



## MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

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20111207 SP ANG Kokoda campaign

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**Speech by Sir Mekere Morauta, Minister for Public Enterprises  
to launch Air Niugini's participation in Kokoda 70,  
the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kokoda Campaign in World War 2  
State Function Room, Parliament House  
Wednesday December 7**

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I am pleased to announce Air Niugini as the official carrier and promoter of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Kokoda Campaign.

Since the opening of the Isurava Memorial a decade ago almost 30,000 Australians have trekked across the Kokoda Trail to walk in the footsteps of the soldiers who fought along it in 1942.

Their journeys have created a trekking industry that has generated K100 million over the past decade and provided direct employment for Papua New Guinea guides and carriers. This amounts to 60,000 employment journeys for guides and carriers and 210,000 nights camping for local landowners along the Trail.

Kokoda has become more than a pilgrimage for Australians. It has become an important means of maintaining national bonds of friendship.

There is a realisation that many Australian trekkers would not be able to complete their pilgrimage without the selfless support of their PNG guides and carriers and the warm hospitality of the villagers along the Trail.

Australian troops came to the same realisation in 1942. Without the support and sacrifice of our legendary 'fuzzy-wuzzy angels', the tide of war would not have turned and the Australian flag would never have been raised on the Kokoda plateau on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1942.

The flag-raising ceremony symbolised the brotherhood forged between us in the darkest days of the Pacific War - a brotherhood founded on respect, fortitude, shared sacrifice and selfless compassion.

Some 52,000 Papua New Guineans were conscripted to serve as wartime carriers to support the war effort. Many were forcibly removed from their villages without any understanding of the meaning of the war. Families were devastated and entire villages grieved for the safe return of their men.

As time slowly steals the survivors from our midst, we owe it to them to ensure their service and their sacrifice is never forgotten. It should be a source of pride and inspiration for future generations of Papua New Guineans.

And Air Niugini is committed to ensuring that their legacy is honored and never, ever forgotten.

Kokoda has come to symbolise the special bond between Australia and Papua New Guinea. We work together to overcome adversity. We share and appreciate each other's cultures and traditions. We are part of the neighbourhood of Pacific countries.

Air Niugini has announced a number of initiatives that will maximise awareness of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Kokoda Campaign.

These initiatives include:

- the creation of a dedicated website, [www.kokoda70.org](http://www.kokoda70.org) and
- the creation of a “flying billboard” on the side of a Boeing 737 that will show the map of the Kokoda Trail along which the battles of 1942 were fought. Air Niugini’s 737 will create unprecedented awareness of Kokoda and ensure that young Australians and Papua New Guineans continue to learn about the bond that was formed 70 years ago.

**Mekere Morauta KCMG MP**  
Minister for Public Enterprises