    | 0        | 0     | 753            | 36    |
| 11 | Adventure 35 / Tropic Tours   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 5         | 1     | 22                       | 2     | 0        | 0     | 22             | 2     |
| 12 | Back Track Adventures / Niugini Holidays  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 0                        | 0     | 38       | 3     | 38             | 3     |
| 13 | Dick Baker  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 25        | 1     | 34                       | 3     | 0        | 0     | 34             | 3     |
| 14 | DCXP  |   |       |       |       | 43    | 5     | 32    | 4     | 147       | 12    | 0                        | 0     | 146      | 11    | 146            | 11    |
| 15 | Desoho Treks & Tours  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 2                        | 1     | 0        | 0     | 2              | 1     |
| 16 | EcoTourism Melanesia  |   |       |       | 30    | 35    | 7     | 79    | 15    | 78        | 11    | 28                       | 4     | 0        | 0     | 28             | 4     |
| 17 | Executive Excellence / Tropic Tours   |   |       | 13    | 35    | 245   | 15    | 378   | 16    | 359       | 19    | 416                      | 27    | 0        | 0     | 416            | 27    |
| 18 | Fuzzy Wuzzy Expeditions   |   |       |       | 5     | 17    | 1     | 47    | 2     | 39        | 3     | 27                       | 3     | 18       | 2     | 45             | 5     |
| 19 | Fuzzy Wuzzy Spiritours  |   |       |       |       |       |       | 8     | 1     |           |       |                          |       | 0        | 0     | 0              | 0     |
| 20 | Getaway Trekking  |   |       |       |       |       |       | 15    | 3     | 56        | 5     | 155                      | 13    | 0        | 0     | 155            | 13    |
| 21 | GMS Tours (Niugini Adventure Tours)   |   |       |       |       |       |       | 33    | 2     | 25        | 1     | 68                       | 5     | 32       | 2     | 100            | 7     |
| 22 | Isurava Memorial Tours  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 2                        | 1     | 0        | 0     | 2              | 1     |
| 23 | Kokoda Bros (Legend Guided Tours)   |   |       |       |       |       |       | 3     | 1     | 6         | 1     | 52                       | 6     | 0        | 0     | 52             | 6     |
| 24 | Kokoda Historical   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 11                       | 2     | 18       | 2     | 29             | 4     |
| 25 | Kokoda Holidays   |   |       |       | 15    | 15    | 1     | 51    | 6     | 35        | 3     | 19                       | 2     | 5        | 1     | 24             | 3     |
| 26 | Kokoda Icon (formerly Kolari Treks & Tours)   |   |       | 32    | 97    | 51    | 10    | 60    | 7     | 45        | 6     | 38                       | 7     | 6        | 1     | 44             | 8     |
| 27 | Kokoda Memorial Black Angels  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 36                       | 4     | 0        | 0     | 36             | 4     |
| 28 | Kokoda Oro Tours  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 25        | 5     | 42                       | 3     | 0        | 0     | 42             | 3     |
| 29 | Kokoda Spirit   |   |       |       |       | 4     | 1     | 187   | 19    | 646       | 49    | 477                      | 40    | 378      | 32    | 855            | 72    |
| 30 | Kokoda Track Experience (Mervyn Hains)  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 18        | 2     | 92                       | 5     | 27       | 2     | 119            | 7     |
| 31 | Kokoda Trail Bushwalking  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 21                       | 2     | 30       | 2     | 51             | 4     |
| 32 | Kokoda Trekking Ltd   |   |       |       | 36    | 636   | 69    | 822   | 100   | 722       | 83    | 370                      | 42    | 207      | 24    | 577            | 66    |
| 33 | Kokoda Treks & Tours Pty Ltd  |   |       | 27    | 117   | 172   | 12    | 189   | 13    | 176       | 11    | 168                      | 11    | 15       | 1     | 183            | 12    |
| 34 | Mentone Grammar   |   |       |       |       | ?     | 3     | ?     | 3     | 18        | 3     | 0                        | 0     | 25       | 2     | 25             | 2     |
| 35 | Niugini Holidays / Pacific Travel   |   |       | 76    | 290   | 587   | 49    | 699   | 63    | 659       | 52    | 116                      | 10    | 186      | 16    | 302            | 26    |
| 36 | No Roads Expeditions  |   |       |       |       | 23    | 2     | 74    | 6     | 368       | 30    | 479                      | 35    | 114      | 9     | 593            | 44    |
| 37 | Northern Distractions   |   |       |       | 92    | 0     | 0     | 68    | 6     | 154       | 9     | 45                       | 4     | 0        | 0     | 45             | 4     |
| 38 | Our Spirit  |   |       |       | 8     | 54    | 6     | 162   | 9     | 195       | 10    | 0                        | 0     | 110      | 4     | 110            | 4     |
| 39 | Paradise Tours  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 0                        | 0     | 15       | 1     | 15             | 1     |
| 40 | PNG Trekking Adventures   |   |       |       | 12    | 33    | 6     | 37    | 4     | 69        | 9     | 237                      | 21    | 12       | 1     | 249            | 22    |
| 41 | Private   |   |       | 3     | 103   | 120   | 17    | 214   | 38    | 363       | 48    | 136                      | 32    | 81       | 9     | 217            | 41    |
| 42 | South Seas Horizons / Brigade Hill Mission Tours  |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |       | 0                        | 0     | 104      | 10    | 104            | 10    |
| 43 | Team Kokoda Australia   |   |       |       |       |       |       | 49    | 4     | 69        | 5     | 83                       | 5     | 10       | 1     | 93             | 6     |
| 44 | Toogee Treks  |   |       |       |       | 7     | 1     | 33    | 3     | 45        | 5     | 52                       | 6     | 10       | 1     | 62             | 7     |
| 45 | Trek 96 Kokoda Historical   |   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 68        | 6     | 23                       | 3     | 0        | 0     | 23             | 3     |

*KTA Summary of Trek Fee defaulters in 2008. Only one company, Adventure Kokoda, had not defaulted on their Trek Fee obligations.*



Wetherall later claimed on his website that he led more than 1000 trekkers across the trail which indicates that either Landy Noel did not count them all – or Wetherall inflated the figure as a marketing ploy.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2008

## Kokoda Story

It's a tale of courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice which Wayne and Michelle Wetherall want to share with everyone.

Six years ago, the Sippy Downs couple formed Kokoda Spirit - a company which takes treks across the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea.

Since then, Kokoda Spirit has educated thousands of trekkers about the bitter fight between Australian and Japanese soldiers which took place on the track 66 years ago - which Australia eventually won.

"It's a business that Michelle and I are very passionate about because it's such a fantastic story of what took place," Wayne said.

**"This year alone we've taken over a thousand trekkers ..."** We do anything from corporate to school groups to individuals or teams." While the trail is 96 kilometres long, with 7,500 meters in climbs and another 7,500 meters in descents, Wayne said the key to completing the track is having a good stamina.

"You don't need to be an Olympian," he said.

## Character References

At the end of 2008, the Australian Government assumed responsibility for the Kokoda Trail under a Joint Understanding signed with PNG.

Mr Rod Hillman was appointed as CEO to replace Bartlett. It was Hillman's first trip to PNG and the defaulting on payment of trek fees by Australian operators was the first issue he had to resolve.

Rather than advise operators who had defaulted on their payments to pay up, the KTA (under Hillman's leadership) entered into a series of confidential settlement agreements which resulted in undisclosed discounts and payments to the rogue companies which included Kokoda Spirit.

Wetherall's persuasive sales skills came to the fore during his negotiations with Rod Hillman and they became close friends. So close that Hillman wrote a letter advising that Kokoda Spirit '*had no outstanding trek fees in 2008, 2009, or 2010*'. He neglected to mention whether these amounts related to the full amount of unpaid fees identified by the Kokoda Track Authority audit, or any reduced amount negotiated as part of a confidential settlement with the KTA.



