

CHAPTER 29: Response to the Kokoda Track Authority Forum held in Port Moresby on 8 March 2019

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Preamble

The system was established as a Special Purpose Authority by the PNG Government in 2004 because there was no precedent for wartime pilgrimages. After the system was seen to be economically sustainable during the period 2004-2008 it would have been appropriate to consider whether to continue to manage it as a government authority or as a business enterprise. Unfortunately the Australian Government officials who assumed control of the Kokoda Trail in 2009 were not familiar with the PNG system.

The transfer of responsibility to these officials resulted in a rapid transformation of the management system. The definition of the 'Kokoda Trail' was upscaled to 'Kokoda Corridor' and expanded to include Sirinumu Dam in Central Province; the beachheads of Buna and Gona in Oro Province and ranges to the east and west of the trail. Wartime heritage was ignored as the emphasis changed from tourism to environment. As a result trekker numbers between 2009 and 2018 declined by 46 percent.

The decline in numbers has resulted in a total loss of K245 million for the PNG tourism industry; a loss of K1.9 million in trek fee income; a loss of K1.4 million for campsite owners along the trail; and the loss of 5,390 jobs for guides and carriers who lost a total of K4.4 million in wages.

Rather than address the reason for the decline in trekker numbers Australian government officials kept adding eggs to the management omelette they created. The 'KTA Forum' concept was introduced to create an impression of activity however a review of the minutes of forums conducted since 2010 reveals that not a single recommendation has been actioned. **According to the Solomon Islands Foreign Affairs Secretary, Colin Beck, 'the Pacific is the most workshopped region in the world.'** He believes it is '*time to change the consultant/workshop dynamics in the Pacific aid space*'.¹

This forum is no different. The issue relating to the maximum weight of backpacks was first raised in 2015 – in 2017 it was unanimously agreed that it should be 18 kg but the decision at this 2019 forum was to have '*further discussions and proper resolutions to be made by the Forum on the minimum and maximum weight for porters*'. In the meantime the guides and carriers the KTA is supposed to be protecting will continue to be exploited.

The management omelette which has the KTA responsible to three Government departments (Conservation, Environment and Climate Change; Provincial and Local Level Government; and PNG Tourism as well as the demands of landowners across the trail and 33 trek operators has to be unscrambled. The current KTA Review (which was a desktop study because the Australian consultant did not step on the trail to meet with village communities to trek with a group of paying customers) should be scrapped because it simply recommends a continuation of the status quo in a different format.

If the PNG Government wishes to achieve its potential for the development of a wartime tourism industry based on a successful model for the Kokoda Trail the following actions should be considered:

1. Remove the Kokoda Trail from the Joint Understanding to develop a case for a World Heritage Listing for the Owen Stanley Ranges;
2. Rename the 'Kokoda Initiative' as the 'Owen Stanley World Heritage Initiative';
3. Develop a Joint Understanding with the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs for Commemoration;

4. Develop a Master Heritage Interpretation Plan for the Kokoda Trail as a model for other significant areas in PNG (Buna-Gona, Sanananda, Milne Bay, Rabaul, Shaggy Ridge, Black Cat Track, Kapa Kapa Track, Bougainville, the Huon Valley, etc);
5. Appoint a professional business administratorⁱⁱ and ‘Kokoda Community Liaison Officerⁱⁱⁱ’ to manage the KTA for a period of two years.

The following actions should then be considered during the two years while the KTA is ‘under administration’;

1. Establish Incorporated Landowner Groups (ILGs) along the trail between Owers Corner and Kokoda;
2. Establish a Kokoda Trail Management Company (KTMC) with ILGs as shareholders
3. Establish a ‘Kokoda Advisory Committee (KAC)’ comprising the Chairman of each ILG
4. Appoint a CEO to manage the KAC and to conduct annual workshops in villages to identify their needs
5. Appoint a professional business manager to manage the company as a commercial enterprise with profits distributed to the shareholders
6. Appoint a Board of Directors with representation from National and Provincial Government and others with expertise in law, accounting, marketing and commemoration.
7. Appoint an accredited Military Heritage Architect to complete a Military Heritage Interpretation Plan for the Kokoda Trail.

If the current KTA Review is adopted and these type of forums are continued in their current format we will be just adding more eggs to the management omelette. The only losers under this arrangement will be the villagers across the Kokoda Trail – the very people the KTA was established to help.

Adventure Kokoda responses to issues raised at the forum are contained in yellow highlight in the minutes of the forum.

Charlie Lynn



KOKODA TRACK AUTHORITY
Special Purposes Authority of the Kokoda and Koiari Local -level Governments

TOUR OPERATORS’ FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

THEME: “WOK BUNG WANTAIM / PARTNERSHIP / GAUKARA HEBOU”

DATE:	8th March, 2019	Minutes taken by:	Lucy Miro
Master of Ceremony:	Tausi Alekevu	Meeting Ends:	05.15 pm
Meeting Start:	09.16 am		
VENUE:	Gateway Hotel, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea		

Members Presents: (Refer attached Listing)

Apologies: Mrs. Pam Christie – Getaway Trekking Adventures
Mr. Jerry Agus - CEO, PNGTPA

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Welcoming Remarks
3. Report of KTA Activities
(a) Review of the last minutes of meeting held in Brisbane in November, 2018.
4. Kokoda Track Camp Site and Guesthouse Owner's Association
5. Porters and Guides Working Conditions
6. Future of the Industry within PNG Law
7. Policy on the fair distribution of fees
8. Revamping the Ranger Program
9. Track Management and Maintenance
10. Manager of Environment
11. Protection of Special Sites
12. Etoa Battlefield Up-date
13. Response from the Tour Operators
14. Response from Kokoda Track Authority
15. Acknowledgements and thanks

Master of Ceremony Mr. Tausi Alekevu welcome everyone, and thanked Deputy Provincial Administrator of Central Provincial Government, Mr Edward Kila for making his time available to attend the tour operator's forum, Ms Nikky Wright, Second Secretary – Kokoda Section, Australian High Commission, Dr. Andrew Moutu – Director – National Museum and Art Gallery, Dr. Andrew Connely – Advisor – Military Cultural Heritage Expert, Mr. Ruben Maleva - Chairman of KTA Board, Government Departmental Representatives, Landowners and other participants.

Mr. Alekevu then invited Mr. Vodave Omi, the Chief of Efofi village and landowner representative from Koiari side to say the opening prayer.

**1. OPENING PRAYER – BY MR. VODAVE OMI – CHIEF OF EFOFI VILLAGE –
LANDOWNER REPRESENTATIVE**

**Meeting opened at 09.16 am with a opening prayer lead by Chief of Efofi Village, Landowner,
Mr. Vodave Omi**

Mr. Alekevu, thanked Mr. Vodave and called on the Interim CEO for Kokoda Track Authority, Mr. Julius Wargirai to welcome the participants.

2. WELCOME REMARKS:

Mr. Wargirai thanked the master of ceremony and commence welcoming all the participants, presenters and facilitators. He said that introduction is already done by the Master of Ceremony, so he thanked the representative from Central Provincial Government Mr. Edward Kila; Government Department representatives; Donor partners; Second Councilor, Kokoda - Australian High Commission, Ms. Nikki Wright; Both the International and Local Tour Operators; Landowners from both Koiari and Kokoda side; Chairman of KTA Board- Mr. Ruben Maleva; and other participants present.

Report on KTA activities – Mr Julius Wargari, Interim CEO, KTA

1. Mr. Julius Wargirai acknowledge the presence of Tour Operators at the Forum and seek their support to KTA as we build partnership as we go forward together.
2. Already this year is shaping up successful than the last few years in terms of trekking numbers.

- a) So far this year from January to April we have issued 63 permits for a total of 725 trekkers.
 - b) Last year from January to April 2018 we issued 64 permits for a total of 596 trekkers, an increase by 129.
 - c) We have to go back to 2015 to get a more successful start to the season when we had 846 trekkers by the end of April.
3. The focus of 2019 has been to develop **Solid Policy Platforms** to make better and more consistent decisions for communities, landowners and tour operators.
 4. The focus is also on making partnerships go forward together with trust and respect.
 5. One of the first priorities is to Listen to the people of the region to understand why they were upset with KTA, and agree on what to do to address their issues:
 - a) With Governor for Northern Province Honorable Gary Juffa, we listened to the people of Kokoda who blocked the track then reopened to the trekker; and
 - a) At Isurava we listened to the landowners and their Chief and agreed a way forward for trekkers to access the Isurava Memorial Site.
 6. The communities are also looking for greater support for local projects to improve their living conditions and their lives.
 - a) On the Northern side, KTA is working with the office of the Governor for Oro Provincial Government and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to address water security;
 - b) On both sides KTA is partnering with Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF) to give Primary School Scholarships to relieve parents of the **school project fees**;
 - c) On Central side KTA is working with local Police to improve **Law and Order** on the track and in the region; and
 - d) In terms of communication, KTA is currently partnering with TE PNG to complete the repair of the two-way radios along the Kokoda Track.
 7. KTA will be working more closely with communities along the track to get a better idea of what their community project needs are, and we can agree with them on how KTA can assist.
 8. Track Management and maintenance was the main focus ahead of the beginning of the trekking season in April, 2019.
 - a) Phase One: During maintenance of the track, KTA employed more than 200 workers in both Central and Oro;
 - b) Phase Two: KTA in partnership with DFAT completed phase two maintenance work on the track and employed 140 people on bridges and other works; and
 - c) Currently in partnership with Conservation Environments Protection Authority (CEPA) and DFAT are developing a **Manual of Standard Operational Procedures** for track management and maintenance which will be used as the policy basis for future work.
 9. KTA will be developing a **Code of Ethics** for the Tour Operators who are registered with the KTA for trekking the Kokoda Track.
 - a) This Code of Ethics will ensure that the trekking business is carried out to the highest standards of the protection of the track environment, protection of the trekkers, protection of the porters and guides;
 - b) All licensed tour operators will be required to operate according to this Code of Ethics;
 - c) The Code of Ethics will provide a Policy Umbrella for other policies on the track such as the preservation and protection of special sites, the working conditions of porters and guides and special natural and cultural values of the region; and,

- d) It is hoped that this Code of Ethics will be part of the new Kokoda Track Authority Legislation which will be developed,

RESPONSE:

The Code of Ethics developed by the Australian management team at the KTA in 2009 is irrelevant to the Kokoda trekking industry because the KTA does not enforce any form of compliance. As a result it is ignored.

