



Australia to help rebuild Bougainville

By Online Editor

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Australian parliamentary secretary for Pacific Islands Affairs, Richard Marles

Australia stands ready to assist and rebuild Bougainville as it had been since the crisis broke out in 1989.

But before Australia does just that, Bougainville will have to provide specific requests or projects to the Australian Government on priority or urgent areas that needs immediate financial help.

Over the last 10 years Bougainville has been receiving direct funding from the people of Australia through the Australian Government's AusAID program valued at more than K500 million (US\$250 milion) since 1997.

Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Richard Marles said in Arawa that Australia was ready to help Bougainville but leaders needed to provide the specific request in order for assistance to flow.

Marles made three commitments of over K1 million to the people of Bougainville, they are K700,000 for the Bougainville Police Service, K60,000 to fight the cholera outbreak and K250,000 for the Koromira Technical School.

On top of that, Australia is funding the Trunk Road maintenance of Arawa at K7 million and helping to rebuild Arawa on a need basis.

Marles, who was pleased to be in Bougainville, singled out the relations his father had in colonial war era.

He said his visit was to see how the Australian aid was helping Bougainvilleans, where they could help more and how the relationship between Australia and Bougainville could be further progressed.

“We are here on Bougainville to show the significance of our commitment to the people of Bougainville.

“Australia is ready to assist Bougainville but we need to have the specific issues needed to be addressed in order to assist.

“I guess we are interested in specific projects we can participate in,” Marles said in Arawa.

He said Australia had helped in building the capacities of the public servants, the Bougainville Public Service, the health sector, education and the weapons disposal program.

Marles visit to Arawa was very significant as he arrived in Buka on an Australian Defence plane accompanied by his team from Canberra, Australian High Commissioner to PNG Ian Kemish and his officers on the ground.

He was well received by the people of Kieta, Koromira and Arawa. Marles also met with Panguna landowners executives and hosted a dinner for all the ex-combatants, the Panguna landowners and women of Arawa.

SOURCE: POST COURIER/PACNEWS