## KOKODA TRACK AUTHORITY

[A Special Purposes Authority of the Kokoda and Koiari Local-Level Governments]

PO Box 545  
Boroko NCD 1 11  
Papua New Guinea  
P: (+675) 323 6165  
F: (+675) 323 6020

E: [kokodatrackauthority@global.net.pg](mailto:kokodatrackauthority@global.net.pg)

Wayne and Michelle Wetherall  
Kokoda Spirit  
PO Box 7293  
Sippy Downs QLD 4556  
Australia

Re: Confirming Kokoda Spirit has paid all outstanding KTA fees and charges

Dear Wayne & Michelle,

This letter is to confirm the outcomes of our conversation held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April in the KTA office. In this discussion I was able to verify;

- Kokoda Spirit has no outstanding trek permit, or other, fees to the KTA from 2008, 2009 or 2010.
- Kokoda Spirit has satisfied all requirements to be issued a KTA Commercial Operations License.

I look forward to working closely with Kokoda Spirit into the future.

Regards,

**Rod Hillman**  
Chief Executive Officer  
May 05, 2010

It was noted that Hillman did not write a similar letter to any other trekking company (including the one company that was compliant with their payment and those in near compliance).

On 3 September 2010 Wetherall's relationship with Rod Hillman was evident in the following announcement on his blog:

*'Kokoda Spirit to manage Kokoda Track Authority Chairman's Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel Day Trek . . . the VIP participants on this trek have been personally invited by the Chairman and CEO of the Kokoda Track Authority.'*

Such a trek should have been put out to tender among licensed Kokoda tour operators at the time however there is no evidence this protocol was followed.

At the end of Hillman's term as CEO he joined Wetherall's company, Kokoda Spirit, on a trek across the Kokoda Trail, and wrote a glowing reference as a parting gift on Thursday, 28 June 2012:

### KOKODA SPIRIT BLOG

THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 2012

*Wayne and Michelle,*

*Please accept my apologies, belated thanks and appreciation for assisting me to join your trek last year. The trek was brilliant and allowed me to spend time with my two sons focused on them instead of organizing/ leading my own trek.*

*Kokoda Spirit's organization and implementation was a credit to you both. The trek flowed well with competent (obviously well trained) staff who enjoyed their work. From our first meeting on Brigade Hill with the porters performing a welcome dance to flying back to Port Moresby and dinner at the Yacht Club we were treated extremely well. The relationship one of my sons developed with your porter Billy was a highlight.*

*Cameron is excellent. He has a genuine passion for the subject and I thoroughly enjoyed his commentary and leadership of the group.*

*This was my first experience as a 'trekker' on the Kokoda Track as all the other times it was work and a very different experience. It was a great insight to the experience trekkers get when they join a tour operator and if everyone supplies the experience Kokoda Spirit does then the Industry is in safe hands.*

*Once again my congratulations and my thanks.*

*Cheers*

*Rod Hillman*

According to a signed statement by Hillman on 8 November 2018, Wetherall advised him that the 'thousand trekkers' he claimed to have led across the Trail in 2008 was just a 'marketing statement and not actual figures'.

In 2016 the Australian High Commission went a step further and wrote a personal letter congratulating Wetherall for the 'great work he was doing on the Track':

*Dear Wayne,*

*By way of introduction I am responsible at the High Commission for the Australian government work in the Kokoda region.*

*I'd like to pass on our congratulations in general to your company for the great work you do on the Track. I see your teams out there, they're clearly well prepared, your porters are being treated well, and your companies interaction with campsite owners and the local communities is positive. Terrific stuff. It's great for those individuals involved, both from PNG and Australia, it's good for the economy, and it helps strengthen the bilateral relationship. Recognise you must be working hard to bring up the number of trekkers - that's not easy in this economic climate.*

*I'd welcome the opportunity to meet with you if you have time next time you're around Moresby Always keen to hear and learn more about the Track, and discuss the Australian government approach, including to some of the challenges.*

*Respectfully yours,*

*Tim Bryson*

**Counsellor, Australian High Commission - Port Moresby**  
 Ph +675 3259333 Ext. 379 I Mobile + 675 7200 7872 I Fax +675 325 5535  
 Australian High Commission - Pott Moresby Locked Bag 129, Waigani NCO, Papua New Guinea [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

[Link to letter from Tim Bryson, Australian High Commission posted on Kokoda Spirit Website on 3 December 2016](#)

The Australian High Commission failed to write to other trekking companies who had established legitimate charitable foundations, built community learning centres, initiated agricultural projects, and provided generous support to local schools and health centres.

They obviously did not have the charm that Wetherall oozed when he needed to.

The Australian High Commission was obviously unaware that Kokoda Spirit was not (according to the PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA), operating in accordance with PNG legislation.

Wetherall's powers of marketing and persuasion are also evident in his LinkedIn endorsements for 'management', 'strategic planning' and 'program management' by the Australian 'Strategic Management Advisor' for the DFAT Kokoda Initiative, [Mark Nizette MBE](#):

|  |
|--|
| Skills & endorsements<br><b>Management</b><br>Endorsed by Mark Nizette, MBE (mutual connection)<br><b>Strategic Planning</b><br>Endorsed by Mark Nizette, MBE and 2 other mutual connections<br><b>Program Management</b><br>Endorsed by Mark Nizette, MBE (mutual connection) |
|--|

It is instructive that DFAT agencies responsible for ensuring good governance in the management of the Kokoda Trail i.e., the Australian High Commission, the DFAT Kokoda Initiative, and the PNG Kokoda Track Authority, have provided written and published endorsements of an Australian company that, according to documentary evidence available, has failed to pay substantial trek fees (resultingly cheating villages of their entitlement to shared benefits), making continued unjustified and unsubstantiated claims on their website, failing to operate in accordance with PNG legislation, and who have avoided their taxation obligations.

## The Last word

The last word regarding Wetherall's character came from one of his trek leaders – a former army lieutenant decorated during the Vietnam War:

'I led two dry season Track crossings for Wayne in 2009. The first, comprising a group of some six clients, went reasonably well. An overall assessment suggested to me that, prima facie, Wayne had his shit in order.

'The second crossing for Wayne later that year, was however, an unmitigated disaster, and suggested to me that Wayne was flying by the seat of his pants, and that his organisation was a major accident waiting for a time and a place to happen. I forwarded a comprehensive assessment of the trek and his organisation to him and received in return only a brief acknowledgement of that report. Since that time, I've had essentially no contact with him.

‘It was very clear to me before, during, and after that second trek, that every facet of his organisation essentially failed to meet even the most rudimentary of common, garden variety trekking standards. It didn’t matter whether the issue was pre or post trek administration; support staff selection, management, development, competence and accountability arrangements; trek safety; or logistics: all seemed to perch precariously and consistently on a narrow knife edge, where the potential for significant problems to emerge were so obviously and consistently in evidence.

‘I concluded that report to Wayne with the following advice: “If it is your wish that KS continues to operate, and to prosper, professionally, on the Track, it is my opinion that a significant review of your Company’s philosophy, your standards and modus operandi is urgently required.”

‘It would be well beyond any possibility that I would trek for or with him again, nor would I in any way recommend any potential trekker to join his expeditions. I would not allow myself to be associated with him or his organisation.

‘My anecdotal-based overview of WW, gained inter alia, from a number of reputable sources whose opinion and judgement I would trust, and over the past seven years, is that he is a bullshit merchant of some standing, whose principal position in life seems to be based on a carefully planned programme of self-aggrandisement and self-promotion. Notwithstanding his clever self-marketing skills, his trekking “exploits” both on and off the Track appears to me to lack any real credibility, He seems somehow to survive on a predetermined network of manipulative exploitation of, at best, half-truths, something akin to a shonky second-hand car salesman!!’<sup>iv</sup>

## Wayne Wetherall Fact Checks

**Date of Birth:** 3 May 1965

1995-1996

NSW Technical Sales Manager, Kirby Refrigeration

1996-1999

NSW State Manager, Kirby Refrigeration

1999-2002

NSW State Manager, [Actrol Pty Ltd](#)

Actrol is a wholesaler of parts to the refrigeration, air conditioning and allied industries.