The Trek Operator Licensing system introduced at the same time is a farce. There is no due diligence conducted on trek operators. All they have to do to become an operator is to turn up at the KTA office and lodge a small fee. There are no checks to see if the applicant has a registered company; a Public Liability Insurance Company; or any assets.

KTA management do not even comply with their own rules. This led to the issuing of trek permits to an English reality TV couple who scammed them and generated the most humiliating international press coverage PNG had ever received. The KTA did not conduct any review to prevent future occurrences.

A carrier engaged by Getaway Trekking, Mr Winterford Tauno, died on the second day of his trek. According to the KTA Ranger at Owers Corner he was seriously overloaded with a backpack weighing 28 Kg. When it was reported the owners of Getaway Trekking accused the KTA Ranger of recording the weights properly. The KTA did not conduct an investigation in Mr Tauno's death to see if it was overloaded as the KTA Ranger claimed and whether that might have contributed to his death.

Legislation will not assist any management system that does not have the will to investigate breaches of its own rules and take remedial action if necessary.

10. KTA will be reviewing the **Role of the Rangers** in assisting KTA, the National Museum and Arts Gallery (NMAG), CEPA and Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority (PNG TPA) do their work better on the track and in the region. The focus will be on the structure and training of rangers along the track, career part-ways and the infrastructure and to improve their working conditions.

The focus will also be on developing a fair system of distributing the trekking fees that are collected by KTA. The fees will be distributed into three main areas:

- a) **Site Access Agreement** – The landowners all along the track will be identified and we will enter into a formal agreement with each one to allow the trekkers to pass;
- b) **Special Site Protection** – The owners of special military sites on the track that require protection will also be identified. The Museum will work with them to develop specific site protection plans, and some of the trekking fees will be used to pay the landowners to protect and manage their sites; and
- c) **Community Project Support** – Also KTA will use the remaining funds to assist communities to implement community projects they agree on, and that will improve the lives of everyone living there.

11. Finally, at a recent meeting of the Kokoda Initiative Ministerial Committee, they agreed that a cabinet submission should go forward to implement the outcomes of the KTA Review as agreed by National Executive Council (NEC).

- a) The submission will also direct that legislation be developed for the new Kokoda Track Authority;

- b) The NEC Submission is going forward to formally appoint Interim CEO Mr. Julius Wargirai to the position for the transition, so there will be some consistency & stability; and
- c) It is expected that the Legislation may take 12-18 months to finalize.

Partnership

- In order to strengthen the work of KTA, the authority requires all tour operators and partners to be positive and any criticism must be constructive and not defamatory to anyone. This would require regular consultation and communication between KTA, tour operators and stakeholders.

Public Money

- The interim CEO made it clear that since he took office, he has not breached any laws including the Public Financial Management Act, 1977 which guide expenditures of public funds; and
- The revenue collected from trekking fees is a public fund intended for the communities along the Kokoda Track and is been spend according to its requirements.

RESPONSE:

- Approximately K12 million in trek fees has been collected by the KTA over the past decade.
- The KTA has never published an audited financial statement which accounts for income and expenditure.
- In the interests of transparency the Interim CEO should now publish quarterly statements of income and expenditure and an Annual Report with an audited financial statement.

Products

- The possibility of identifying new products to compliment the trekking experience will be considered under the developments of policies of new KTA.

RESPONSE:

These should not be considered until proper management systems (website, database, campsite bookings, trek itinerary management; ranger audits, etc are in place.

Oro Issues

- In March 2019, the trek was closed by frustrated Orokaiva communities from four wards surrounding the Kokoda station. They demanded services to their communities which includes, school fees and water supply to their communities; and
- KTA in partnership with the Governor for Oro Provincial Government, are now making arrangements to engage with ABT to dispatch technical officers to commence feasibility studies and scoping on the ground.

Improving Trek Management

- As part of improving trek management, two other activities were carried out including Mt Fala radio transmission repair and assessment of radio stations in villages along the track was completed and a general repair work on identify technical faults will be addressed soon through partnership between KTA, CEPA and ABT.

- Working together in partnership with landowners to address their consents on land issues.

Law and Order awareness

- In March-April of this year (2019), a joint KTA-police awareness was conducted targeting hotspot areas along the track, the exercise was positive and a number of outcomes were derived which will become the focus of other law and order programs for this year.

Hotspots – Sogeri, Owers' Corner, Ioribaiwa, Nauro and Efogi

What were the outcomes?

Review of the last Tour Operators' Forum, Minutes of the Meeting

The interim CEO Mr. Wargirai presented the Tour Operators Meeting Minutes held in Brisbane in November 2018. No matters were raised arising from that meeting.

Open discussions:

Mrs. Sue Fitcher acknowledge the close consultation the KTA Interim CEO established with other tour operators. It's a unique opportunity for the tour operators, donors and other stakeholder partners to support the trekking industry. She queried how long the KTA review will take.

The interim CEO Mr. Wargirai indicated that will take more than 18 months. As there are processes administered by other Government agencies outside the control of KTA.

RESPONSE:

The consultants Review of the KTA was a desktop study and is irrelevant to the professional management of the Kokoda trekking industry. It should be disregarded – **see Attachment.**

Mr. Wargirai further stated that in the meantime, such tour operators Forum is very important to KTA. It is an important consultation forum to provide valuable input to the development of KTA policy and guidelines.

Way forward:

We believe we are all contributing and going the right way in building KTA to the next level. The Interim CEO acknowledge the partnership it has with the following; CEPA, Kokoda Initiative, Oro and Central Provincial Government, Australian High Commission (DFAT), ABT, Koiari Local Level Government, Kokoda Local Level Government, European Union funding, Chamber at 15th Mile, Sogeri Road, Governor of Oro and Governor of Central Province.

- focus on developing Solid Policy Platforms to make better and more consistent decisions for communities, landowners and tour operators;
- Progress partnership with Oro Governor, ABT and CEPA to jointly progress water security project in four (4) wards in the vicinity of Kokoda Station;
- Responsibility of KTA to work more closely with communities and landowners along the Kokoda Corridors (from Owners Corner to Kokoda);
- In Partnership with KTF, progress the completion of payment of project fee subsidies to all primary schools along the Kokoda corridors from Koiari side to Kokoda side including others in Northern Province, Central Province and NCD;

RESPONSE:

This is the responsibility of the National and Provincial Governments. Trek fees were introduced to provide for the development of campsites to meet the needs of the people who pay them and to

provide shared benefits to communities along the trail to meet their needs. The needs of villagers should be identified through the conduct of annual KTA workshops. The role of Australian NGOs is to raise funds for philanthropic purposes – not steal them from Government authorities. KTF should be asked to return the fees.

- Follow up with outcomes stemming from the joint KTA and Police Law and Order awareness exercise that was conducted on the Kokoda Track;
- Develop **Code of Ethics and Code of Conducts** to guide the operations of KTA;
- Develop a **Manual on Standard Operational Procedures**;
- Identify special military sites and Develop protection plan;
- Improve the administration and operation of KTA for the interim period leading to the establishment of new KTA; and
- Improve the management of trek;

Kokoda Track Campsite and Guesthouse Owners' Association: Mr Sai Laimi, Landowner, Kokoda side

Mr. Lami was grateful and thankful for opportunity to speak on behalf of the Kokoda Trek Camp sites and Owners Association at the Forum. He Acknowledged PNGTPA, KI and KTA for supporting the Association.

a) Background

There has been lot of discussions earlier on setting up of Camp Sites and Guesthouses Owners' Association However, this has eventuated only recently and he acknowledge the support of everyone involve.

b) Current work done on Association

Given all the background situation, Kokoda Initiative Partnership has assisted to establish the association

with a workshop in Sogeri in which selected campsite owners attended. It was a learning experience and an eye-opener to most of the attendants.

c) Kokoda Initiative and PNGTPA organize three meetings:

- First meeting held in Kokoda on 11th - 12th November 2018 for Northern end of the track and second one held on the 11th - 12th December, 2018 for Southern end held at Efogi village with all Campsite and Guesthouse owners.
- At this meeting following were achieved:
 - PNGTPA presented accommodation accreditation standards for Camp Grounds
 - Code of practice was also presented
 - Module association constitution obtained from Investment Promotion Authority was presented and making appropriate changes.
 - Two (2) x Co-Chairman elected
 - Eighteen (18) Committee members
 - Gender equity (2x female Koiari side and 2x female Kokoda side)

Third meeting held at Sogeri in March 2019 achieved the following:

- 16 of the 18 Committee members attended, two committee members did not attend and send their apologies.
- PNGTPA further presented the accommodation standards and code of practice;
- Subsequent signed off by 18 committee members including two Co-Chairmen.
- The constitution of the Association fined tuned.

