AUSTRALIAN PATROL OFFICERS (KIAPS) IN THE TERRITORY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A CASE FOR FORMAL AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION

This document is an addendum to the submission for formal Government recognition of Patrol Officers (Kiaps) provided to the Prime Minister on 3rd November 2008 and incorporates discussion relating to the response to that submission from Senator the Hon John Faulkner, Special Minister of State, on 8th December 2008.
1. Preamble

[Slim said] “I do admire you and I do admire what you have done in New Guinea. I know something about this. It is the sort of thing that I was trying to do during most of my life. Your young chaps in New Guinea have gone out where I would never have gone without a battalion and they have done on their own by sheer force of character what I could only do with troops. I don’t think there’s been anything like it in the modern world...”

What moved me was his particular reference to our patrol officers. When every other word of criticism has been spoken and other defects in our administration have been discussed, I stand in amazement close to reverence at what was done, to my personal knowledge, in the ten years between approximately 1952 and 1962 by young Australian patrol officers and district officers in areas of first contact. There were a few mistakes and a few weak brothers, but the achievement, with the resources available, revealed a quality of character and manhood that should make our nation mightily proud that these fellows were Australians.

2. Summary

Patrol Officers, or Kiaps as they were known in the former Territory of Papua New Guinea (TPNG), have provided submissions, letters and emails to the Prime Minister, Senator Faulkner, Senators and Federal Members of Parliament in support of formal Australian Government recognition of the work they undertook as Australian public servants and sworn members of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary in TPNG between 1949 and 1974.

Support for recognition has also been made by way of letters of support to the Prime Minister or relevant Members of Parliament by a number of Federal Members including the following:

- The Hon Bob McMullan MP, Member for Fraser and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance
- The Hon Duncan Kerr SC MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs
- Ms Annette Ellis MP, Member for Canberra
- Senator Gary Humphries, Senator for Canberra
- Luke Hartsuyker MP, Federal Member for Cowper, Shadow Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House

Written support for formal Government recognition has also been received from the following organisations:

- Police Federation of Australia
- Papua New Guinea Association of Australia
- Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans Association

Support has also been received from many people including:

- John Farquharson, Canberra Times
- Tim Bowden, ex ABC journalist and producer of Taim Bilong Masta
Queensland Police Union

Theodore Mawe, Lecturer in History and Pre-History, University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea

Dr Hank Nelson, BA, MEd (Melb), PhD (UPNG) Emeritus Professor and Visiting Fellow, Division of Pacific and Asian History; Chairman, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) Project

Much of this support has been conveyed to the Prime Minister and relevant Government Minister, Senator Hon John Faulkner, Special Minister of State.

It is only in retrospect that we are attempting to bring the truly amazing work of Patrol Officers to the attention of the Australian public through the Australian Parliament.

During the period in question, between 1949 and 1974, Australians (or Britons) had little understanding of the role of Patrol Officers in bringing Pax Australiana to Papua New Guinea.

Senior officers within the TPNG Administration tended to view the hardships, gallantry, danger and hazard as everyday events and part of what constituted normal duty, much the same as within the Defence Forces.

Our submission is a belated attempt to remedy that contemporaneous lack of recognition while these men are still alive.
3. Present situation

On 8th December 2008, Senator Faulkner responded to a Submission to the Prime Minister from ex Kiap and Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA) member, Chris Viner-Smith, which sought formal Government recognition of Patrol Officers and the work they undertook in the former Territory of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Australian Government.

The response indicated that the submission had been examined in some detail and included these words:

"The story of Patrol Officers is certainly an extraordinary one and one that deserves a higher level of consciousness than that which exists in contemporary Australian society."

On 18th December 2008, Mr Viner-Smith replied to the Senator’s letter and requested a meeting with him (accompanied by the immediate past President of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, Keith Jackson AM), in February 2009 to further explore the issues raised.
4. Concerns

There are some issues arising from the Ministerial correspondence which we believe requires some clarification:

**Use of the word ‘civilian’ in regard to Patrol Officers**

Patrol Officers were sworn, armed, commissioned officers of the RPNGC, an Australian external Territorial Police Force. While regular members of the RPNGC generally administered law and order in urban areas, Patrol Officers administered the law in the field as members of the Field Constabulary.

The administration of law and order and the training of local police formed the basis of the Patrol Officer’s duties but in addition to this he was required to undertake other duties such as a Magistrate of Local Courts, manager of Corrective Institutions and manager of other Government agencies.

It is contended that Patrol Officers could not be classified as ‘civilians’ other than if used as a comparative noun distinguishing Defence Force personnel from non Defence Force personnel.

**Understanding of the work situation of Patrol Officers**

In correspondence from the Department of the Special Minister of State there seems to be some misunderstanding of how Patrol Officers undertook their duties. We have listed below many of the situations in which Patrol Officers worked.

Patrol Officers were mainly based at a Patrol Post which was established in a jungle clearing. It usually consisted of native material huts built by the Kiap, who would often supervise the building an airstrip to enable small aircraft to land and establish a viable form of transport and supply.