2002-2003

National Sales Marketing Manager, [Reliance Group/TubeFit](#)

Note:

‘*TubeFit*’ does not generate any results in the Reliance Group Search Engine – it is not possible to gauge the extent of Wetherall’s ‘*National*’ responsibilities in this position.

2003-2006

National Sales Marketing Manager, RES (Refrigeration Equipment Supplies)

Note:

RES does not have a website - it is therefore not possible to gauge the extent of Wetherall’s ‘*National*’ responsibilities in this position.

[2004](#)

Kokoda Spirit Pty Limited (ACN:111 575 378) registered with ASIC 0n 28 October 2004.

[2005](#)

Kokoda Spirit (PNG) Limited (1-47149) registered in PNG on 16 December 2005.

The following is an extract from the first Kokoda Spirit website on [11 February 2005](#):

‘Kokoda Spirit is passionately committed to the legacy and Spirit (sic) that our Australian Soldiers (sic) and their Papuan New Guinea Brothers (sic) have left for us on the Kokoda Track (sic). The Courage (sic), Endurance (sic), Mateship (sic) and Sacrifice (sic) on this sacred track have become legend. We at Kokoda Spirit are dedicated to providing our Trekkers (sic) and Rafters (sic) with the Experience (sic) of a Lifetime (sic), to Experience (sic) Adventure (sic), to Experience (sic) the Spirit (sic) and to Experience (sic) the Culture (sic) and the People (sic) this wonderful, fascinating and awe inspiring Country (sic) provides.

‘At Kokoda Spirit we are always at the forefront of new adventures in PNG. We have successfully explored and opened up 3 new rivers in PNG. We can also organise treks to Mt Wilhelm and Mt Victoria. We are also opening up trips to Alotau at Milne bay and Buna and Gona on the North Coast (sic). Kokoda Spirit has offices in both Sydney and Port Moresby. This allows us to provide you with local contacts in Australia, while our strategically based Port Moresby office provides all the advantages of local knowledge and local infrastructure. This support network ensures your trekking or rafting adventure is enjoyable and trouble free.

‘Our Australian office and operation is run by Wayne Wetherall and Frank Hasiuk. Both these men are passionate about the Kokoda Track (sic), the Australian history, the people and the culture. Both Wayne and Frank have accompanied “Ossie” on the Kokoda Track (sic) and his explorations of the PNG rivers. They have established strong bonds with the local villagers, setting up trusts to supply much needed supplies of School books and equipment. Wayne and Frank's expertise in Business (sic), IT and Tourism (sic) provides the professional support and infrastructure to the team in Papua New Guinea. Wayne Wetherall has an intimate knowledge and passion for the Australian war history on the track and is our Chief Australian Guide. He has also written a number of stories on the history and his experiences on the track. His enthusiasm and knowledge will give you an insight into the Kokoda Tracks (sic) history. ‘Kokoda Spirit has also run small group trips to explore the history and sites of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, China and Borneo. (Details on request.)

‘Wayne Wetherall achievements in Brief:

‘Kokoda Spirit is the only Trekking/Rafting Company (sic) in PNG. Kokoda Spirit is also the only commercially operated Rafting (sic) company in PNG. Kokoda Spirit can offer you rafting at the completion of your trek - either on the Kumusi River near Kokoda or on the Vanapa and Angabanga Rivers near Port Moresby.’

#### **FACT CHECK:**

1. Kokoda Spirit ventures into white-water rafting in PNG ended after three Israeli rafters were drowned on one of their expeditions in [May 2005](#).
2. There is no record of Wayne Wetherall and Frank Hasiuk ‘*setting up trusts to supply much needed supplies of School books and equipment*’ for local villagers in 2005.
3. There is no record of Wetherall publishing ‘*stories on the history and his experiences on the track*’ prior to 2005.
4. There is no record of Kokoda Spirit organising or leading ‘*small group trips to explore the history and sites of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, China and Borneo*’ prior to 2005.
5. Prior to 2004, Frank Hasiuk worked in Real Estate in South-Western Sydney. According to a PNG guide on his first trek across the Kokoda Trail in 2004 he provided the funding for Wetherall’s initial ventures into PNG. He was mentioned on the Kokoda Spirit website for a short time before being removed.
6. According to Wetherall’s [LinkedIn profile](#) he was employed as the National Marketing Manager with Refrigeration Equipment Supplies from 2003 until [December 2006](#).

[2006:](#)

[Celsius Journal](#): Vol 34. No 5. May 2006. Page 14. Industry News - The Official Journal of the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association of Australia



*'Wayne Weatherall is the National Sales Manager for RES. Wayne has been a great help assisting us with Worldskills.'*

**FACT CHECK:**

It is difficult to understand how Wetherall could have been *'at the forefront of new adventures in PNG; exploring and opening and opening up new rivers in PNG; and opening up trips to Alotau, Buna and Gona* whilst he was employed as the National Sales Manager for Refrigeration Equipment Supplies at the same time in 2005-2006.

There are no known records of his *'exploring'* and *'opening up'* of *'new adventures'* in any of these locations – it can therefore be assumed that he made them up to enhance the myth he was cultivating in the early years of his involvement with the Kokoda Trail.

**2009:**

According to an interview with the [Sunshine Coast Daily newspaper on 15 April 2009](#) he informed the reporter, Anne Lousie Brown, that he was:

*'a **building industry sales executive**, but "had a nagging need" to make his Kokoda Spirit dream come alive.'*

**FACT CHECK:**

There are no known records of Wayne Wetherall's engagement in the building industry as a sales executive. He has not mentioned this fact in his [Linkedin profile](#) or any other forum.

It is possible he might just have been trying to impress the young female reporter.

**2011:**

THE AWCI 66th Annual Conference: (Association of Wall and Ceiling Industries)

Reef View Hotel, Hamilton Island, QLD: 6-9 November 2011

Motivational Speaker: Wayne Wetherall

*'Wayne Wetherall is currently the owner and Managing Director of Adventure companies, Kokoda Spirit and Wild Spirit Adventures. Wayne had a very successful career in the corporate world as a National Sales and Marketing Manager and General Manager, until in 2004, he walked the Kokoda Track in PNG; a life changing experience that he has turned into a passion and lifestyle.'*

*'In 2007 he took on the fulltime role as Managing Director of his own company Kokoda Spirit, which quickly became Number One operator of adventure treks across Kokoda and PNG, escorting over 4000 trekkers across the track. Wetherall's adventure company has now expanded into Borneo, Africa and Nepal, with his passion to deliver life changing adventures.'*

**FACT CHECK:**

Wayne Wetherall established his myth on the pillar of his international, national, and state athletic records [which were listed on the Kokoda Spirit website on 11 February 2005](#).

They were quietly removed from the website after the aura of the *adventurer, explorer, and historian* with a *passion* for our *soldiers* had been established.

If Wetherall's athletic records were true it is fair to assume they would have featured in his profile as a 'motivational speaker' of some note at the AWCI 66<sup>th</sup> International Conference in 2011 – that's what motivational speakers do!

**2013:**

*Wayne's expertise in Adventure tourism, Business, Management, Leadership, Motivation and Life changing experiences, provides the professional support and infrastructure to the team in Papua New*

Guinea. Wayne has had a very successful career in the corporate world as a State Manager, National Sales and Marketing Manager and General Manager.'

**FACT CHECK:**

According to Annual Returns submitted for Kokoda Spirit PNG, Wetherall did not have a 'team in Papua New Guinea' as the company did not employ any full-time or part-time employees.