- The registration of association documents has been submitted to IPA

Registration process are:

- Approval of the registration of association registrar;
 - One month of objection period, the association registration is advertised in the daily papers for a month;
 - Final approval of the association; and
 - All these steps may take 1-2 months.
- Support provided to the Association
 - Governance training
 - Association structure
 - Roles and responsibilities of office bearers
 - Support the operation of the association
 - Set up the office
 - Operational expenses
 - The association will do partnership with KI, CEPA, KTA, PNGTPA, Kokoda and Koiari LLG and the Oro and Central Provincial Governments.

d) Issues:

Complains from the Guesthouse owners:

- Graffiti on the walls of the building along the trek.
- Firewood – not paying for the firewood being used.
- Tour Operators should feel responsible for their rubbish
- Lot of damages on the campsites and planning to impose fees now.

Way forward

- Association Road Map;
- Association committee provide awareness on:
 - Set up of the association;
 - Explain the important aspects of the constitution; and
 - Further discussion on accommodation accreditation standards with all campground and guesthouses owners.
- The Campsites and Guesthouses Owners Association to be registered with PNG Investment Promotion Authority to operate as a legal entity; and
- Develop policy guidelines for better management of campsites

RESPONSE:

Who will fund this proposed association?

Our experience over the past 28 years indicates that it is almost impossible to facilitate agreement between members of the same clan at the same location at any of the campsites along the trail – rather than work together and share the benefits they prefer to develop their own small sites which do not meet the needs of trekkers. For example the campsite at Owers Corner which was funded by the Kokoda Initiative 10 years ago has never been used because of a local dispute – it has never been resolved.

If we cannot get village clans to work together at the various campsites along the trail there is no chance that campsite owners from different villages/Provinces will agree.

Campsites should not be co-located – they should be discretely separated so as not to compromise the integrity of individual trek groups.

The KTA should therefore be careful about creating expectations that will not produce better results – there have been too many failures over the past decade for this warning to be ignored.

Local campsite owners have no idea of the needs of trekkers – and they have never been taught how to meet them or to value-add by providing additional services. Governments at all levels have refused to assist them in developing their sites – and the KTA would prefer to donate trek fees to an Australian NGO to give away rather than help their own people to increase their incomes.

The solution is simple. Engage a Port Moresby based architect to evaluate each site along the trail to design and build ablution facilities, cooking and dining facilities, a drying hut and sleeping huts for guides and carriers. Most of these could be built from bush material under supervision. A micro-finance scheme could be introduced which provides for the repayment of small loans in this area. This would not be a problem because they would be able to increase their prices.

Porters and Guides Association:Mr. Warren Bartlett, Sogeri Enterprises

Mr. Bartlett of Sogeri Enterprises, thanked Interim CEO Mr Julius Wargirai and other partners in supporting KTA to coming this far. He spoke on the working conditions of the Porters and Guides and mentioned that most of the International Tour Operators are using porters and guides and not looking after them. Incident where he mentioned that a sick porter was left behind in the village with no arrangement made for possible medical evacuation to seek proper medical services.

Porters and Guides are the back bone of the trekking industries and tour operators must look after them by providing following:

- 1) Feed them;
- 2) Pay them daily allowances, walk home allowance of K250.00 each, and provide return airfares;
- 3) Provide sleeping bags;
- 4) All tour operators must have a 2 (two) way radio, VHF radios (KTA base contact), Satellite phone; and
- 5) Should not leave any trekking patient behind. Must help in this situation.

Last meeting held at Hotel Hodava, the resolution was:

- 1) Setting rates – pay daily rates and walk home allowances; and
- 2) Tour operators provide sleeping bags and feed local porters and guides

The KTOA meeting in Brisbane was different and did not relate to these resolutions. It is a concern for the porters and guide association. At the back of the KTA trek permit there is a guideline stating that Campsite fees for trekkers is K20.00 per night for per person and porters/carriers are K5.00 per night per person.

Campsite owners are not being paid sometimes and they do not get enough money and this is a concern for campsite owners.

Issues:

- Some toilet pots were given by PNG Tourism Promotion Authority and no one knows where these toilet pots are now;

- Toilets are really unhygienic and not good for trekkers; and
- Mr. Bartlett commented on tour operator's not paying their porters and guides well.

Way Forward

- Pack weight for each porter should be 18kg as per the previous minutes resolution at Hotel Hodava;
- Tour operators should pay campsite fees and guesthouse fees for the guides and porters;
- Provide food and sleeping bags for the guides and porters;
- Develop guide for porters and guides' working conditions
- As per the Licence conditions, each tour operator must carry with them 2 (two) way radio, VHF radios (KTA base contact), Satellite phone;
- Campsites and guesthouses to improve toilet facilities;
- Decision to be made for Tour operators to pay their guides and porters at K80.00 per day and walk home allowance of K250.00, and provide airfares for return fares; and
- Tour operators are responsible for any sick guides and porters and arrange medivac.

Future of Industry within PNG law: Mr. Mark Hitchcock-PNG Trekking Adventures

Mr. Mark Hitchcock representing PNG Trekking Adventures spoke on doing business in PNG and is well aware of the complexities of doing good business in PNG which could be complex and challenging given the ever changing and developing regulatory environment. Himself and his wife Pamela Christie, owns and operates PNG Trekking Adventures, a premier worldwide trekking adventure company based in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Pam passed her apology for not attending the forum. Mark introduced himself as the General Manger for Bougainville Copper Limited. At first glance his occupation would seem to be at the opposite end of the spectrum to tourism and trekking, however, there are a number of similarities especially in relation to the resource owners, involvement in the development of their resource; and training

Mark described relevant background of operating business in Papua New Guinea,

Work Force

- In PNG nearly 60% of the population is of working age;
 - This percentage must be similar across the Kokoda Track;
 - Skills shortage is a key challenge for all employers in PNG; and
 - It is common for skilled professionals and technical staff to be hired from overseas.
- However, there are requirements for business houses to have training programs for local employees, and expatriate staff are expected and required to transfer or impart knowledge to Papua New Guinean staff.

Customary land

- All of the Kokoda corridor is customary land, which means the land use is governed by the traditional owners and their clan;
- With all customary land foreign investors operating in PNG are prohibited from purchasing or leasing customary land from traditional landowners;
- Operating in PNG – Forms of Business
- "Carrying on a business" is defined as an initial transaction which triggers an ongoing series of transactions. It does not include a one-off isolated transaction;

- If you are operating treks on Kokoda, using business from overseas, and sending staff, contractors or owners of the business, to manage any aspects of the trek (paid or volunteering), then you are carrying out a business activity in PNG as a foreign enterprise;
- If you have an agreement with a local PNG operator and you send clients to that operator to run the trek in its entirety as your agent, then you are not operating a business in PNG unless you own part of the operation or get involved in the management and day to day running of the local PNG operator;
- A trekking business may operate as a locally incorporated company or as a foreign enterprise registered to operate in PNG;
- Locally incorporated company - Incorporated under the PNG Companies Act administered by the PNG Investment Promotion Authority;
- The company operates as a subsidiary of the foreign enterprise;
- There are minimum requirements;
 - One director must be a resident in PNG;
 - Incorporation process can be completed online;
 - Part of the process of incorporating a company is obtaining a TIN (Tax Identification Number) from the Internal Revenue Commission (IRC);
 - Applies to PNG operators as well. They should incorporate a company with Foreign Enterprise;
 - Permitted to operate in PNG once they are registered and certified by the IPA;
 - The Foreign Enterprise operates in PNG as a branch;
 - Operates similar to a locally incorporated company but there are differences in taxation purposes; and
- SME (Small to Medium Enterprise) Legislation is proposed that if passed in its current form will restrict tourism operations being conducted by foreign enterprises;

Partnerships and Joint Ventures

- are an unincorporated vehicle that carries on business on behalf of its partners; and
- Can be formed between:
 - Individuals; and
 - Locally incorporated entities

Foreign Enterprises

- It is important for a foreign enterprise to be first certified by the IPA prior to entering any contracts for the purposes of carrying on business in PNG, otherwise the contract may be declared unlawful and voided (page29 PWC Navigating your way around); and
- Joint Ventures are similar to partnerships but are more commonly used in the mining and gas sectors

1) Registering in PNG as a branch of an overseas company or as a subsidiary foreign enterprise is a similar process 2

Steps: 1. Reserve a name and complete the online registration

Steps: 2. Apply to IPA for Foreign Certification providing

- a) business sector and principal activities;
- b) Date of commencement;
- c) Operating locations;
- d) No of Citizen and non-citizen employees;
- e) Proposed investment – generally K100,000 is required; and

- f) Budget cash flow for the first year Six monthly reporting thereafter including amount of capital expenditure and employee statistics.

