

SEVENTH DAY

Thursday 5 September 2019

DRAFT HANSARD

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SEVENTH DAY
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The Speaker (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair at 10.00 a.m.

There being no quorum present, Mr Speaker stated that he would resume the Chair after the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended.

The Deputy Speaker took the Chair at 11.00 a.m., and invited the Member for Markham, **Honourable Koni Iguan**, to say Prayers:

‘Our Father in Heaven, we stand before you as leaders of this nation. Lord you have chosen us from all different backgrounds. We are all sinners. Our deeds and thoughts are not yours. We think and do things that are evil but Lord you have chosen us to lead this beautiful nation. With our simple beings, we bow our heads before you. Lord forgive us from all evils that we have done we cannot stand proud and tell our nation that we are worthy. We are sinners. Lord, you cannot send angels from Heaven to lead this nation but you have chosen us to be instruments in leading this nation. Therefore Lord, with our simple hearts we ask you to forgive us and accept us as we are. Help us to lead with your own knowledge and will. Lord, today before you, we bow our heads as simple leaders and we now would like to join in to say the Lord’s Prayer together.’

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS –
STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER**

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, I have to inform the Parliament that four Local Level Government Presidents of Telefomin District are present in the Speaker’s Public Gallery this morning.

On behalf of the Parliament, I extend to them a very warm welcome to the National Parliament.

QUESTIONS

Financial Mismanagement in MRDC

Sir MEKERE MORAUTA – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my questions are directed to the Prime Minister regarding the Minerals Resources Development Corporation.

But before that, may I take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for his words of welcome following my move to the Government.

As the Prime Minister himself said at the press conference, I came not seeking a job or ministry, I came because I want to help in a very small way in firming out the government's foundation pillars because I know that the Prime Minister will be making very difficult adjustment decisions in the coming months and weeks, and he needs a strong foundation because the decisions are going to be costly and very weighty. If the foundations are not strong the opportunities or chances of sinking are quite high.

02/07

So in a small way, I want to strengthen that foundation, but as a coastal man I am using shipping language as a crew or a deckhand at the Prime Minister's call.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my questions are in relation to Mineral Resources Stabilization Fund, and I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney General, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Police take note.

Prime Minister, the matters I wish to raise occurred before you became the Prime Minister and by that office, the sole trustee shareholder with MRDC. You are therefore, not responsible for the events that happened.

But now as the sole trustee shareholder, you may be able to throw light on these matters and take measures to resolve them. Because it is in the benefit of the landowners, whose funds are held by MRDC in trust, managed and invested by them.

Prime Minister, information from credible sources and generally known publicly points to serious cases of fraud, misappropriation, abuse of office and breach of trust, by MRDC in its management of the landowners' trust funds.

The landowner entities affected include Petroleum Resources Gobe (PRG), Petroleum Resources Kutubu (PRK) and Star Mountain land owners.

I believe a number of matters were reported to the Police late last year but nothing appears to have happened. These matters were also reported to the attention of the previous government, but it appears that they were suppressed or sat on by your predecessor, who then was the sole trustee shareholder.

Prime Minister, there are few matters that I wish to raise.

First, K10 million of Petroleum Resources Gobe land owner trust funds were used by MRDC without the approval of the board of PRG. This matter I am told, was reported to the Fraud Squad in late November last year, and nothing has happened.

Second matter, K100 million grants by the State to Petroleum Resources Kutubu, Star Mountain land owners and the Fly River Provincial Government would be spent on projects of their choice. That was the condition of this grant but were diverted by the MRDC for other purposes. Again this matter was reported to the Fraud Squad and nothing has happened.

Thirdly, there are serious allegations concerning the initial investment appraisal of the Star Mountain Hilton Hotel. I have heard that the costs were overestimated suggesting leakage and corruption and the rate of return figures were highly inflated in order to make investments look more profitable and the investment recovery period shorter than they really are.

Prime Minister, it is widely known that the occupancy of Hilton Hotel post-APEC, is hovering about 25 per cent. So the landowners will be very lucky to make any money soon, but the management contractors are making their money.

The questions are:

- (1) Is the Prime Minister aware of these allegations?
- (2) As the sole trustee shareholder, will the Prime Minister consider making investigation into these allegations of abuse?
- (3) If they are known to be true, will the Prime Minister take action against those responsible and institute measures to prevent these abuses from recurring in future?

03/07

(4) Is the Prime Minister aware that over the last six years, MRDC has consistently made losses and its accounts have been liquified, yet no corrective action or remedial actions have been taken?