2015:

*'Founded in 2004 by adventurer, Wayne Wetherall, Kokoda Spirit began with an earnest desire to experience a legendary track that was once all but forgotten to time until a small band of Soldiers trekked into the interior of Papua New Guinea and fought back an invading Japanese force during World War II. This formidable frontier became known as the Kokoda Trail Campaign.'*

**FACT CHECK:**

It is a stretch to relate the term 'adventurer' to the various suburban sales manager positions listed on his [Linkedin profile](#) prior to 2004.

According to Wayne Wetherall's [Linkedin profile](#) he has also 'thrown himself out of a perfectly good plane skydiving 4 times', and 'caged dived with the Great White sharks off Port Lincoln'.

**FACT CHECK:**

- Wetherall did not actually 'throw himself out a perfectly good plane skydiving 4 times' as claimed. According to [Skydive.com.au](#) a parachutist must have completed nine AFF training stages which involve assisted jumping 'with two instructors holding on to you' before one is permitted to jump solo. [This FB post](#) indicates that Wetherall participated in a 'tandem jump' firmly attached to the bosom of a qualified parachutist in the same fashion as this [95-year-old skydiver](#).
- According to [Shark Diving in Port Lincoln](#): 'Our crew strive to ensure all groups get a similar experience in the cage, based on shark interaction . . . Please remember that the day isn't just about being in the cage as there is also ample viewing opportunity from on board the vessel while waiting for your turn to dive'.



Wayne Wetherall after throwing himself 'out of a perfectly good plane' (firmly attached to the bosom of a qualified tandem parachutist), and diving with what appear to be 'white pointer' fish.

## Trolling for the Truth

Trolling for the truth regarding Wetherall's claims on the Internet Archive is a difficult, time-consuming exercise which leads to the conclusion that he either has *mathematical dyslexia*, a poor memory, or he just makes things up.

| YEAR | KOKODA SPIRIT WEBSITE CLAIMS   | COMMENT  |
|------|--|--|
| 2010 | <a href="#">Reference (18 November 2010):</a><br>Kokoda Spirit led 3000 trekkers   |  |
| 2011 | <a href="#">Reference (Kokoda Spirit Blog of December 2011):</a><br>Wetherall completed 46 treks   |  |
| 2012 | <a href="#">Reference (11 January 2012):</a><br>Kokoda Spirit led 3800 trekkers  |  |
| 2013 | <a href="#">Reference (13 January 2013):</a><br>Wetherall completed 50 treks<br>Kokoda Spirit led 3600 trekkers<br><br><a href="#">Reference 1 (25 May 2013):</a><br>Wayne Wetherall announces his retirement from trekking after completing 50 treks.<br><br><a href="#">Reference 2 (26 January 2014):</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 55 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 4000 trekkers</li> </ul> | Kokoda Spirit seems to have 'lost' 200 trekkers in 2012!   |
| 2014 | <a href="#">Reference (13 December 2014):</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 56 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 4000 trekkers</li> </ul>  | According to this post Kokoda Spirit led 400 trekkers across the Trail in 2013 & 2014.   |
| 2015 | <a href="#">Reference 1 (27 February 2015):</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 56 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 5000 trekkers</li> </ul><br><a href="#">Reference 2 (5 November 2015):</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 60 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 6000 trekkers</li> </ul>  | According to the two references for the same year Wetherall either did not trek at all - or he did 6 treks, with Kokoda Spirit leading either 1000 or 2000 trekkers.   |
| 2016 | <a href="#">Reference 1 (5 March 2016):</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 65 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 5000 trekkers</li> </ul><br><a href="#">Reference 2 (27 December 2016):</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 6000 trekkers</li> </ul><br><a href="#">Reference 3 (27 December 2016):</a>  | <p>According to these references, Wetherall either completed nine treks or 14 treks in 2016 with Kokoda Spirit leading minus 1000 trekkers, nil trekkers, 1000 trekkers, or 2000 trekkers</p> <p>According to Kokoda Track Authority records only 477 trek permits were issued to Kokoda Spirit in 2016.</p> |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 70 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 7000 trekkers</li> </ul>  |  |
| 2017  | <p><a href="#">Reference 1 (29 December 2017):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 70 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 6600 trekkers</li> </ul>   | <p>According to these references Wetherall either completed 5 treks or 15 treks, with Kokoda Spirit leading either 1600 trekkers, 2000 trekkers, or 2500 trekkers in 2016.</p> <p>According to Kokoda Track Authority records only 464 trek permits were issued to Kokoda Spirit in 2017.</p>  |
| 2018  | <p><a href="#">Reference 2 (26 February 2018):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 80 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 7000 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Reference 3 (26 February 2018):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 7500 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Reference 4 (22 March 2018):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 80 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 7500 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Reference 5 (31 March 2018):</a><br/>Kokoda Spirit led 7000 trekkers</p> <p><a href="#">Reference (11 August 2018):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 82 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 7700 trekkers</li> </ul> | <p>According to these references Wetherall completed either 2, 11, 12, or 21 treks in 2017, and Kokoda Spirit led either 200, 700, 900, 1100, 1400, or 1800 trekkers across the Trail.</p> <p>The Kokoda Spirit staff in 2018 included Wetherall and two female administrators.</p> <p>In 2018, according to the Kokoda Spirit and Wild Spirit Adventures websites they advertised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>74 treks to Mt Kilimanjaro in Africa;</li> <li>26 expeditions to Everest Base Camp in Nepal;</li> <li>7 treks to the Sandakan Death March in Borneo;</li> <li>62 treks across the Kokoda Trail.</li> </ul> <p>This amounts to a total of 169 international expeditions. If Wetherall completed up to 21 treks as claimed he would have been absent from his home office for up to 10 months leaving the bulk of the work to his two female staff.</p> |
| 2019  | <p><a href="#">Reference (9 January 2019):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 91 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 8400 trekkers</li> </ul>   | <p>Wetherall completed either minus two treks or three treks while Kokoda Spirit led either 500, or 1200 trekkers.</p>   |
| <b>Trekking across the Kokoda Trail ceased in November 2019 due to Covid-19</b> |  |  |
| 2020  | <p><a href="#">Reference 1 (12 August 2020):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall led 85 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 8900 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Reference 2 (30 October 2020):</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 80 treks</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Wetherall completed minus six treks.</b></p>   |



|      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
|      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 8500 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><u>Reference (25 November 2020):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 95 treks</li> <li><u>Kokoda Spirit led 8500 trekkers</u></li> </ul>   | <p>Wetherall completed minus 5 treks in October 2019</p> <p>Wetherall completed 15 treks in one month!</p> <p><b>* There were no flights between Australian and PNG in 2020 and according to KTA records there were no treks conducted across the Trail due to Covid-19 restrictions.</b></p>  |
| 2021 | <p><u>Reference (19 January 2021):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 85 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit let 8500 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><u>Reference (31 March 2021):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 91 treks</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit led 8400 trekkers</li> </ul> <p><u>Reference (30 July 2021):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed 95 treks</li> </ul> | <p>Wetherall completed minus 10 treks!</p> <p>Wetherall completed six treks in two months!</p> <p>Wetherall completed four treks in four months</p> <p><b>* There were no flights between Australian and PNG in 2021 and according to KTA records there were no treks conducted across the Trail due to Covid-19 restrictions.</b></p> |
| 2022 | <p><u>Reference (23 May 2022):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed ‘more than 90 crossings of the Kokoda Track’</li> <li><u>Wetherall has trekked Kokoda ‘in excess of 95 times’</u></li> <li><u>Kokoda Spirit led 8500 trekkers</u></li> </ul>   | <p>Wetherall led minus 5 treks in May 2022!</p> <p>Wetherall completed five treks in May 2022!</p> <p>Kokoda Spirit led 100 trekkers in 2022.</p>  |
| 2023 |  |  |
| 2024 | <p><u>Reference (15 March 2024)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetherall completed ‘more than 99 treks’</li> <li>Kokoda Spirit has ‘<u>escorted thousands of trekkers safely across Kokoda.</u>’</li> <li>Wetherall has completed ‘<u>in excess of 95 treks</u>’</li> </ul>  | <p>Wetherall completed ‘more than nine or four treks in 2024!’</p> <p>Wetherall did not complete any treks in 2004!</p>  |

## The Business of Kokoda – and its Exploitation

The cessation of trekking due to Covid exposed the dysfunction of the [management system](#) established by the Australian Government via the DFAT-Kokoda Initiative since they assumed responsibility for the Kokoda Trail in 2008.