6. Porters

- Personal income Tax Annual wages paid to an individual porter, up to K12,500 do not get taxed.

7. Superannuation

- an employer of 15 or more full-time employees must register with a local authorized superfund;
- Membership is compulsory for PNG citizens who are continuously employed for three months; and
- Contributions are 6% employee and 8.4% employer

8. Workers' Compensation Insurance.

- All employers in PNG are required to have Workers Compensation Insurance (compulsory);
- Insurances for PNG operations must all be sourced from PNG Insurance providers; and
- Employee conditions are governed by The Employment Act 1978 and sets out minimum conditions including employing woman and young People. As a note the minimum wage is K3.50 per hour.

Non-Citizen Employees

- Governed by The Employment of Non-Citizens Act 2007;
- Prescribes the process of applications for, approval, and cancellation of work permits. A work permit can be from 1-3 years;
- The Act prohibits the engagement of non-citizens without a work;
- Identifies occupations which are reserved for PNG citizens as set out in the 2008 regulations
- Tour guides and Tourist Information Officers are on the reserved list;
- As stated previously foreigners planning on working in PNG must hold a work permit; and
- Business Visas are intended for foreign citizens travelling to PNG to conduct business meetings.

I understand that the Immigration Department is cracking down on the use of Business Visas to enter PNG. As part of this 12-month multiple entry business visas are no longer possible.

Work Permits requirements include a training and localization program which includes details of a 3-year budget and plan to train citizen employees. As I said earlier there is an obligation on expatriate staff to transfer knowledge to Papua New Guinean staff. That training is essential for resource owner involvement in the development of their resource. As a Tour operator in PNG one of your goals must be to train staff in all positions to the point where they can eventually operate and take ownership, be it in tourism or any other business in PNG.

Something that can be said about the mining industry is the training. An example, Bougainville Copper in the past made some mistakes, but one thing it did do properly was training. Many of the key people at Lihir, and OK Tedi were trained by BCL

Conclusion

Part of the Role of the KTA is to ensure compliance by all operators, both Papua New Guinean and Foreign based, to comply with the laws of operating a business in PNG and must set out the minimum requirement that will be accepted, before being registered with the KTA. This may include a transitional period to allow all operators to meet that minimum.

Finally, he mentioned the SME Legislation that is proposed. There are bills that are before parliament, and if passed in its current form, it will restrict tourism operations being conducted by foreign enterprises. he urged the KTA with the support of all operators to make a submission to the appropriate authorities to alert the threat to the Kokoda Trail, and to PNG tourism in general.

If you are operating currently and have concerns with the issues he raised, you should seek independent professional advice

Way forward:

- Treks in Kokoda business and not in foreign countries;
- Local tour operator partners with international partner if the international tour operator does not have PNG IPA Business Certificate and signed agreement.
- Locally incorporated company PNG IPA Act and company operators as a subsidiary of overseas company.
- Kokoda corridors customary land and foreigner investors are prohibited from customary land;
- Review the draft license for tour operators – terms and conditions;
- Business training program for locals;
- Overseas tour operators must be registered with PNG IPA in order to operator business in PNG;
- Transfer knowledge to PNG Staff; and
- KTA to assist international tour operators with PNG visa processing.

Excellent presentation

Open discussions:

- Sue's response to Mr. Bartlett accusation on some tour operators allowing porters to carrying more than 20-22 kgs. She asked Mr. Bartlett to provide evidence and she feels this require more discussion.

RESPONSE:

An investigation by Sogeri Police Sergeant Max Maso revealed that the carrier who died was engaged by Ms Fitcher's company – Getaway Trekking, The KTA Ranger at Owers Corner recorded that the carrier, Mr Winterford Tauno, was overloaded with a 28 kg backpack. Sergeant Maso reported 'it is evident that the group on this particular trip on the 14th September, 2017 engaged by Getaway Trekking Pty Limited were all over loaded in breach to Code of Conduct stipulated under this code'.

The KTA Rangers report should be on file in the KTA office and Sergeant Maso's investigation would be available at the Sogeri Police Station.

- Jack Deia of No Roads Expeditions talked on porters and guides – to change the name "Porters", as it is degrading. Everybody to be called "**Guides**" and not porters. He requested KTA to look into this matter and change the name. Jack emphasized that 18kgs

is the right weight and not 22kgs. Requirement of 18kgs is implemented by many tour operators and this has improved a lot. Kokoda Track belongs to landowners of Kokoda and Koiari and connected to tour operators. He appealed to Australian tour operators to ensure that they employ Koiari and Kokoda people. He also mentioned that the communities along the Kokoda Track will listen to landowners bearing in mind that local tour operators are landowners, and not any other foreigners.

RESPONSE:

Carrier' was the term used during the Kokoda campaign – it is associated with the term 'fuzzy-wuzzy angels' and should be retained because of its historical linkage. There are roles for both 'guides' and 'carriers' within trek groups.

- Kila of Kokoda Historical tour operator – Porters or guides are the ambassadors of our country; guides are responsible to look after the porters both local and international.
- Jack – mentioned that No Roads employees are contracted, they have 88 Guides, food is provided and guest house or camp sites are always paid. They also have medical team, a chef and senior guides. The employees are all paid at different rates.
- Billy Narai intervened and talked on previous and current mistake and failures. Most times tour operators bypass Owners Corner villages and Sorgeri/Depo communities who are not aware of any tour operators' activities taking place on their land. They should be part and partial of the trekking activities and something must be done to include their communities so that all landowners benefit collectively. He told Tour operators from Australia and PNG tour operators, to take note of what Mr. Mark Hitchcock (PNG Trekking Adventures) has presented especially in the PNG IPA company laws.
- Sue responded that KTOA tour operators always stop at Sogeri, and she even left her contact a number of times with different individuals but nobody has contacted her so far.
- Tau Maguli from Sogeri Enterprises & Lodge, commented that the approved weight pack is 18kgs as per the forum at Hotel Hodava. His company pay all porters full and treat them well from day 1 to the last day of the trekking. On ANZAC Day trekking this year (25/4/19), some tour operator companies increased their weight from 18kg to 20kg. He spoke directly to some of this tour operators.
- Sue asked him to clarify and provide evidence of companies that are practicing this. She asked, have you seen this tour operator's packs being weight? Did Ranger let them go?

RESPONSE:

The KTA Ranger's report at Ower's Corner on 17 April 2019 recorded a KTOA group with the following weights: 2 X 27 kg packs; 3 X 25 kg packs; 4 X 24 kg packs; 1 X 23 kg pack; 12 X 22 kg packs; 1 X 21 kg pack; 2 X 20 kg packs. The report will be in file in the KTA office.

- Jack responded that some of the additional weights are normally added on by the porters themselves without the knowledge of Tour Operators after compliance check is completed. These are hidden items carried by porters on behalf of their families on their way to Port Moresby or back to the villages. He recommended that something must be done about this practice.
- Wayne Fitcher responded that Australian Guides ensures compliance of the required weight, hence, any accusation must be accompanied by evidence. He also mentions that there was an

instance when Adventure Kokoda walked through the night to Efogi. He said we have to draw a line.

RESPONSE:

Whilst Adventure Kokoda's published trek itineraries allow for their trek groups to arrive at each campsite in the late afternoon each day there are occasions when some are late because they are slower than expected. Our trek leader always stays back with the slower trekkers to bring them safely into their campsite.

Wayne should not be too concerned about this however because our trek leaders are trained for these occasions - they have a combined total of 130 years professional army experience with service in Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Iraq and Afghanistan. They have been trained in night patrolling and night fighting without any form of lighting. One of them was awarded a Military Medal for courageous leadership in the execution of a night ambush against the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. They have also participated in tactical night parachute jumps with the US Army Special Forces from darkened C141 Starlifter jet aircraft at 7000 metres.

Wayne can rest assured that bringing in a small group equipped with bright headlamps and torches is not a difficult task for them.

- Sue Fitcher complemented the work of rangers although there is still room for improvement.
- Jack raised the issue of Charlie Lyn criticizing KTA/KTF and DFAT for assisting parents of students attending primary schools located along the Kokoda Track with their project fees. He questioned Charlie Lyn's logic as the K350,000 support to parents benefitted all the communities along the track compared to the same amount being spent on medical expenses for one girl only. He said that all tour operators have their charity funds and should be using this, just like No Roads Expeditions tours who have already assisted some people along the Kokoda and Koiari.

RESPONSE:

There are two reasons for my criticism:

- The first relates to the 14-year old girl from Kokoda who is destined to die if she does not have an emergency operation which can only be undertaken in an overseas hospital.
- The second is that trek fees were never intended to subsidize Government responsibilities – it was supposed to be the other way round.

If the KTA and Kokoda Initiative regard cash handout to an Australian NGO to be more important than the saving of a young girl's life they are in a very sad space.