From the Patrol Post the Kiap would embark on a “patrol” walking through the jungle or mountains of the hinterland to contact villages within his area, which would generally have a population of about 50,000 people. The Kiap would carry out police and magisterial duties first and then attend to other duties such as censuses, education in local government
practices and tax collection. Some patrols were first contact patrols; others were done for punitive reasons. Sometimes patrols were accompanied by a teacher going to a new village school or an agricultural officer who would advise villagers about crops. Patrols lasted from two weeks to three months and were mostly conducted without support or communication with the outside world. All food, sleeping gear, medical supplies and paperwork had to be carried. The Kiap would be accompanied by local native carriers and native policemen who were trained by the Kiap.

Many books have been written about the dangers Kiaps encountered with the environmental hazards and the warring and hostile tribes and we are sure the Minister understands these perilous situations.

Very frequently patrols contained what the Minister has described as an “emergency response involving hazard” and we hope this short dissertation has shed some light on the issue.

Listed at Attachment 1 are some (but by no means all) of the situations Patrol Officers encountered.

**Recognition**

The Minister has suggested that the National Medal might be an appropriate form of recognition. “The National Medal recognises long and diligent service by members of recognised organisations that help the community during times of crisis. The National Medal is Australia’s most awarded civilian medal (it is also awarded to Defence Force personnel).

Kiaps would welcome eligibility for award of the National Medal and encourage progress towards this end but disagree with this option for formal recognition of Patrol Officers for the following reasons:

- The National Medal is not specific to Patrol Officers as, for example, the Australian Police Medal is to members of Australian Police Forces or the Australian Antarctic Medal (for 12 months service) is to members of an Antarctic expedition.
A criterion for the award is that the recipient has served for 15 years. Service in an area of constant danger has a limit. Defence Force members have a “Tour of Duty” which has a defined time, DFAT diplomats or consular officials with a “hardship” posting may only last for six months. This was the same for Patrol Officers and some left the job after their first “tour”. Others lasted much longer but the majority, especially those in the field, did not last in the job for fifteen years, the length of time required to qualify for the National Medal or the NPSM. Our submission to the Prime Minister suggests two years service, which we believe is adequate.

Kiaps are seeking recognition of their work as one of Australia’s greatest achievements in its short history and while the National Medal is an Australian Honour, it does not have a post-nominal entitlement and therefore the pride in recognition is not present.

We believe that if the service was performed for the suggested qualifying two year period, it should be recognised.

The Minister has also stated that he is “not persuaded ... that all Patrol Officers should receive medallic recognition of their service in TPNG.” It is therefore implied that some are eligible but it is not clear to whom the Minister refers. It is also suggested that individual achievements of Patrol Officers were recognised through the British Imperial honours system. We observe that very few officers received Imperial awards recognising their services.

**Suggested types of recognition**

Senator Faulkner states, “I acknowledge that Patrol Officers exercised Police powers as members of the Field Constabulary Branch of the RPNGC. It is the Government’s view that the policing role of Patrol Officers would be the only one amongst their many roles that might attract service recognition”.

There are currently three specific awards for Australian Police (which Kiaps were as RPNGC members), the Australian Police Medal (APM), the Police Overseas Service Medal (POSM) and the National Police Service Medal (NPSM).
Patrol Officers were sworn Australian Police Officers who operated daily in dangerous conditions protecting the community and had many additional roles including guiding the community towards national independence. They placed their own safety at risk to protect the quality of life of the community and maintain law and order.

No Patrol Officer has received an APM nor is eligible for the POSM and is not likely to meet the length of service criteria for the NPSM.

We ask that the Government consider a separate, distinctive and permanent way of honouring these Australians, enabling them to take pride in that recognition knowing that the law enforcement, training, nurturing and development roles they undertook in TPNG in pursuit of Australia’s responsibilities to the United Nations were worthwhile and an important part of Australia’s history.

Further to (but not exclusive of) the suggestions made in the original submission, the following options are proposed:

- A new External Territory Police Service Medal similar to the National Police Service Medal (NPSM) with criteria which include a realistic minimum number of years served and which has a post nominal entitlement.

- A new Police Service (TPNG) Medal, similar to the Imperial Rhodesia Medal with criteria which include a realistic minimum number of years served and which has a post nominal entitlement.

- A Certification of Appreciation from the Government ceremoniously awarded to ex Patrol Officers by Federal Members of Parliament around Australia.
Attachment 1

Some situations encountered by Patrol Officers

As at 12 January 2009 - This list is still being compiled and remains incomplete

The Honour Roll

1950 September Cadet Patrol Officer Peter Evans missing Port Moresby, never found.

1951 January District Commissioner Cecil Cowley killed Mt. Lamington eruption.

1951 January Cadet Patrol Officer James Joyce killed Mt. Lamington.

1951 January Cadet Patrol Officer Athol Earl killed Mt Lamington.

1951 January – Cadet Patrol Officer Ken Broadhurst killed Mt Lamington eruption

1951 December Assistant District Officer Ken Earle killed aircraft crash near Wapenamanda, Western Highlands while accompanying DCA on aerial inspection of airstrip under construction.