The result of this dysfunction, after an investment of more than PNGK150 million in aid funding is summarised in a local FB post on the [Koiari Strategic Forum](#) from a leader in the local Koiari community on 3 August 2021:

*'We are totally forgotten, there is NO FALL BACK PLANS during COVID 19 period. We are been isolated as a result, dead rate increased to people dying within weeks, students left schools, teachers absent from classes, projects ceased, medical drags shortage, health issues raised to an alarming rate etc. No transport services and people walked days and nights to Port Moresby city to get basic services. Mothers and Children walking during rainy season with cold in the difficult terrains is painful'.*

In this section we explore one of the symptoms of the dysfunction relating to the relationship between the PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) and their inability to monitor Wayne Wetherall's legal obligations to register as a 'Foreign Enterprise' in accordance with the IPA Act, and to meet his employment and taxation responsibilities in PNG.

We will attempt to match claims made by Wetherall on his LinkedIn Profile against those made on his Kokoda Spirit website, and the compliance of his PNG company with the IPA Act regarding their governance requirements as a Foreign Enterprise.

### Background

Foreign companies who wish to establish a business in PNG usually engage a local solicitor to act on their behalf. Wayne Wetherall engaged [Leahy Lewin Lowing Sullivan Lawyers](#) (LLLS Lawyers). Goosey Ltd was a PNG shelf company registered with LLLS Lawyers. On 24 January 2005 it was re-registered as Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd, No 1-47149 with the PNG [Investment Promotion Authority](#) (IPA).

We assume the Directors and Shareholders, Gwen Tauaole, Sharon Nalu and Amanda Namaliu were solicitors working for LLLS Lawyers at the time.

The 2004 Annual Return listed Gwen Tauaole as the shareholder in the company with Sharon Nalu as Director. The company had assets of K100 (\$50). In 2005 Amanda Namaliu replaced Gwen Tauaole as shareholder. Assets remain unchanged at K100 (\$50). There were no changes to the company in their 2006 and 2007 Annual Returns.

After establishing a company there is a requirement to meet annual compliance costs with the IPA however inefficiencies within the PNG bureaucracy means these are rarely followed up.

LLLS Lawyers filed Annual Returns for Kokoda Spirit PNG from 2006-2008. No further returns were filed after 2008, either because Wetherall did not wish to meet the annual compliance costs, didn't pay his account, or reckoned he could get away with it.

In 2016 Wetherall engaged [Christopher Smith Chartered Accountants](#) who filed Annual Returns for 2009 and 2010 in May 2016 – and for 2011-2014 all in one day, on 30 August 2016.

In 2017, Wetherall changed accountants again and engaged Lee Frank Huang from '[DFK Mayberry Chartered Accountants](#)' to submit Annual Returns for 2017-2020.

Wetherall and [Lee Frank Huang](#) are both listed as Directors of Kokoda Spirit PNG. Both reside in Brisbane in breach of the IPA Act which requires such businesses to obtains a 'Foreign Enterprise' certification to ensure they meet their employment and taxation obligations in PNG.

According to their Annual Returns from 2005-2015 Kokoda Spirit PNG did not have any employees.

From 2015-2018 they employed four (4) full-time employees and nil part-time employees. This was reduced to three (3) full-time employees on their returns for the period 2018-2020.

During the period 2009-2015 the cumulative asset value for the company totalled PNGK1,310,953, and liabilities totalled PNGK1,821,602. This would have ensured they did not have any taxation liabilities to meet in PNG.

It is not known how they calculated the values of their assets and liabilities each year from 2009 because the Annual Returns for this period were up to seven (7) years overdue.

### **PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) Records**

The IPA is the responsible government agency for the establishment of business names, companies, and foreign enterprises.

The following information can be validated by visiting the IPA website at <https://www.ipa.gov.pg/> and following these steps:

- Click on 'Online Services'
- Click on 'Company Search'
- Enter 'Kokoda Spirit'
- Click on 'Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)'
- Click on 'Filings'
- Click on the relevant Annual Return.

### **Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)**

#### **CURRENT DIRECTORS**

Wayne WETHERALL: Appointed 29 July 2011  
15 Sandleigh Crescent, Sippy Downs, Queensland, 4556, Australia  
Po Box 1829, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea  
Nationality: Australia

Lee Frank HUANG: Appointed 23 January 2017  
Unit 12, Kwilla Apartments, Granville, Port Moresby, National Capital District, 121,  
Nationality: Australia

#### **FORMER DIRECTORS**

Gwen TAUAOLE: 2 Sep 2002 – 16 Dec 2005  
Po Box 1173, Port Moresby, National Capital District, 121, Papua New Guinea

Christopher Michael SMITH: 2 Jan 2015 – 1 Jan 2017  
C/-Smiths Chartered Accountants, P O Box 478, Port Moresby, National Capital District,  
Nationality: British Indian Ocean Territory

Amanda NAMALIU: 16 December 2005 – 21 November 2006  
Po Box 1173, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea  
Nationality: Papua New Guinea

Sharon NALU: 21 November 2006 – 29 July 2011  
Po Box 1173, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea

Nationality: Papua New Guinea

**Note:**

Michelle Wetherall, listed as a Director on the [2008 Annual Return](#) is not listed as a former director on the IPA Website

### 2004 Annual Return

Gwen Tauaole listed on 2004 Annual Return for Kokoda Spirit PNG as a Director and Shareholder.

Return signed on 20 June 2006 by Sharon Nalu as a Director.

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services>Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return 31-Dec-2004 12:00:00

### 2005 Annual Return

Kokoda Spirit (PNG) Limited (1-47149) was registered by Amanda Namaliu on 16 December 2005.

Goosey Ltd changed its name to Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd on 26 January 2005.

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services>Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Notice of Change of Directors and Particulars of Directors 28 Dec 2005 10:58:51

### 2006 Annual Return

The **2006 Annual Return**, signed by Sharon Nalu on 20 June 2007, lists Sharon Nalu as a Director and Amanda Namaliu as Shareholder.

**21 November 2006:**

Amanda Namaliu appointment as Director of Kokoda Spirit ceased.

Sharon Nalu appointed as Director of Kokoda Spirit

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services>Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Notice of Change of Directors and Particulars of Directors, 28 Dec 2005 10:58:51

### 2007 Annual Return

- Click on 'Filings-Kokoda Spirit-Filings-Annual Return (Form 22) 31 December 2007

The **2007 Annual Return**, unsigned and undated, lists Sharon Nalu as a Director, and Amanda Namaliu as the Shareholder.

### No Annual Returns were filed with the IPA from 2008-2015.

On 7 January 2015, Christopher Smith, of Smith's Chartered Accountants, filed a [Notice of Change of Registered Office](#) for Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd. Smith was also appointed a Director of the company on 2 January 2015.

- 24-May-2016 11:30:06 Annual Return for September 2009 (7 years overdue)
- 26-May-2016 09:26:21 Annual Return for September 2010 (6 years overdue)
- 30-Aug-2016 10:27:22 Annual Return for September 2011 (5 years overdue)
- 30-Aug-2016 10:29:04 Annual Return for September 2012 (4 years overdue - submitted 2-minutes after filing the 2011 Annual Return).