- Mick O'Malley, Adventure Out Australia – bags weighing extra kilos for their family is not proper as this is business hours which they are paid and should allow only for business. We need to educate the guides and porters.

- Nikki Wright – Second Secretary, DFAT representative from the Australian High Commission clarified that Australian High Commission is not part of the subsidy arrangements as this is a partnership between KTA and Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF).
- Lisa Favave told the Forum that the Trek was closed in 2018 which affected the local Tour Operators/ Porters/Guide. Being a landowner, she wanted the track to open again therefore, she was part of the negotiation to remove the blockades and allow International Tour Operators to commence operation again. She said her son is employed, insured and being well looked after by a tour operator (did not mention the name of the tour operator). She commented that Sogeri is being left out in all development including education and health. Favave also agreed that the name “Porters” should be changed to “Guides”. That weight should be 16kg for tour operator and add two for porter himself totaling to 18kg.

RESPONSE:

Network Kokoda, which was established by Adventure Kokoda, has established a ‘Koiari Womens Centre’ at Sogeri – courses being conducted at the centre include literacy, financial literacy, floriculture, agriculture, sewing and cooking. They have established market gardens at Iaowari and Sogeri National High Schools and a commercial fish farm at Iaowari High School. They have employed a young graduate in agriculture who has assisted local farmers to establish new gardens and improve old ones.

Network Kokoda has also funded the establishment of a TB Isolation Ward at Popondetta Hospital and a Community Centre at Abuari.

Way Forward

- The Guest houses to develop proper standards to improve quality of services;”

It will be a long time before village ‘guesthouses’ meet the requirements of trekkers. Trekkers prefer privacy, a bit of space for their gear, insulation from farting and storing and protection from infestation and the elements. Until these requirements can be met they prefer the privacy and protection of individual mosquito-proof tents.

- Further discussions and proper resolutions to be made by the Forum on the minimum and maximum weight for porters;

This issue has been on the table for four (4) years now and has been successfully resisted by the KTOA who are thus able to reduce their expenses by engaging fewer carriers.

A primary responsibility of the KTA is the protection of the welfare of the Koiari and Orokaiva guides engaged in the Kokoda trekking industry. One of the major factors in this regard is the long term protection of their physical wellbeing – particularly in relation to backs and knees. This was acknowledged during the Kokoda campaign in 1942 and it should be acknowledged now – 22.5 kg is simply too heavy – anybody who doubts this should volunteer to carry a 22.5 kg pack a relatively short distance from Owers Corner to

Ioribaiwa Ridge to get a feel for what they expect the guides and carriers endure for up to 10 days at least six times per year.

The issue does not require any further discussion – 4 years has been long enough - it now needs a decision!

- Invite PNG IPA officers to next forum to present on company laws; and
- CEPA and Kokoda Initiative to support KTA, to work with other partners.
- Review and revise Rangers' work arrangement on the track
- Organize rangers and ranger should be always at the ranger stations to check the trekkers. Apply Standardize compliance;
- Develop code of ethics and code of conduct including the guides;
- Review the names (porter to guides); and
- Liked it to be hot like this will be facilitating lot of consultations.

Mr. Gunther thanked everybody who participated in this session.

Master of Ceremony thanked Mr. Gunther for facilitating the session and called on next presenter.

Policy on the fair distribution of revenues collected: Mr. Mark Nizette, Kokoda Initiative Advisor

Funding for KTA

We have to understand and to play a major role, we have to be aware that are 12,000 to 15,000 people living along the Kokoda Corridors look to KTA as their voice.

The KTA is responsible for managing the Kokoda trekking industry between Owers Corner and Kokoda – the population along the trail would be less than 2,000.

The PNG Government, supported by DFAT and the Kokoda Initiative are responsible for assisting in meeting the needs of villagers beyond the confines of the trail.

The 'Kokoda Corridor' is a term introduced by Australian officials in the Kokoda Initiative who are engaged in assisting PNG to obtain a World Heritage listing for the Owen Stanley Ranges. The expansion of the definition of the Kokoda Trail to 'Kokoda Corridor' has allowed them engage a wide range of Australian consultants to complete an extensive suite of social and environmental reports on issues which are irrelevant to the Kokoda trekking industry.

The Partnership between Australian Government and Papua New Guinean Government is important as it provides for opportunity for the communities living along the trek to improve their lives. Few activities were delivered. In October last year 2018 the KTA review was presented in Parliament.

Without war we would be invisible. **(What does this mean?)** How can we better take advantage? KTA is not a government entity that requires government funding. It's a Special Purpose Authority of Kokoda and Koairi Local Level Government's and its revenue is solely generated from the Tour Operators by paying trekking fees and license fees which is distributed back to the people.

KTA is such an important entity and for the 5 to 10 years, the National Government will fund the operation and administration costs **(If the KTA is not a ‘government entity that requires government funding’ as stated above why is the National Government funding its ‘operation and administration costs’ – and can this source of funding be guaranteed in view of the current economic challenges faced by the PNG Government?)**

The trekking and licensing fees should go back to the community, KTA is collecting from tour operators and should distribute evenly among the communities along the track. **(This is crap! In return for the trek fees, Kokoda trekkers expect the trail to be safe, they expect to see interpretive memorials at each significant site and they expect adequate campsites with hygienic ablution facilities. They also expect to see local village communities receive their fair share of benefits from the trekking industry through the generation of local employment opportunities; the collection of fees for campsites; the sale of local goods and souvenirs and the provision of services to meet the needs of trekkers – the fees were never intended to be raided by the Kokoda Initiative to support the work of Australian NGOs).**

There are ways for managing the track:

1. private land, recognize the landowners to walk through their land “sign a deed of access”;
2. Tourism want to come and see the war relics, **(this is not true – and how would the Kokoda Initiative know of this anyway? They have never conducted a post-trek survey of trekkers to seek to understand why they were motivated to trek Kokoda and what suggestions they might like to offer to improve the experience – and they have not trekked with a group of trekkers since they assumed control of the trekking industry in 2009)** work conjunction with National Museum and Art Gallery and how do we protect these special sites;
3. KTA and National Museum and Art Gallery to work together and KTA will use the trek fees to work on this **(Trek fees were not introduced for this purpose – this is a government responsibility);**
4. Resource – majority of the funds will be return to landowners for special projects based on good solid platforms **(How would the Kokoda Initiative know what these are – they have not conducted a single workshop in a village since they assumed control of the Kokoda trekking industry in 2009 – the lack of consultation at the village level is the most serious issue among local communities today);**
5. Accurate reports “monthly reporting”; **(Agree – but the taxpayer funded ‘Kokoda Initiative’ has not published a newsletter since 2015 – there has also been no financial reporting on the cost of the projects they have funded along the trail – or the cost of the signage they have erected promoting themselves.)**
 - How do we identify landowners? For example do we work together with CEPA, social mapping and work with communities; and
 - ceremony at Sogeri Primary School, KTA paid project fees for schools along the Koiari side and Oro side will be water project.

(Adventure Kokoda has compiled a list of landowner across the trail and can provide their details if required. The taxpayer funded Kokoda Initiative has previously claimed to have conducted ‘Social Mapping’ surveys along the trail – they should therefore publish the results of these surveys).

6. Who will we partner with?
 - Anyone has ideas to identify landowners talk in discussion. Mr. Julius Wargirai, Interim CEO for KTA listening to people from Kokoda, they have worries. Who will they talk to? So, the only way to take the attention is to block the trek. The Biage and Vesulogo communities have different ways of resolving issue.

(If the taxpayer funded ‘Kokoda Initiative’ does not know the answer to these questions after 10 years insitu and the expenditure of more than K120 million during this period they should be wound up and returned to Canberra).

7. Department of Justice and Attorney General, Village Courts – training program for mediators; and

Village workshops are the most effective means of addressing village concerns – Kokoda Initiative personnel have been advised of this many times in the past but have chosen to ignore it.

8. Andy Abel, ML, president of PNG Surfing Association, Board Chairman of the National Museum, KTA would like to partner with Andy.

Andy Abel has developed a world class surfing association in PNG based on a successful model of ownership by traditional custodians. He should be engaged without delay to begin the process of applying the same model to the Kokoda trekking industry.

Way Forward

- 1) Identify landowners – KTA and KI to work together;
- 2) Training program – to train the rangers and community as mediators – KTA to liaise with DJAG, Village Courts; and
- 3) Tourism wants to come and see the war relics, work conjunction with National Museum and Art Gallery

The Facilitator Ms Kay Kalim, thanked Mark Nizette and call upon Mr. Allan McCagh for next presentation.

Revamping the Ranger Program: Mr. Alan McCagh, abt Associates

Mr. Allan McCagh spoke on developing a concept on Rangers’ Proposal. He further stressed that Fly River Model will be used in improving Ranger Capacity. Additional recruitment from three to four Senior Rangers to be recruited on base grade and should be selected by KTA and community leaders compromising of men and women. The Ranger program are to ensure protection, monitoring and reporting on military heritage protection and also ensure national security on special sites are also protected working in partnership with the National Museum & Art Gallery. Rangers will also be trained in Occupational Health and Safety practice, on Project Proposal

Development and, on monitoring of environment and animals so that they are certified and recognized.

Other programs will include:

- Install and maintain assets;
- Monitoring and reporting on trek maintenance work.

