

## **Minister Rambachan congratulates the Australian Government on the treatment of the Aboriginal people**

**On the celebration of Australia Day, January 25, 2011.**

It is always an honour to bring greetings on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on this joyous celebration of Australia Day to you High Commissioner, your Government and the good People of the Commonwealth of Australia. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy, joyous, safe and blessed New Year.

Australia Day is a day of celebration, of remembering our past and using the lessons learnt to prepare and work towards a better future. In keeping with that spirit, I would like to reminisce over our past year's achievements. 2011 was indeed a memorable and special year for both Trinidad and Tobago and Australia.

But before I do so, I am reminded that in Australia there are dozens of Trinbagonians who are celebrating your national day, by which in fact has become their own. During our visit to Australia during CHOGM, we saw the passion, commitment and conviction of those Trinidad and Tobago nationals who have adopted Australia as their home. But even as they have done so they remained grounded in their own cultural revolution by celebrating with the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and her delegation the festivals of light. But long before all of this many will remember when Australian artist, Rolph Harris, entered our living rooms through the television, painting and singing, thereby sharing with us aspects of Australian culture. That has lived with until this day.

We witnessed the handing over of the Chair in Office of the Commonwealth from one female Prime Minister to another, a “historic” moment as remarked by Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma, as this was the first time this has ever occurred within this institution. I would like to thank the good offices of the Australian High Commission and the Australian Government for facilitating arrangements for the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and for hosting such a successful event. I look forward to continuing the work of the Commonwealth and implementing decisions which were agreed to.

As each year passes by, the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and Australia deepens. The bilateral relationship is fortified with the level of trade and investment between both countries. Trinidad and Tobago has been working assiduously towards achieving our developmental goals, and we thank Australia for your continued support and guidance in the areas of training, education, sports and climate change among others. Australia certainly is on the right path to becoming a world power, and we applaud your efforts towards realizing the Millennium Developmental Goals and providing a better life for all of your population.

Our citizenry is indeed appreciative of the opportunities to qualify for the scholarships and workshops offered by your Government. They continue to provide valuable training in developing areas within Trinidad and Tobago. In early 2011, three of our nationals along with others in the Caribbean region were invited to participate in the “Adapting to Climate Change: a workshop for coral reef managers”. Such workshops are helpful in our battle against climate change. As Small Island Developing States (SIDS), we are particularly vulnerable to the disastrous effects of climate change. The Caribbean region is working persistently

to put measures into place to withstand the losses we continue to suffer on a yearly basis.

Your Excellency, we applaud the Australian Government for its commendable efforts in combating climate change. Your tireless commitment to this predicament which plagues every country and citizen of this world is highlighted through the passing of your Government's Clean Energy Future Package. Your support for the SIDS during CHOGM was well appreciated. We welcome any expertise on the issue of climate change and we look forward to the continued work and collaboration between us and Australia and by extension the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute. I have been informed that we are currently in the process of analysing our enabling environment for CCS activity and will be seeking advice from the GCCSI in charting a course on how to proceed. We anticipate this collaboration will be a fruitful endeavour.

For the past two years, Australia and Trinidad and Tobago have co-sponsored the First and Second Regional Workshop on the Negotiations for the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty, which were held right here in Port of Spain. These workshops have been integral to developing the region's support for the Treaty, which is crucial for the safety our citizens. Trinidad and Tobago anticipates another successful session in 2012.

**My respect for Australia rose to extreme heights during my visit and this for a very important reason. Along with my colleague, Gideon Hanoomansingh, we were deeply touched, in fact emotionally lifted, by the way Australia honours its first peoples and celebrates their presence at every State function. This is a lesson the world must adopt because a people without**

**ancestral gratitude to their past will never build a nation. Acknowledgement of ones history is the bedrock upon which great societies are built. Tonight in particular to this aspect of Australian heritage I pay tribute. The sounds of the traditional instruments played by the first people linger in our minds.**

Your Excellency, forty-three years of great relations and to the friendship we share I raise my glass and invite everyone present to toast your great nation of Australia.

Cheers.

Thank you.