- 30-Aug-2016 10:30:08 Annual Return for September 2013 (3 years overdue - submitted 1-minute after submitting the 2012 Annual Return).
- 30-Aug-2016 10:31:03 Annual Return for September 2014 (2 years overdue - submitted 1-minute after submitting the 2013 return).

On 25 January 2017, Wayne Wetherall submitted a [Notice of Change of Directors](#) which advised that Christopher Smith ceased his appointment on 1 January 2017 and was replaced by Lee Frank Huang from 23 January 2017.

Lee Frank Huang is an Australian citizen who was a Partner with [DFK Mayberry Chartered Accountants](#) from 2015-2019. He is currently the Chief Financial Officer for [Jani-King Brisbane](#).

14-Mar-2017 14:49:50 Annual Return for September 2015

14-Mar-2017 14:54:05 Annual Return for September 2016 (Submitted 5 minutes after the 2015 Annual Report).

11-Oct-2017 16:14:42 Annual Return for September 2017

25-Oct-2018 15:07:26 Annual Return for September 2018

19-Nov-2019 14:37:37 Annual Return for September 2019

01-Oct-2020 13:45:47: Annual Return for September 2020

#### 2008 Annual Return:

The [2008 Annual Return](#), signed by Wayne Wetherall on 2 February 2015, lists Wayne and Michelle Wetherall as Joint Directors and Shareholders.

Assets: K11,226

Liabilities at K44,967.

There are NIL employees.

#### 2009 ANNUAL RETURN:

**Ref:** <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services>Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 24 May 2018, 11:30:07.

**Note:** The link at the bottom of the 2009 ([88710 \(2\).pdf](#)) is for the previous year's Annual Return i.e., 2008

#### IPA WEB COPY: 2009

##### Annual Return: September 2009

Directors:

- Wayne Wetherall
- Christopher Smith

Shareholder:

- Amanda Namaliu

#### IPA HARD COPY 2009

[2009 Annual Return](#), filed on 24 May 2016:

Directors:

- Wayne Wetherall
- Christopher Smith

Shareholder:

- Amanda Namaliu

• Assets: K180,160

• Liabilities: K120,461

NIL employees



## NOTES ON IPA ANNUAL RETURN ANOMOLIES FOR 2009:

- There is no official IPA notification of Michelle Wetherall ceasing to be a Director of Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd.
- The Annual Return (Form 22) differs in form between the Web Copy and the Hard Copy (pdf)
- The Web Copy lists Wayne Wetherall and Christopher Smith as Directors and Amanda Namaliu as the Shareholder in 2009.
- The Hard Copy lists Wayne and Michelle Wetherall as Joint Directors and Joint Shareholders in 2009.

| Annual Return (Form 22)  |           | Companies Act 1997<br>Form 22<br>ANNUAL RETURN  |   |             |         |                     |                |             |       |           |   |   |           |          |           |   |   |           |             |         |                     |                |             |     |     |     |     |     |
|--|-----------|---|---|-------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|-------------|-------|-----------|---|---|-----------|----------|-----------|---|---|-----------|-------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>Particulars of Annual Return (Form 22)</b><br><b>KOKODA SPIRIT PNG LTD (1-47149)</b><br>Filing Date: 24-May-2016 11:30:06<br><b>Annual Return for September 2009</b><br>Main Business Sector: Tourism<br>Filing Date/Annual Return Filing Date: 01-Apr-2009<br>Date of Annual Meeting: No<br>Is a Form 23 Notice of Shareholding Being Submitted: No<br>Director 1 Name: Wayne WETHERALL<br>Residential Address: 15 Sandleigh Crescent, Sippydowns, Queensland, 4556, Australia<br>Postal Address: Po Box 487, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea<br>Nationality: Australia<br>Director Consent: This person has consented to act as a director for this company<br>Appointment Date: 29-Jul-2011<br>Director 2 Name: Christopher Michael SMITH<br>Residential Address: Section 51, Allotment 26, Port Moresby, National Capital District, 121, Papua New Guinea<br>Postal Address: C/o Smiths Chartered Accountants, P.O. Box 478, Port Moresby, National Capital District, 121, Papua New Guinea<br>Nationality: British Indian Ocean Territory<br>Director Consent: This person has consented to act as a director for this company<br>Appointment Date: 07-Jan-2015<br>Shareholder 1 Name: Amanda NAMALIU<br>Residential or Registered Office Address: Section 41, Allotment 6, Chester Street, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea<br>Postal Address: Not Supplied, ... National Capital District, Papua New Guinea<br>Nationality: Papua New Guinea<br>Shareholder Consent: This person has consented to act as a shareholder for this company<br>Appointed: 19-Feb-2006<br>I certify that all the information entered and/or uploaded is true and correct: Yes<br>Designation: Director<br>Annual Return Hard Copy: 88710 (2).pdf<br>Upload Annual Return Hard Copy: 88710 (2).pdf<br>Submitted By: SMITHS CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS C M SMITH<br>PO BOX 487, PORT MORESBY, NATIONAL CAPITAL DISTRICT, PAPUA NEW GUINEA<br>Receipt Date: 06-Feb-2015 00:00:00<br>Filing Documents:<br>File Local Annual Return: 88710.pdf<br>Annual Return Hard Copy: 88710 (2).pdf |           | Section 215(1)<br><b>Form 22</b><br><b>ANNUAL RETURN</b><br>Company number: 1-47149<br>Note: Information in this form must be either typed or handwritten in block letters. Where there is insufficient space on the form to supply the information required, use a separate sheet in the same format containing the information. All information must be stated as at the date in Item 8, unless otherwise specified.<br>1. Company name: KOKODA SPIRIT PNG LTD<br>2. The year (dates) to which the annual return relates: 1 January - 31 December, 2009<br>Note: Insert the dates e.g. 1 January - 31 December of the applicable year.<br>3. Address of registered office: C/o Smiths Independent View, L4 S5 Gorobe Street, Badili PORT MORESBY (P.O. Box 487, Port Moresby)<br>Note: The suburb, and street name and number, or the allotment and section number or portion number, and the district and province must be stated. If at the premises of a firm or other person, specify the name of such. If in a building state particulars of the location within the building.<br>23. Details of director(s):<br><table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Given names</th> <th>Surname</th> <th>Residential address</th> <th>Postal address</th> <th>Nationality</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WAYNE</td> <td>WETHERALL</td> <td>15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA</td> <td>15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA</td> <td>AUSTRALIA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MICHELLE</td> <td>WETHERALL</td> <td>15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA</td> <td>15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA</td> <td>AUSTRALIA</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Note: Initials are not sufficient for the given names of a director. The suburb, and street name and number, or the allotment and section number or portion number, and the district and province must be stated for the residential address of a director. The country of residence must be stated if it is not Papua New Guinea. A director must be a natural person.<br>24. Details of secretary(s). (Complete only if applicable):<br><table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Given names</th> <th>Surname</th> <th>Residential address</th> <th>Postal address</th> <th>Nationality</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Nil</td> <td>Nil</td> <td>Nil</td> <td>Nil</td> <td>Nil</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Note: Initials are not sufficient for the given names of a secretary. The suburb, and street name and number, or the allotment and section number or portion number, and the district and province must be stated for the residential address of a secretary. A secretary must be a natural person ordinarily resident in the country. Insert "Nil" where no one is appointed.<br>27. State the total value of the assets of the company as at the last balance date: K 180,160<br>28. State the total value of the liabilities of the company as at the last balance date: K 120,461<br>29. Declaration and signature:<br>I declare that the company satisfies the solvency test, and this declaration is made under a resolution by the company's board of directors to adopt the contents of the annual return, and all information in this form is true and correct, and the copy of every document submitted with this form is a true and correct copy of the original document.<br>Signature of Director or Secretary: [Signature]<br>Name of Director or Secretary: WAYNE WETHERALL<br>Role: DIRECTOR<br>Date: 2/2/15 |   | Given names | Surname | Residential address | Postal address | Nationality | WAYNE | WETHERALL | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | AUSTRALIA | MICHELLE | WETHERALL | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | AUSTRALIA | Given names | Surname | Residential address | Postal address | Nationality | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Given names  | Surname   | Residential address   | Postal address  | Nationality |         |                     |                |             |       |           |   |   |           |          |           |   |   |           |             |         |                     |                |             |     |     |     |     |     |
| WAYNE  | WETHERALL | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA   | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | AUSTRALIA   |         |                     |                |             |       |           |   |   |           |          |           |   |   |           |             |         |                     |                |             |     |     |     |     |     |
| MICHELLE   | WETHERALL | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA   | 15 SANDEIGH CRESENT, SIPPYDOWNS 4556, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | AUSTRALIA   |         |                     |                |             |       |           |   |   |           |          |           |   |   |           |             |         |                     |                |             |     |     |     |     |     |
| Given names  | Surname   | Residential address   | Postal address  | Nationality |         |                     |                |             |       |           |   |   |           |          |           |   |   |           |             |         |                     |                |             |     |     |     |     |     |
| Nil  | Nil       | Nil   | Nil   | Nil         |         |                     |                |             |       |           |   |   |           |          |           |   |   |           |             |         |                     |                |             |     |     |     |     |     |