Way Forward

- 1) Rangers selected by KTA and community leaders comprising of men and women (use the Fly River Model);
- 2) Partnering with CEPA on monitoring environment and animals along the track;
- 3) Further training in higher education in PNG, so it is sustainable; and
- 4) Allocate Rangers with house and movement of Rangers to other Ranger Stations.

KTA Rangers should be the ‘eyes and ears’ of the KTA CEO. They should not be put in a position where they have to confront the leaders of trek groups. All they should do is weigh backpacks; question guides and carriers to record how much they are being paid and whether they are properly equipped for their trek. They should record the number of trekkers and guides/carriers in each trek group and check to see how much they pay each local campsite owner. They should also report on the condition of the trail in their area of responsibility and provide the supervision for any remedial work.

KTA management should then take appropriate action against any rogue trek operators who are not providing for the welfare of the guides and carriers they engage or are short-changing campsite owners.

Ms Kay Kalim, Facilitator, thanked the presenter Mr. Allan McCagh and mentioned that this is a big process and need to engage communities along the track and called on the next presenter.

Track Management and Maintenance: Mr. Michael O’Kave, KTA

KTA’s Operations Manager Mr Michael O’Kave presented to the Forum members a paper generally highlighting some of the work that KTA has done to improve its operations. He also highlighted some opportunities and challenges for KTA.

Open discussions:

- **Ms. Sue Fitcher** - commented on ranger program being fantastic. We are yet to discuss with partners, established operators and guides association, campsite and guesthouse association the importance and welfare sustainability for all guides. Safety standards needs some considerations for superannuation scheme and insurance.
- **Mr Allan McCagh** advised the Forum that we have to be mindful of the implication as a consequence of our actions. It is therefore important that KTA is restructured and we are all looking forward to that.
- **Mr Ruben Maleva** the Chairman of KTA Board commented that the infrastructure development along the track especially bridges maintenance (example Eora Creek Bridge) is affecting the environment and the people are now concerned about it as there are fewer big trees now. How are we going to address these issues? We have to assist KTA to address some of these issues.
- **Ms Kay Kalim** Director Sustainable Environments Program, CEPA recalled that in one of the Sydney conference she attended, arrangements in military did not like to deface the track. What is the better way?

- **Mr Allan McCagh** reported from Contractor's recommendation option was Ready Made Kit form bridges or use PNG Power poles.

The best bridges are those built out of bush material by local villagers – these are the most photographed by trekkers and feature on most of their social media posts. Local villagers should be paid for the building and maintenance of bridges prior to the start of each trekking season.

- **Mrs Sue Fitcher** – Sustainable, trekking industry is crucial for all of the tour operators. Do you agree or understand that Kokoda Corridors numbers are increasing on treks therefore there need to be increase in quality products, guest houses, and increase in numbers of trekkers and not in prices?

The Kokoda Trail has the potential to be a world class pilgrimage destination – it is not possible to increase the quality of the experience by not increasing prices. The objective should be to increase the yield from trekkers rather than lowering the bar in an attempt to increase numbers.

- **Mr Mark Nizette** – increase in fees not discuss yet, KTA is responsible for management of trekking industry focusing on Owners Corner to Kokoda.

If this is the case then KTF should return the funds they heisted to support villagers who do not live along the trail between Owers Corner and Kokoda.

- **Mr Allan McCagh** supported the need to improve the suitability and quality of the services along the track as the Kokoda region rely mainly on the trekking industry. Trekkers normally bring K200 to K300 extra in their pockets whilst trekking and they normally go back with that money, they don't spend it and we have to provide opportunity for them to spend that money if we improve quality of services.

Adventure Kokoda trekkers are advised to bring double this amount however they return with more than half because there are very opportunities to spend it on. This is because the villagers have never been taught how to provide the goods and services to meet the needs of trekkers. This is because those taxpayer funded officials responsible for this have never trekked across with a group of trekkers or have never conducted a post-trek survey to see what trekkers would like to purchase.

- **Ms Kay Kalim** said Kokoda Initiative looked at protecting the trek. The KI aims at protecting and preserving the track, however, there are a lot of misunderstanding in the community on conservation and preservation of the environment. Hopefully, from 1-2 years' time KTA & KI will sustain the industry in light of this. A Master Development Plan should be in place to guide KTA. KTA also need guidance from the communities on what type of livelihood they prefer.

The custodians of the land across the trail are masters of their environment and a more than capable of protecting it – all they need for this to happen is a planned program and funding.

- **Mr Ruben Maleva** stated that the current arrangement on the way forward is to get KTA in order and that is the right approach.
- **Jack Deia** stated that PNG is the land of compensation, the trek money is purposely for projects, however can it be used as a loyalty to community? Landowners want their ground money (Papa ground collect money)
The Ranger stations at Owners Corner and Kokoda are ill-equipped. KTA should provide vehicles so that rangers can move from Depo to Owners Corner and Kokoda to Kovel for inspections. Rangers must involve landowners to do track maintenance and bridges. He also stated that no permanent bridge will be allowed by landowners.
- **Mark Nizette** responded to Jack that KTA money are from tour operators and Kokoda Initiative money is approved by NEC at 10 million per year commencing in 2018. The Governors of the Central and Northern Provinces are represented in the Steering Committee. The 2019 funds are not release yet. Kokoda Initiative money is for the community projects. Most funds for Kokoda Initiative should be given to the provincial administration for the people.

How is the K10 million per year spent? Why aren't financial reports published to inform stakeholders? We are already halfway through 2019 – when will these funds be released? How will they be allocated? Will local villagers have any input? Who is providing the funds – DFAT or the PNG Government?

- **Mr Jack Deia** asked Mr. Allan McCagh on the Rangers program and the source of funding.
- **Mr Allan McCagh** responded that the program is to be funded by the Papua New Guinea Government funding under each Recurrent and Capital Investment Program (CIP) annual budget.

How much money is allocated? What are the priorities? Who determines the priorities?

- **Mr Jack** asked Michael O'Kave to involve landowners for trek maintenance.

This should be standard practice – after all they acknowledged as masters of their environment by those who spend significant time on the trail.

- **The interim CEO** advised the Forum that he has commenced engaging landowners to do track maintenance and this was done in phase 1 and phase 2 of the track maintenance early this year. KTA has to further ensure that this arrangement is actually implemented by the Rangers on the ground and any Ranger found to be doing their own arrangements contrary to what they are required to do would be dealt with severely.

On the issue of bridges, the CEO has discussed this matter with other options with Abt Associates and its been considered to become part of its plan on track maintenance.

The interim CEO should be congratulated for his positive engagement with landowners and local communities. However he needs a professional business manager to assist in the development of a database, a campsite booking system, a trek itinerary management system, a licensing system and a financial accounting system. This expertise does not currently exist within the KTA.

- **Mr Mick O'Malley** raised concern on Marketing of products and Mr Mark Nizette responded that this is the responsibility of PNG TPA and KTA will ensure they are represented in the

next meeting to answer such question.

KTA is not responsible for marketing – it is responsible for managing!

- **Mr Kila from Kokoda Historical** - Raise concern that some of the landowners are doing their garden on the trek, How will we address this issues? This is a protected zone.
- **Ms Kay Kalim** responded that CEPA did community consultation on the process of zoning and land use and the need to protect and sustain the environment.
- **Mr Tau Maguli from Sogeri Enterprise** raised concern on the campsite bookings, where pick periods are always difficult, tour operator usually clashes at the campsites and guesthouses.
- **Mr Michael O' Kave** - Issues on camp site bookings, the onus is on the tour operators and KTA can assist by advising tour operators on their schedule trek and campsite itinerary on the trek permit applications form.

The lack of a campsite booking system is the major inhibitor to the opportunity for village communities to earn additional income from the provision of services and food. For the past 10 years campsite owners and villagers have no idea who trekking on the trail and they have no idea of the size of each group or the direction in which they are trekking. The first they know is when the group arrives. As a result they do not have time to prepare food to sell, organise local artefacts to sell or arrange for a local sing-sing.

A campsite booking system is a fundamental responsibility of the management authority. Unfortunately there is a history of misleading information and avoidance of responsibility in this area and this has resulted in many of the problems we have today. The following extracts from KTA newsletters are evidence of this:

September 2011

'The online Track Permit purchasing system aims to be in place by the end of September. This will allow tour operators to purchase and print their trek permits online. A separate tour operator alert will be sent out with a tutorial in the near future.'

November 2011

'The online permits system is soon to go live, which will make the process of purchasing permits convenient and easy for PNG and Australian based tour operators.'

'Trials are underway to ensure all aspects of the facility are working well. Once launched the trekkers and tour operators will be able to logon to the KTA website and purchase a permit by simply following the prompts on screen.'

'This will automatically be paid from their account into the KTA banking facility which makes secure payments. The service operates by credit card purchases through the ANZ eGate payment service.'

'Permits will take a matter of minutes. The next newsletter will provide more information on this service.'

December 2011

'Track Permits Online The system is now live, allowing all Tour Operators to purchase track permits online. This convenient system was showcased at the Tour Operator Forums in October and was well received by all. Once the new year and the trekking season gets underway we are expecting to see this system being made use of more regularly as it will be the most convenient way of securing permits, saving Tour Operators time and money.'

