

**SPEECH BY THE
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT, PROFESSOR RAJESH CHANDRA
FOR THE OPENING OF THE NEW NAURU CAMPUS, 2018**

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Acting President of the Republic of Nauru, His Excellency, David Adeang;
- The Speaker of the Parliament of Nauru, Honourable Cyril Buraman;
- The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of USP Council, Mr Winston Thompson and Mrs Queenie Thompson;
- Minister of Education, Honourable Charmaine Scotty and Honourable Ministers and Senior Officials of the Nauruan Government;
- Honourable Ministers of Education of USP member countries and other Members of USP Council;
- The Australian High Commissioner to Nauru, Her Excellency Ms Angela Tierney;
- The Ambassador of Taiwan, His Excellency Mr Chin-Fa Chow;
- USP's Development Partners;
- Members of the USP Senior Management Team;
- Chair and Representatives of the Nauru Learning Village Taskforce Working Group;
- The Campus Director, USP Nauru Campus – Ms Alamanda Lauti;
- Representatives of Alexander & Lloyd Group, and Craig Construction Limited;
- Staff and students of the USP Nauru Campus;
- USP Alumni;
- Invited Guests;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. WELCOME

Welcome, and Omo Yoran to you all.

On behalf of the Pro Chancellor and Chair of Council, Mr Winston Thompson and The University of the South Pacific (USP) community, I am deeply honoured to join the Hon. Minister of Education and Her Excellency the Australian High Commissioner in addressing you at this historic and momentous occasion of the opening of the new USP Nauru Campus within the Nauru Learning Village.

This is indeed an occasion for celebration for the Government and people of Nauru and the University. We from the Vice-Chancellor's Office, together with the director, staff and students of the old campus have been dreaming about a new campus for many years—so today marks the realization of our collective dream and one that we believe will make such a foundational contribution to the future development of Nauru.

The new campus demonstrates the firm commitment of the Government of Nauru, the Australian Government, and USP towards working together for the development of

this country's education system—and therefore the development of the country since education is the foundation of all development.

I humbly thank our long-term development partner, Australia, for financing this magnificent building with such excellent facilities. This Campus demonstrates the continued commitment and support of the Australian Government towards quality sustainable education for the Pacific region and its people, and towards the University. Australia has given USP rock-solid support since our establishment in 1968. This new Campus will be an addition to the long list of other development assistance that has been provided to the University by Australia.

We are deeply honoured by the presence of the Acting President, His Excellency David Adeang— who is also a prominent USP alumni from the 1993 graduating class—who will shortly be officially opening this new campus.

Your Excellency, we thank you and your Government for your continued support to the University since its establishment. We also acknowledge the commitment and assistance of Honourable Charmaine Scotty and the Ministry of Education.

Your University, USP, is legitimately proud of its history since its establishment in 1968 by the first 11 member countries. The Late Excellency Hammer DeRoburt, the founding father of Nauru's Independence, was also a founding Member of USP and served the University as its second Chancellor. This year, we are proud to be celebrating Nauru's 50th Anniversary as well as the 50th Anniversary of USP. This is a reminder of how closely our histories are tied together, as well as our future.

I would like to congratulate the Government and People of Nauru as you celebrate your 50th Anniversary and wish Nauru a very bright and prosperous, peaceful and sustainable future.

The 50 year journey for the University was not always a smooth one; however, the Government of Nauru will always be remembered for standing up during difficult times to support the University. I recall that during the period when the founding President of the Republic - Hammer DeRoburt, was in office, the University benefitted from Nauru's generosity over and above the normal membership contributions. In 1975 Nauru made a large grant of F\$249,750 as aid. The total aid to USP reported as at 30th September 1975 was only F\$493,600, so this was almost half of all aid that year and by far the single largest donation. I wish to acknowledge such show of confidence in and generosity to the University by the Government of Nauru and its commitment to the education of not only Nauruans but of all the people of the Pacific.