### 2010 ANNUAL RETURN:

**Ref:** <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services>Search for a Company >Kokoda Spirit >Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 26 May 2016: 09:26:22.  
**Note:** the IPA Hard Copy, 183334.pdf, is for the previous year's Annual Return i.e., 2009

| IPA WEB COPY: 2010  | IPA HARD COPY: 2010  |
|---|--|
| <b>Annual Return: September 2010</b><br><br>Directors:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>• Christopher Smith</li> </ul> Shareholder: | <b>2010 Annual Return</b><br><br>Directors:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>• Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> Shareholders: |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> </ul> NIL Employees  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: K404,380</li> <li>Liabilities: K460,586.</li> </ul> NIL Employees   |
| <b>NOTES ON IPA ANNUAL RETURN ANOMOLIES FOR 2010:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2010 Annual Return was not submitted to the IPA until 2016.</li> <li>The Web Copy lists Wayne Wetherall and Christopher Smith as Directors and Amanda Namaliu as the Shareholder in 2010.</li> <li>The Hard Copy lists Wayne and Michelle Wetherall as Joint Directors and Joint Shareholders in 2010.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>2011 ANNUAL RETURN:</b><br><b>Ref:</b> <a href="https://www.ipa.gov.pg">https://www.ipa.gov.pg</a> >Online Services>Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 10:27:22. Scroll to the bottom of 'Annual Return for September 2011' and click on <a href="#">199878.pdf</a> to access the IPA Hard Copy.   |  |
| <b>IPA WEB COPY: 2011</b>   | <b>IPA HARD COPY: 2011</b>   |
| <b>Annual Return: September 2011:</b><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Christopher Smith</li> </ul> Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> </ul> NIL Employees  | <a href="#"><u>2011 Annual Return</u></a><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> Shareholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> NIL Employees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li>Assets: K141,664</li> <li>Liabilities: K804,284.</li> </ul> |
| <b>NOTES ON IPA ANNUAL RETURN ANOMOLIES FOR 2011:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2011 Annual Return was not submitted to the IPA until 2016.</li> <li>Wayne Wetherall was listed as a Director for Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd in the 2009 and 2010 Annual Returns for the company, but IPA was not notified of his appointment until <a href="#">29 July 2011</a> when he replaced Sharon Nalu as a Director of the company.</li> <li>The Web Copy lists Wayne Wetherall and Christopher Smith as Directors and Amanda Namaliu as the Shareholder in 2011.</li> <li>The Hard Copy lists Wayne and Michelle Wetherall as Joint Directors and Joint Shareholders in 2011.</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>2012 ANNUAL RETURN:</b><br><b>Ref:</b> <a href="https://www.ipa.gov.pg">https://www.ipa.gov.pg</a> >Online Services>Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return Form 22 10:29:04. Scroll to the bottom of 'Annual Return for September 2012' and click on <a href="#">199879.pdf</a> to access the IPA Hard Copy.   |  |
| <b>IPA WEB COPY: 2012</b>   | <b>IPA HARD COPY: 2012</b>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Annual Return: September 2012:</b></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Christopher Smith</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> </ul> <p>NIL Employees</p>   | <p><u><b>2012 Annual Return</b></u></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> <p>Shareholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: K125,222</li> <li>Liabilities: K87,217</li> </ul> <p>NIL Employees</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On <b>13 July 2012</b> IPA advised <i>‘since Wayne Wetherall is the sole director, he must ordinarily reside in PNG’</i>. This was ignored.</li> <li>The 2012 Annual Return was not submitted to the IPA until 2016.</li> <li>The Web Copy lists Wayne Wetherall and Christopher Smith as Directors and Amanda Namaliu as the Shareholder in 2012.</li> <li>The Hard Copy lists Wayne and Michelle Wetherall as Joint Directors and Joint Shareholders in 2012.</li> </ul> |   |
| <p align="center"><b>2013 ANNUAL RETURN:</b></p> <p><b>Ref:</b> <a href="https://www.ipa.gov.pg">https://www.ipa.gov.pg</a>&gt;Online Service &gt;Search for a Company&gt;Kokoda Spirit&gt;Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)&gt;Filings&gt;Annual Return (Form 22) 10:30:08. Scroll to the bottom of ‘Annual Return for September 2013’ and click on <a href="#">199880.pdf</a> to access the IPA Hard Copy.</p>  |   |
| <p align="center"><b>IPA WEB COPY: 2013</b></p>   | <p align="center"><b>IPA HARD COPY: 2013</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Annual Return: September 2013:</b></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Christopher Smith</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> </ul> <p>NIL Employees</p>   | <p><u><b>2013 Annual Return</b></u></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> <p>Shareholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Michelle Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: K152,482</li> <li>Liabilities: K111,573</li> </ul> <p>NIL Employees</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2012 Annual Return was not submitted to the IPA until 2016.</li> <li>The Web Copy lists Wayne Wetherall and Christopher Smith as Directors and Amanda Namaliu as the Shareholder in 2012.</li> <li>The Hard Copy lists Wayne and Michelle Wetherall as Joint Directors and Joint Shareholders in 2012.</li> </ul>  |   |
| <p align="center"><b>2014 ANNUAL RETURN:</b></p>  |   |

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services> Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 10.31.03. Scroll to the bottom and click on [199881.pdf](#) to access the IPA Hard Copy.

| IPA WEB COPY: 2014   | IPA HARD COPY: 2014   |
|--|---|
| <b>Annual Return: September 2014:</b><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Christopher Smith</li> </ul> Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> </ul> Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br>NIL Part-Time Employees | <b>2014 Annual Return</b><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Christopher Smith</li> </ul> Shareholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: K157,698</li> <li>Liabilities: K110,354</li> </ul> Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br>NIL Part-Time Employees<br><br>The return does not contain an official date-stamp of receipt from the IPA. |

- On 24 February 2014, a Notice of Change of Directors, (Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg> > Online Services > Search for a Company > Kokoda Spirit > Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149) > Notice of Change of Directors and Particulars of Director Form 16) was lodged with the IPA which listed Directors as Christopher Smith, Wayne Wetherall and Lee Frank Huang.
- Christopher Smith is not included in the IPA Web Copy Return but he is included on the IPA Hard Copy Return.
- Lee Frank Huang is not included on either return.