Trek operators were obviously misled because none of this ever happened.

Since then three campsite surveys have been conducted by the KTA and nothing has happened.

It is clear that the KTA does not have the capacity to implement a campsite booking system or a trek itinerary management system – as a result there is to exist as a management body.

- **Mr Billy Narai** asked where does the maintenance of the road start? and queried the upgrade of toilet facilities at Owers Corner and Sogeri Depo. Mr Michael O'Kave explained that it starts at Sogeri Depo Junction terminating at Owers Corner. On the toilets, KTA Interim CEO advised the Forum that it has engaged landowner groups to provide repair and maintenance work at the Owers Corner including construction of four (4) new *hauswin*, upgrading of the two (2) toilets and general cleaning services in the area. However, the work has stall because the landowners have changed the way by threatening the Ranger with a bush-knife if he does not leave Owers Corner. Lately, the situation has gotten worse as the engaged landowner group are now having disputes within their own clans and they are yet to resolve their own differences before they commence work again. Mr Wargirai advised that KTA cannot do anything in such situation as the dispute is an internal matter and they have to sort it out amongst themselves. This will allow for the Ranger to return to his post and ensure that the services are provided for the benefit of everyone. He further appeals to landowners to help each other and facilitate councilors, police to be part of the meditation.
- **Mr Andrew Abel, ML President of PNG Surfing Association** emphasis that landowners needed to be empowered in order to take ownership in planning and making decisions. He suggested PNG TPA restore the “Technical Working Group” that is no longer functioning

Way Forward

- Liaise with PNGTPA to Set-up Technical Working Group (TWG);
- Establish communication between landowners and stakeholders;
- Develop Master Development Plan to guide KTA;
- CEPA need community consultation, process of zone. Community must talk out – the trek area and garden areas. Other areas to be identified. Research, NMAG and KTA to identify this area, policy on region; and
- Find out the type of livelihood they (landowners) prefer? Need guidance from the community.

Management of the Environment: Mr. Elton Kaitokai, Senior Program Manager, CEPA

Mr Elton Kaitokai Senior Program Manger presented his paper on the above subject matter. The highlights of his papers are:

- Interim Protection Zone derive from Brown River Catchment

- Protected areas in PNG;
- Product – birdwatching, site seeing, camping, Dobu/Koairi ID, local values, certain tree for house posts
- Protect the culture heritage.

Protecting the natural, cultural and historic values of the Owen Stanley Ranges, Brown River Catchment and Kokoda Track Region

1. GoPNG Policy Decisions & Bilateral Commitments

2006: Submission to World Heritage Secretariat: Kokoda Track & Owen Stanley Range on “Tentative List” 2008: NEC Decision No 27/2008 – Protection of Brown River Catchment for future Power & Water for Port Moresby / NCD (February)

First Joint Understanding (2008-2010) between PNG and Australia on the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges (March)

2010: Second Joint Understanding (2010 – 2015)

2015: Joint Declaration on Kokoda Initiative beyond 2015

2. Establishing the importance of the area

1. Since 2008 DEC now CEPA together with partners has been doing assessment through various studies to determine the ‘values’ of the area in terms of NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL VALUES in 2017 began consulting and doing awareness with Communities, LLGs, DDAs, Provincial Governments and sector agencies/industries;

Completion of the Values Reports-Natural and Cultural Successful completion of the first rounds of community consultations (2018) and the commencement of the second round (2019);

Draft of set of principles as an approach to Protected Areas Management Planning for the area;

Completion of the Values Reports-Natural and Cultural

Successful completion of the first rounds of community consultations (2018) and the commencement of the second round (2019);

- Products development on values
- Draft of set of principles as an approach to Protected Areas Management Planning for the area;
- At least 25 species of plants, insects, birds and mammals of conservation concern occur with the IPZ.

Protection of Special Sites: Mr. Greg Babilis, Principal Curator, NMAG

As a Papua New Guinean, and a Curator in our Museum’s Modern History Branch, my job is to find the truths on the Papua New Guinea side of the story. Like how many Papua New Guineans were killed? Or what is the significance of the war for Papua New Guineas and Papua New Guinea as a modern-day nation?

In mid-2015 the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Museum & Art Gallery was planning for a legislative review of its

- War Surplus Material Act, one of two acts that the Museum administers. The other act that the Museum administers is; and
- National Cultural Property Preservation Act.

In thinking about some underlying points and issues about the act the Director of the Museum, Dr. Andrew Moutu, posed an interesting proposition and question that, nations create wars but could be reverse be true? That is, can wars also create nations?

This is hardly a profound statement - winners of wars have the prerogative to either control a conquered nation or create a new one – that's what they have been doing since the dawn of mankind!

We are looking forward to try to envision pertinent development agendas for the Museum and how these help us achieve our overall goal of protecting and preserving PNG's historical heritage and securing its cultural future.

Works to protect illegal export of the relics out of the country. More active role in the Kokoda track.

11. ETOA Battlefield Update: Dr. Andrew Connelly, NMAG

There is no recorded battle named 'Etoa' in any military history publication produced since 1942. It was initially referred to as the 'lost battlefield' however when it was pointed out that it had never been 'lost' it was changed to 'Etoa'.

Thanked the facilitator and continued with his presentation on Etoa Battlefield Site Up-date. The highlights are;

- a) National Museum and Art Gallery:
- b) Special site protection;
- c) Master interpretive plan;
- d) Community museum and trade houses – also to use it as community meeting places, women gather for marketing to trekkers;
 - Efogi, Alola and Buna have been built. Efogi community museum was opened on 25th April, 2019 ANZAC Day by the Governor of Central Province, Mr. Robert Agarobe, MP.
 - Partnering with Escape Trekking Tour Operator, which they donated solar lights.
- e) A Japanese team JARRWC visited Etoa Battlefield in February and began evacuation. Their next trip will be in August 2019. They have found 500 artifacts. National Geographic filming was done in March, and helped lot of Japanese. Japanese soldiers' bones return to family.
 - o New helipad roughed out
 - o JARRWC work to continue
 - o Access: From Alola and Eora Creek campground - Trekking sites set up and trekkers to access, what they can see and where to stay, hopefully by 2020. It is only for one night and back. It will be locally hosted and there must be prior arrangement and one group at a time.
 - Interpretive trails x2, Expect 1 night for most groups Camp facilities- basic and Access 2020 season
 - Limit carrying capacity, 20 trekkers max? smaller better, locally hosted – by prior arrangement only, Need booking system
 - o Trial group this year TBD
- (f) Researching the battlefield
- (g) Fabula – UXO handling, contacted PNGDF/ADF to handle this, for the safety of trekkers and local people/communities
 - o Ranger sent last week to Ioribaiwa
 - o -letter from NMAG director
 - o -counted artefacts
 - o -took photos

Built diwai railing

New site was identified at Ioribaiwa, and some pictures were presented on power point

- (Shane's pictures). Have spoken to families the landowners of this section.
- (h) New Policy – **No touch, No Dig**, letter was sent out to all tour operators.
This policy is based on the following points:
- i. The Kokoda Track and its environs have been likened to one long museum, but can also be seen as one continuous archaeological site in various stages of discovery, protection and degradation.
 - ii. You all know best that many known sites have been picked over and/or degraded by excessive traffic, and known collections and individual artefacts lying unsecured along the Track have been continuously reduced.
 - iii. Most of the Kokoda corridor still waits to be professionally surveyed by archaeologists.
 - iv. All artefacts from WWII belong to the nation of PNG through the NMAG.
 - v. Many of the remaining artefacts are unexploded ordnance (UXO) that present a risk of toxicity and/or detonation.
 - vi. The entire Track runs through traditionally owned land which should restrict trekkers and others from exploring on their own.
 - vii. Finally, the entire Track is a commemorative site and a memorial to those that gave their lives during the Kokoda Campaign. Disturbance to this sacred ground should be kept to a minimum.
- We ask that tour operators ensure that their clients, guides and porters refrain from:
- viii. Handling artefacts lying along the Track, whether singly or in collections/caches, especially UXOs. Handling artefacts degrades their condition and presents serious hazards, especially in the case of UXOs.
 - ix. Digging in soil or sweeping away leaf litter in search of artefacts or landscape features. Disturbing the ground, including the leaf litter and humous, promotes erosion and degradation of the landscape. Removing artefacts from their provenience (position in the ground) destroys the archaeological context and historical integrity of the objects. Undiscovered artefacts and landscape features are best left in place for future professional archaeological survey/excavation.

Excessive exploration beyond established trails.

1. 'Going bush' degrades the forest environment and presents a serious risk of injury. We ask that trekkers always stick to the main paths or seek local assistance/permission before going off the main track and into traditional lands.

We ask that you inform your clients of these rules as part of your pre-trek briefings, and keep your guides and porters informed of their responsibilities, both during treks and when walking home along the Track singly or in small groups.

BUT...

Despite the new rules, if something is presented:

UXO- Put somewhere secure as possible in immediate area

Record location (GPS if possible plus picture and description)

Report to NMAG

Other- Leave with Community museum curator, KTA Ranger, or contact NMAG.

Document handover with photo.

