



HIGH COMMISSIONER

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION  
ISLAMABAD

### **Message from H.E. Margaret Adamson, High Commissioner of Australia**

It gives me great pleasure to mark Australia's National Day in Pakistan by taking this opportunity to reflect on the depth and strength of the unique relationship between our two nations. Australia continues to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan, just as it has since its beginnings as a state in 1947, as a partner and friend. The relationship between Australia and Pakistan has continued to grow over the last year and looks set to grow steadily throughout 2016 across a number of fronts.

Looking back, the visit to Pakistan of Australia's Foreign Minister, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, in May was a highlight of 2015. During that visit, Ms Bishop met with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, Interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Khan, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif.

Australia and Pakistan enjoy an historically significant relationship between our two defence forces. Australia has sent an officer of Major rank to the Command and Staff College at Quetta almost every year since 1910, and our exchange arrangements continue with Quetta and the National Defence University, Islamabad. Australia offers 140 places to Pakistani military officers on Australian military courses, as well as eight university Masters-level scholarships. In February 2015, the Chief of Australia's Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC, led a delegation to Pakistan and met with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Rashad Mahmood, and Chief of Army Staff General Sharif as part of an ongoing high-level 1.5 track strategic dialogue.

As a friend and partner, Australia continues to support the people of Pakistan through our development assistance program. Australia's development assistance is producing tangible results – for example, in 2014-15, 48,000 women and men working in agriculture increased their income through improved technologies and practices as a direct result of Australian aid. Australia's contributions supported 118,000 children, including 62,000 girls, to undertake basic education. Furthermore, 4,000 teachers, including 1,800 women, were trained to improve their teaching skills. Australian aid has meant an additional 6,021 births throughout Pakistan were conducted by a skilled birth attendant. Almost 1,500 women survivors of domestic violence accessed critical support services which may not have been available otherwise. In addition, over the last five years Australia has provided over \$90 million through the World Food Programme to the people of Pakistan to help support them through humanitarian crises, such as assisting those affected by the October 2015 earthquake.

Key elements of Australia's development assistance program are a focus on poverty reduction, and the empowerment of women and girls. Australia's campaign to secure a position on the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2018-2020 reflects the Australian Government's focus on advocating for the rights of women and girls worldwide, promoting good governance and stronger democratic institutions – including national human rights bodies, promoting and protecting freedom of expression and advancing the human rights of indigenous peoples.

Our development assistance also aims to help stimulate economic growth in Pakistan. For example, we work to improve access to markets and the creation of value chains through initiatives such as the Australia Balochistan Agri-business Project, and the Market Development Facility (MDF). The MDF is supporting the private sector to grow their businesses through value addition, supply chain development and the provision of services and inputs that assist small-holder farmers and ultimately create jobs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan, Punjab and Sindh. Furthermore, Australia will continue to share our world-leading expertise in water resource management, building on many years of existing cooperation with Pakistan on this crucial issue.

Australia and Pakistan continue to strive to expand trade and investment and there remains great potential for further business collaboration, particularly through agri-business and agricultural science linkages. There are also prospects for growth in trade and investment in education; mining equipment, technology and services; processed foods; and IT and communications products and services. Looking further ahead, there remain opportunities for cooperation in clean energy technologies (including clean coal, wind and renewables); medical technologies; and infrastructure investment.

Throughout 2015, Australia stood firm in its support of Pakistan in the battle against terror. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) has had a comprehensive and productive relationship with Federal and Provincial law enforcement agencies in Pakistan since 1984. In 2015, the AFP supported the commissioning of 12 digital forensic laboratories throughout Pakistan, along with comprehensive training in modern forensic techniques and procedures. The AFP also supported the opening of the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) Forensic Laboratory in Islamabad. This facility will enable the NAB to forensically extract information from data storage devices, examine documents and determine fingerprints; all of which can be used as evidence in court proceedings.

The Fayyaz Sumbal Foundation is a charity established by the AFP in 2013 following the death of Deputy Inspector General Fayyaz Sumbal in Quetta, as a victim of terrorism. The foundation raises funds to help the families of police officers wounded or killed in the line of duty and demonstrates Australia's solidarity with Pakistan through all the challenges and threats of terrorism. The foundation's primary fundraising venture is the annual Fayyaz Sumbal Cricket Match conducted in Lahore. The next match of the Fayyaz Sumbal Cup is due to take place in Australia on 28 January 2016.

The story of the relationship between Australia and Pakistan is of course fundamentally a story about people. That story extends back to the mid-1800's, when cameleers, including from what is today Balochistan and Sindh, proved to be a turning point in the exploration and development of the Australian interior. Indeed, from the 1860's to the early 1900's, those cameleers and their 'ships of the desert' became the backbone of the Australian economy, carrying supplies and materials across our vast land, including tools and equipment needed

for the surveying and construction of some of Australia's earliest and greatest infrastructure projects, such as the Overland Telegraph and the Trans-Australian Railway.

Today, more than 40,000 Pakistan-born people call Australia home. Australia is now amongst the more popular destinations for Pakistani undergraduate and post-graduate students with over 14,000 Pakistani students currently studying in Australia. In 2015 more than 6200 student visas were granted to Pakistan students, providing them an opportunity to study in Australia and enrich the Australia-Pakistan relationship. Almost 3900 of these visas were granted to new students seeking to study in Australia for the first time. Pleasingly, more than 80% of these new visas were granted to students studying a Higher Education degree program, offering them the opportunity to develop their full academic potential. These students will return to Pakistan with skills and experience which will benefit them personally in their career development and also contribute to Pakistan's continued economic growth and the prosperity of all Pakistanis. In addition, in 2015 there were 60 Pakistani students studying in Australia on long-term scholarships under the Australia Awards program, with new awardees expected to take up studies in Australia this year.

Developments in 2015 demonstrated the strength and endurance of the Australia-Pakistan relationship, and the spirit of friendship between our people. I look forward to continuing to build-on our partnership in 2016.

Margaret Adamson  
26 January 2016