#### 2015 ANNUAL RETURN:

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services> Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 14:39:51. Scroll to the bottom and click on [Form 22 - ye2014 signed.pdf](#) to access the IPA Hard Copy.

| IPA WEB COPY: 2015  | IPA HARD COPY: 2015   |
|---|---|
| <b>Annual Return: September 2015:</b><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> </ul> Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br>NIL Part-Time Employees. | <a href="#">2015 Annual Return</a><br><br>Directors: NIL<br><br>Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: K138,171</li> <li>Liabilities: K89,128</li> </ul> Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br>NIL Part-Time Employees |

- On 11 February 2015, (Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg> > Online Services > Search for a Company > Kokoda Spirit > Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149) > Notice of Change of Directors and Particulars of Director Form 16) the IPA was advised that the Directors for Kokoda Spirit PNG were Christopher Smith, a chartered accountant, and Sharon Nalu – neither were listed in the 2015 Annual Returns.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu is listed as the Shareholder on the 2015 IPA Web Copy while Wayne Wetherall is listed as the Shareholder on the 2015 IPA Hard Copy.</li> <li>The 2015 IPA Hard Copy was signed by Wayne Wetherall on 31 May 2016.</li> </ul>   |   |
| <p align="center"><b>2016 ANNUAL RETURN:</b></p> <p>Ref: <a href="https://www.ipa.gov.pg">https://www.ipa.gov.pg</a>&gt;Online Services&gt; Search for a Company&gt;Kokoda Spirit&gt;Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)&gt;Filings&gt;Annual Return (Form 22) 14:54:04.</p> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The link at the bottom of the 'Annual Return for September 2016' is for the previous year's Annual Return i.e., 2015.</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>IPA WEB COPY: 2016</b>  | <b>IPA HARD COPY: 2016</b>  |
| <p><b>Annual Return: September 2016:</b></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <p>Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br/>NIL Part-Time Employees.</p>   | <p>No Hard Copy was filed with the IPA for 2016.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michelle Wetherall had been removed as a Director and replaced by Sharon Nalu.</li> <li>According to IPA Records, Sharon Nalu ceased to be a Director on 29 July 2011 – there are no other IPA notifications authorising her re-instatement.</li> </ul>   |   |
| <p align="center"><b>2017 ANNUAL RETURN:</b></p> <p>Ref: <a href="https://www.ipa.gov.pg">https://www.ipa.gov.pg</a>&gt;Online Services&gt; Search for a Company&gt;Kokoda Spirit&gt;Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)&gt;Filings&gt;Annual Return (Form 22) 16:14:42. Scroll to the bottom and click on <a href="#">Form 22 - ye2016 signed.pdf</a> to access the IPA Hard Copy.</p>  |   |
| <b>IPA WEB COPY: 2017</b>  | <b>IPA HARD COPY: 2017</b>  |
| <p><b>Annual Return: September 2017:</b></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <p>Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br/>NIL Part-Time Employees.</p>   | <p><a href="#">2017 Annual Return:</a></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: Illegible</li> <li>Liabilities: Illegible</li> </ul> <p>Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br/>NIL Part-Time Employees</p> <p>The return does not have an official date-stamp of receipt from the IPA.</p> |



- Amanda Namaliu is listed as a Shareholder on the 2017 IPA Web Return but is not listed as such on the 2017 IPA Hard Copy.

### 2018 ANNUAL RETURN:

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services> Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 15:07:27. \

**Note:** The link at the bottom of the 'Annual Return for September 2018' is for the previous year's Annual Return i.e., 2017

| IPA WEB COPY: 2018   | IPA HARD COPY: 2018                                     |
|--|---|
| <b>Annual Return: September 2018:</b><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>• Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amanda Namaliu</li> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> Four (4) Full-Time Employees<br>NIL Part-Time Employees. | There is no record of an IPA Hard Copy Return for 2018. |

**26 Feb 2018**

### CLAIM BY WAYNE WETHERALL:

*'We are also the largest employer of PNG Guides, Carriers and Porters and employ our staff from the Villages and surrounding areas of the Kokoda Trail corridor.'*

*'We are proud to employ locals and provide income, training and a career to the local people of the Kokoda Trail.'*

### **FACT CHECK:**

According to the Kokoda Spirit PNG Annual Return they have four (4) full-time PNG employees and NIL part-time employees.

### 2019 ANNUAL RETURN:

Ref: <https://www.ipa.gov.pg>>Online Services> Search for a Company>Kokoda Spirit>Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)>Filings>Annual Return (Form 22) 14:37:37. Scroll to the bottom and click on [Signed YE 2018 AR.pdf](#) to access the IPA Hard Copy.

| IPA WEB COPY: 2019  | IPA HARD COPY: 2019   |
|---|---|
| <b>Annual Return: September 2019:</b><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>• Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amanda Namaliu</li> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> | <u><b>2019 Annual Return:</b></u><br><br>Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>• Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> Shareholder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three (3) Full-Time Employees<br/>NIL Part-Time Employees</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Three (3) Full-Time Employees<br>NIL Part-Time Employees.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: Illegible</li> <li>Liabilities: Illegible</li> </ul> <p>The return does not have an official date-stamp of receipt from the IPA.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu is listed as shareholder on the 2019 IPA Web Return but is not listed as such on the 2019 IPA Hard Copy Return.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p align="center"><b>2020 ANNUAL RETURN:</b></p> <p>Ref: <a href="https://www.ipa.gov.pg">https://www.ipa.gov.pg</a>&gt;Online Services&gt; Search for a Company&gt;Kokoda Spirit&gt;Kokoda Spirit PNG Ltd (1-47149)&gt;Filings&gt;Annual Return (Form 22) 13:45:47. Scroll to the bottom and click on Signed YE 2019 AR.pdf to access the IPA Hard Copy.</p>  |  |
| <b>IPA WEB COPY: 2020</b>  | <b>IPA HARD COPY: 2020</b>   |
| <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda Namaliu</li> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <p>Three (3) Full-Time Employees<br/>NIL Part-Time Employees.</p>   | <p><u><b>2020 Annual Return:</b></u></p> <p>Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> <li>Lee Frank Huang</li> </ul> <p>Shareholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayne Wetherall</li> </ul> <p>NIL Full-Time Employees<br/>NIL Part-Time Employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets: Illegible</li> <li>Liabilities: Illegible</li> </ul> <p>The return does not have an official date-stamp of receipt from the IPA.</p> |
| <p><b><u>KOKODA SPIRIT WEBSITE CLAIM:</u></b></p> <p><i>‘Our business is registered in Australia as Kokoda Spirit Pty Ltd, and we are registered with the PNG Internal Revenue Commission in (SIC) PNG as Kokoda Spirit PNG Limited.</i></p> <p><i>‘We operate within the laws and requirements of both countries and pay our tax in both Australia and PNG.</i></p> <p><i>‘Our PNG employees are registered with the PNG Internal Revenue Commission for income tax.</i></p> <p><i>‘This ensures they are covered for tax and superannuation benefits.’</i></p> <p><b>FACT CHECK:</b></p> |  |

- The PNG Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) is the responsibility government agency for registering Business Names, Companies, and Foreign Enterprises. The Internal Revenue Commission is responsible for the collection of taxation.
- According to the 2020 Annual Return, Kokoda Spirit PNG employs three (3) full time employees and NIL part-time employees.
- Kokoda Spirit Australia was recently found not to have paid the required superannuation levy for a long-term employee and has been placed on a time-payment system by the Australian Taxation Office.

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<sup>i</sup> Email from Lawrence Appelbee dated 12 March 2011

<sup>ii</sup> [https://web.archive.org/web/20100310114046/http://www.kokodaspirit.com/2008\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20100310114046/http://www.kokodaspirit.com/2008_09_01_archive.html)

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[https://web.archive.org/web/20130427185937/http://blog.kokodaspirit.com/2011\\_08\\_01\\_archive.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20130427185937/http://blog.kokodaspirit.com/2011_08_01_archive.html)

<sup>iv</sup> Email from Lawrence Appelbee dated 12 March 2011