Report to NMAG

Intent:

To preserve the remaining military heritage intact, for future research and proper management.

Support the long-term sustainability of the trekking industry.]

Way Forward

- 1) UXO- Put somewhere secure as possible in immediate area, Record location (GPS if possible plus picture and description) and Report to NMAG;
- 2) Tour operators ensure that their clients, guides and porters refrain from these sites;
- 3) Digging in soil or sweeping away leaf litter in search of artefacts or landscape features. Disturbing the ground, including the leaf litter and humous, promotes erosion and degradation of the landscape. Removing artefacts from their provenience (position in the ground)
- 4) Ensure national security on special sites are protected partnering with Kokoda Track Authority, Tour Operators, Landowners with National Museum and Art Gallery; and
- 5) Monitoring and reporting on military heritage protection;

Dr. Moutu thanked both Mr. Greg Babilis and Dr. Andrew Connelly on their presentation and discussions was open to participants.

Open Discussions:

- **Sue** - Praised the National Museum Art Gallery staff for the good work they have done and encouraged them to continue the good work they are doing.
- **Mr Mark Nizette** – highlighted the significance and importance of the natural environment of forest along the Kokoda trek. The forest is unique in the world as some of the living micro-organisms found in the forest does not exist anywhere else in the world. For example, in one of the fallen old trees at Myola a scientist discovered over 200 types of fungus growing in its trunk. This was recorded in Guinness Book of Record. The environment in that area is very special and we should all acknowledge and contribute to preserving

This ‘discovery’ of an old tree trunk in a massive forest is irrelevant to the Kokoda trekking industry – the moss forest is unique and trekkers respect the environment by walking softly and not interfering with plants or trees. However the desecration of the mortar position at Lake Myola is of concern. The position was protected by the local landowners who collected a fee of K10 – this generated an income of some K30,000 each year. Rather than protect and interpret the site the Kokoda Initiative destroyed it and effectively deprived these subsistence villagers at Naduri of a substantial annual income.

- **Mr Jack Deia** mentioned that a particular plane that crashed into the once swamp of Myola was removed by National Museum and Art Gallery and requested if this could be returned and put back to where it was before.
- **Dr Andrew Connelly** responded that it was for safe keeping and it is the responsibility of NMAG to take care of it and at least there is a story to tell.
- **Mr Bobby Sibona, a landowner** claimed that some bones were removed from 1900 Camp and asked if this is against the law. Dr Moutu responded that by law the relics of the war belongs to the state and the bones belong to the family, so they can be returned to the family.
- **Jack Deia** requested NMAG if they can make space available at the NMAG for display of “Kokoda war relics” and name it “Kokoda Section” in the National Museum and Art Gallery. Dr Moutu agreed that it is an interesting idea but the problem is no funding.

Response from Tour Operators: Mrs. Sue Fitcher, Getaway Trekking& President of KTOA

Firstly, Sue thanked the Interim CEO Mr Julius Wargirai and the KTA for hosting this forum and the welcome KTA provided. She thanked DFAT, CEPA, ABT for the support KTOA continually

receive. She also thanked the PNG Tour Operators for their welcome and said this is the first time we have had a combined Tour Operators Forum, and she felt this was a really positive move. As many people have said today, we must all work together, and being together means we can learn from each other.

She wish to apologize for those KTOA members who were not there. She said they were used to the previous regime setting dates for forums and making changed again in the last minute. KTOA was waiting for confirmation on dates that had actually been confirmed. It does seem that once Julius makes a decision, it stands. So, for future forums, our members will be here.

I want to applaud Mr Wargirai's approach to his work, he has consistently maintained he cannot effect change on his own and that it will take a team approach to achieve to our potential. That approach was also evident with Mark's invitation for contributions of ideas to the planned dispute resolution program.

The welcome dinner was a wonderful example of Julius' inclusion, his desire for a collaborative community approach to the betterment of our industry.

KTOA has followed that lead and in December, 2018 three (3) member companies undertook a goodwill trek, with the intention of simply meeting landowners, guesthouse owners and other community members to talk, and more importantly, to listen.

This was KTOA's first goodwill trek. Did it provide an immediate result? Probably not, but they weren't looking for one. The goodwill team wanted to open up dialogue and create relationships where we can work with people on the ground, understand issues, and join together in finding solutions.

She also applauds Julius' response to the debate earlier on pack weights and general porter wellbeing. His comment was 'this is not just operators, this involves KTA as well. We are still weak in this area'. It takes people of strength and integrity to take responsibility and own up to shortcomings. Much easier of course to take pot shots.

Are there problems and issues for us to solve? Yes. Do we have everything working as well as we can? Absolutely not. There has been some robust and really constructive debate already today, and we absolutely encourage this to continue. We are in an era of change, change is difficult for some people, and sometimes brings about negative behavior.

It is time to call out those who would choose to damage and destroy the industry for whatever warped vested interests they have – who would know. We have talked about some of the claims and accusations that have been made earlier; it is interesting to note that are rarely if ever, are they made in person, but through others or from the safety of sitting behind a computer and ranting through social media. It does appear to confirm the adage that bullies are always cowards.

It would be easy to dismiss the negative comments and accusations thrown around as the bitter ramblings of someone, struggling with their declining relevance. However, that would be to ignore the damage and destruction being caused to our businesses, our industry and the country we love.

We can only wonder who Sue Fitcher is referring to in her shriek to the forum. She represents a small band of 11 Australian trek operators in her capacity as President - two of these are inactive. She has therefore unfairly slandered the other 22 trek operators by refusing to name who she is 'calling out'. If she does not have the courage to do this she should withdraw her remarks.

Make no mistake, the media in Australia is listening. Each verbal attack is heard. Lies are reported as facts. And every negative interview, post or tweet is an attack on us all, gets in the way of the great work being done, and holds the industry back from growing.

Consider this, every single trekker we bring to Kokoda provides income for guides, guesthouse owners, landowners, special site managers, transport companies, owners of gardens. Every lie or misrepresentation that is told that stops a trekker coming to Kokoda takes money out of our pockets.

Ms Fitcher is obviously more concerned with money coming out of her pocket than in providing for the welfare of the guides and porters she engages – this link to [Fake Research – Fake Association](#) shows that she has used dodgy research to justify her exploitation in the past.

Negative comments:

- damages to the business;
- Negativity have nerves
- make no mistake every media is listening;
- consider every single trekker provides campsites;

General comments:

- all members of the KTOA are Australians
- Business meeting in PNG, continue dialogue, appropriate cost and classification
- Conduct of Ethics – very supportive. To include possible license cancellation
- Guides are the fact of our industry and requires formal training
- Insurance and superannuation – experience of staff passing away on trek. Goodwill – the best they would do.

Issues we are not aware of:

1. pack weight **(what? The issue has been discussed at forums since 2015)**
2. strict integrity
3. problems, lies and personal attack
4. report tour operator who are not complying with the regulations
5. you can be part of problem and part of solution
6. very impressive we have issued here and we will solve it. This is how we will solve problems.

Way Forward

In future date for the forum she proposed last week in November & first week in March. Fantastic welcome dinner and it was wonderful. Upskills and betterment of where we are. Goodwill trek for four days for four companies, tour operators.

7. Open up dialogue and work with people
 - provide photos and videos for evidence and, solve this issue professionally;
8. Tour Operators to sign employment contract with guides and porters.

Master of Ceremony, Mr. Alekevu, thanked all the participants and announced that our meeting has come to an end and invited the KTA ICEO for the closing remarks

Closing remarks: Mr. Julius Wargari, Interim CEO, KTA

Mr. Wargirai, thanked the following participant who sat throughout the forum from the beginning to the end:

- Mr. Edward Kila - Deputy Provincial Administrator; Central Province;

- Ms. Nickky Wright – Second Secretary for Kokoda, AHC;
- the Facilitators;
- the Presenters;
- the department representatives
- International tour operators;
- Local tour operators;
- ABT;
- Landowners, community representatives; and
- other people who participated.
- And other interested people who participated
-

Mr. Wargirai was very pleased with the turn out and the contributions made in terms of presentation and the general discussions. He further requested that in all future presentations all presenters should make recommendations for proper discussion and resolutions to be made to be made by the Forum on the way forward. He also advised that the minutes of the meeting will be finalized and forwarded to them for contributing in terms of input and omission where necessary. He also made it known that there will be a landowner forum will be held this year and he will advise further on the arrangement. He also requested Tour Operators, landowners and partners to provide constructive criticisms that will assist and help KTA to progress and not criticisms to destroy the good work for everyone and defame individuals. He once again thanked everyone for attending the forum and wished them a safe journey back home.

NEXT TOUR OPERATORS' FORUM

The next tour operators' forum will be held in Brisbane on 27th November, 2019; and
 The PNG tour operator's forum for next year will be on 27th May, 2020.
 Venue yet to be confirm, (TBA).

Meeting closed at 5.15 pm.

ⁱ Tweet by Jonathon Pryke, Lowy Institute, 7 June 2019

ⁱⁱ The professional business administrator should have at least 10 years' experience working in PNG at executive level in both private and government enterprises.

ⁱⁱⁱ The current Interim CEO of the KTA has proven to be a trusted and respected facilitator with local landowners and village communities – he would be well suited to this role.