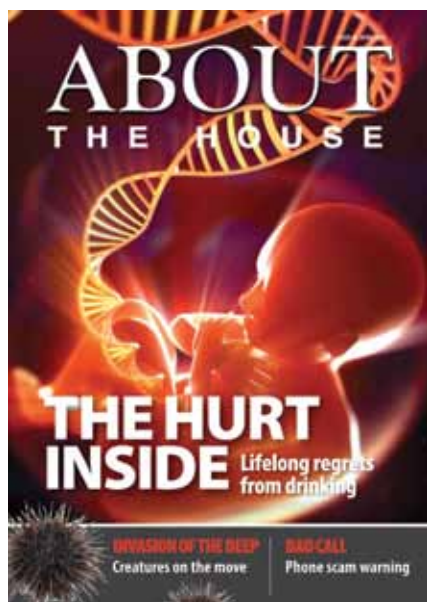


Despatch BOX



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PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS: Kiribati Room opening at the ACT Legislative Assembly

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE PACIFIC

Increased vocational education is a key to improving the employment prospects of young people in the Pacific region, according to Kiribati Education Minister Maere Tekanene.

Praising Australia for its commitment to improving education in Pacific island countries, Mrs Tekanene said vocational training is providing more opportunities for self-employment and innovation, giving greater access to job opportunities and stimulating the economy.

"If there is more vocational training, students will be more employable," she said.

Mrs Tekanene was visiting the ACT Legislative Assembly as part of a Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program.

Under the program, which is coordinated by the Australian federal

parliament, Australian state and territory parliaments are twinned with the parliaments of Pacific island countries. With funding from AusAID, the program supports capacity building of Pacific parliaments. ACT is twinned with Kiribati.

Mrs Tekanene said the parliamentary twinning program provides an avenue for strengthening cooperation between developing and developed nations in the Pacific region.

"There are many things our nation wants to gain from its relationship with Australia," she said.

During the visit by Mrs Tekanene and opposition MP Waysang Kumkee, a committee room in the ACT Legislative Assembly was named the Kiribati Room in honour of the twinning arrangement and the growing ties between the two parliaments.

PARALYMPIANS READY FOR LONDON

Australia's 2012 Paralympics squad has been honoured at a ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra.

One hundred and sixty-one athletes were selected as part of the Australian team for the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

The athletes will be joined by 140 officials in the largest Australian team ever selected for the Paralympics.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott, Minister for Sport Kate Lundy and Minister for Disability



PRIDE OF THE NATION: Paralympians with PM Julia Gillard at Parliament House

Reform Jenny Macklin addressed the athletes at the event, wishing them every success.

The Paralympics will begin with the Opening Ceremony on August 29.

AAP