1953 November Patrol Officer Gerald Szarka murdered, on patrol, Telefomin, Sepik.

1953 November Cadet Patrol Geoffrey Harris murdered , on patrol, Telefomin, Sepik

1955 October Patrol Officer John Short died of illness contracted whilst on patrol, Tauri River, Kerema.

1958 November Patrol Officer Rupert Haviland died in hospital Australia from work related illness.

1960 November Cadet Patrol Office Fergus Anderson, drowned, on patrol, Tauri River
1964  Alan Lewis CLEEVE, Cadet Patrol Officer aged 21 years, died 8th September, following a motor boat accident on the ARAMIA River, a tributary of the BAMU River in the BALIMO Sub District, Western District

1967-8  Peter Gall was murdered in New Ireland while on patrol

1971 August  District Commissioner E. J. Emanuel murdered Kalbara, Rabaul, New Britain.

1972 September,  Cadet Patrol Officer Taffy Watkins, drowned (murdered), on patrol, OM River, Oksapmin, Telefomin.

1974  Patrol Officer Desmond Murphy murdered Kerema, Gulf District.

1974  District Officer John Absolom died whilst on patrol from Esa’Ala in the Milne Bay District. Parts of his government dinghy and a lifejacket were washed up but his body never found.

Aircraft Accidents

1953  Auster on take-off crashed into Vanimo Harbour. Pilot killed, passengers, District Commissioner Ian Skinner and Assistant District Officer George Wearne, rescued from submerged aircraft.

1955  Dragon on take-off crash into Madang Harbour. Patrol Officer Barry Griffin escaped from sunken wreckage.

1964  Dornier on take-off crash Tauta (Ramu). Pilot killed, District Commissioner F. P. C. Kaad severely injured and still paraplegic, ADO Vince Smith minor injuries.

1969  15th Jan Bill Johnston injured in the crash of a Cessna 310J while a member of the Land Settlement Selection Board at Bali Island in the Bali-Witu group off the south west coast of New Britain. The team leader was killed and the pilot injured.
1970  
20th May Patrol Officer Harry Balfour-Ogilvy was killed along with his wife, Esther, and infant daughters, Deborah and Sandra; and Dave Robertson, Assistant District Officer, Esa’ala, in an Aztec crash near Gurney.

1970-71  
Patrol Officer Rick Niland was doing an airdrop at Fane Mission, Goilala, when the engine failed and the aircraft crashed on the airstrip which was still under construction. No deaths, but the Cessna was a write off.

1972  
1st September Patrol Officer Shipway, his son Steven aged 13 and his domestic servant died in a Skyvan on transfer from Minj to Mendi.

Attacks on Patrols.

(Very short initial list. The Department did not publicise these events before 1951. The correspondence on the Kainantu attacks, on Burge and Brown, is digitalized on the National Archives website)

November 1946  
Patrol by ADO I. Downs attacked Banir River, Menyama

November 1951  
Patrol by ADO L. Hurrell attacked Akwanji, Menyama

December 1952  
Patrol by DC J. McLeod attacked just off Mendi, Southern Highlands

May 1953  
Patrol by POs J. Frew and L. Ford attacked Lai Valley, Mendi

June 1953  
Patrol by ADO W Murdoch and PO R. Neville attacked lumunu, Tari, Southern Highlands.

November 1953  
Patrols by PO G. Szarka & CPO G. Harris simultaneously attacked Eliptamin Valley, Telefomin. Both officers and 2 police killed.

February 1954  
Patrol by W. T. Brown attacked Obutasa, Lamari Valley, Kainantu
May 1954  
Patrol by PO B. Burge attacked Obura, Lamari Valley, Kainantu.

May 1954  
Patrol by PO F. Esdaile attacked on 3 occasions 7 miles from Mendi, Southern Highlands.

June 1955  
Patrol by ADO W. Allen and POs J. Hayes and J. Martyn attacked Bainings, New Britain.

October 1955  
Patrol by PO R. Claridge attacked Moranda, Southern Highlands.

August 1955  
Patrol by ADO W. Crellin attacked Hamburi, Southern Highlands

May 1956  
Patrol by R. MacIlwain attacked Jimi River,

October 1957  
Patrol by ADO R. Neville and POs Booth and P. Conroy attacked Mianmin, Telefomin, Sepik.

January 1961  
Patrol by PO O. Alder attacked Tainabora, Wonenara, Eastern Highlands.

May 1961  
Patrol by PO O. Alder attacked Sebanumu, Wonenara, Eastern Highlands

November 1964  
Patrol Officers Robb Stott and Chris Viner-Smith attacked with bows and arrows and bush knives in restricted area near Udarobi village out of Nomad PP in the Biami Western District.