USP's 16th Chancellor His Excellency President Marcus Stephen, was the second Nauruan to hold this position. President Marcus Stephen referred to USP in his address to the Nauru Parliament on 15 September, 2009:

“This is the very essence and importance of the USP, where our people, not only in Nauru but in the Pacific region are given the opportunity for good, solid higher education. Most of the prominent persons in the region today all went to USP. Even leaders like the PM from Solomon Islands also went to USP.... Mr. Speaker, it is Nauru's

turn to hold the fort, so to speak. We must make sure that during our watch we give the right support to the Vice Chancellor and the USP Committee. Throughout our watch, we will be vigilant and commit ourselves to giving USP any assistance necessary during our 1-year period of chancellorship so as to ensure that USP will continue to provide our people and our children with quality educational services.”

As the Vice-Chancellor referred to by His Excellency, let me state that the former President Marcus Stephen was an excellent Chancellor and we enjoyed full support and advocacy from him in his role as Chancellor and from the Government of Nauru.

The quote from former President Stephen illustrates the nature of our unique USP family. We are grateful to the Government of the day for sustaining and deepening the long term vision of our past leaders in establishing and further supporting the University with this new Campus at the Learning Village.

The Beginning of Nauru Centre

Distance learning courses have been available in Nauru since the early 1970s, when they were facilitated through the Nauru Education Department. The Nauru Centre was established in August 1986 under the guidance of Ms Mere Pulea, and was officially opened in October 1987. It moved into its Headquarters in Aiwo District in 1989. The campus provided tutorials and face-to-face courses in accounting, management, Bachelor of Education (Primary), early childhood education, English, and library and information studies.

What will be offered at the new Nauru Campus

The new Campus will continue to offer courses as requested by the Government of Nauru and other stakeholders in our quest to provide capacity building for the development of Nauru. The Campus Director will continue to seek areas to complement the implementation of the new Nauruan based curriculum with programmes in life-skills, culture and language, climate change, Pacific TAFE and TVET, and traditional subject areas of English, Maths and the Sciences.

Role of the modern ICT development acknowledging New Zealand in the new USP Nauru Campus

We are particularly looking forward to fully leveraging the new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment to improve connectivity to all campuses and also to facilitate the provision of expanded, faster and more reliable ICT-based learning courses, especially distance and flexible learning (DFL) courses. The rolling out of Lecture Capture which enable students studying from Nauru to experience face-to-face-lectures from other campuses like Laucala, Emalus and Alafua will be a major feature of learning at the new campus. USP has contributed around \$472,000 mostly in the provision of ICT equipment that included PCs and audio visual equipment, surveillance cameras, installation of the satellite dish, and staff travel costs for the project. I would also like to acknowledge here the New Zealand Government’s assistance to USP to strengthen connectivity at regional campuses through its donation of the new satellite dish for the new Nauru Campus as part of its overall

grant for the upgrade of USPNet—which is New Zealand Government’s 50th anniversary gift to the University and the Pacific island countries.

ENROLMENT AND ALUMNI NUMBERS

After the opening of the USP Nauru Centre in 1987 we had our first two graduates in the following year in 1988. In the past 30 year period we have had a total of 149 Nauruans graduate from USP, including two who went on to become Presidents of Nauru. The acting President is also an alumnus. The enrolment at the present Campus in 2017 was 122 students, and is projected to be 149 for 2018. These enrolment numbers do not include a record number of 386 students attending short courses at Continuing and Community Education (CCE) in 2017.

Your Excellency, with the state-of-the-art classrooms and learning facilities, convenient educational environment, and public accessibility to the National library, we are confident that enrolment will increase sharply next year beyond what we have seen in the recent past.

CONCLUSIONS

With the new campus and new investment in ICT infrastructure, the opportunity is there to make a real difference to building capacity in Nauru. To achieve this objective, both USP and the Government will need to continue working closely together. For our part, I wish to assure the Government of Nauru and all stakeholders that the Campus leadership here and the Management of USP are determined to work even more closely with the government to ensure the most productive use of the new campus and its excellent facilities. We will look after the investment wisely with timely maintenance. While the new campus will not solve all of the challenges facing Nauru’s education sector, I am confident that it will surely help train generations of young people who will be important for the future of Nauru, and assist in the strengthening of education and research in this country.

I wish the new campus and Nauru great success in the future.

Thank you, Tubwa kor and God Bless.