(5) Will the Prime Minister require MRDC to publish audited accounts and spending statements?

(6) When was the last time MRDC paid any dividends as opposed to these royalties that should have been paid to MRDC by the mining and petroleum companies for distribution to the shareholders?

(7) Given that funds managed by MRDC are landowners' money and not the State's money, why is the Chief Secretary to Government appointed as Chairman of MRDC?

(8) Will the Prime Minister consider appointing another Papua New Guineans to replace him?

A Papua New Guinean with demonstrated success and experience in the private sector.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I also thank the Member for Moresby North-West for asking a series of questions that is of public importance especially when the institution is alleged to be non-compliant to judiciary standards and perpetrating corruption.

It is a trustee company that ensures the resources belonging to our beneficiary groups in our mining and oil projects are safeguarded as far as their investments are concern.

These are serious allegations raised. To answer the Member's question, I have been made aware of these matters and few letters have come my way since I assumed office as the Prime Minister.

With the fact that whoever occupies the Prime Minister's position is the trustee shareholder, I think those complaints were rightfully raised to the office of the Prime Minister.

I do not know what transpired before my term as Prime Minister but since I assumed office a couple of complaints have been raised. I have been able to channel those complaints to the police to do investigations and ascertain exactly the correctness or otherwise of those allegations.

So firstly, the police are there and they are functional and I request all complaints whether it is against MRDC or any state-owned enterprise, department of state or any public office holders for that matter to utilize them.

I also take this time to convey to the police that they do not need any instructions from the Prime Minister or any Minister for that matter to do their job. They have to do their job. I look forward to obtain police views on this matter.

I also request that MRDC furnish an updated public account, so that an audited account can be made known to public and all stakeholders, including myself as a shareholder be updated on the status of all these subsidiaries and their funds.

For specific matters raised by the good Member for Moresby North-West, like the K100 million grant, the issue on the Star Mountain Plaza and the K10 million from Gobe landowner trust account, I will get MRDC to furnish to the office of the Prime Minister a response pertaining to those specific allegations

04/07

That is very specific in nature.

I will get MRDC to furnish the office of Prime Minister the response pertaining to those specification allegations. To summarize, MRDC is a public institution that holds in trust, funds for the beneficiary groups, the land owners and their children and future children.

So, it is incumbent upon them to furnish to us the report and I will ask them in the first instance. I intend to use this question as an opportunity to report back to the country, through the Parliament as to the status of MRDC and the status of what has happened in MRDC in as far as managing land owner funds are concerned.

As for the question alluding to the Chief Secretary as the chairman of MRDC, if my memory is not incorrect, it was the Treasury Secretary who chaired MRDC sometimes back.

The Secretary was the ex-officio chairman by virtue of the position he held and now the Chief Secretary

It is not a choice by individual person who is occupying that occupation to be chairman. It is by designation that the current Chief Secretary has become the ex-officio chairman.

Let me look at the legality of the matter for sustainability of this important organization and for the benefit of land owners going forward. As well as for the entire structure of MRDC so that we have a structure that is in arms-length from the Government, but continues to maintain rapport, interface and scrutiny of Government.

This is so that our public funds for our land owners and their children are kept and grown in MRDC is used to the best of intentions.

Let me assure this House and the Member for Moresby North-West, I will bring a full report back to this Parliament when we resume in October on what the police is doing and what MRDC is doing. These can be spelled out so we all can know in totality what is happening in MRDC in respect to these allegation. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Supplementary Question

Land Owners Should Manage and Invest Their Own Funds

Sir MEKERE MORAUTA – Mr Speaker, I am delighted that the prime Minister has decided to have a thorough look at MRDC.

The other alternative that the Prime Minister could look at is, get the land owners themselves to manage and invest their own funds.

I know that Lihir land owners have chosen to get away from MRDC and are managing their own funds and they are now doing quite well. So, I think that is an opportunity that you can look when trying to restructure MRDC. Thank you.

Mr. JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I take into consideration the recommendation offered by the Member for Moresby North-West.

As I have said earlier, we will look into MRDC in totality. There are evidence of successes in our country in many of the savings fund like NASFUND and the other super funds we have. The Member has a hand in some of the reforms that was put in place in 2000 and 2001 that has led to these success.

There is evidence also that MRDC funds have grown over time so all these need to be answered in totality. We look at exactly where the numbers are, see the success, and also look at the failures, and we set up a structure that is safe from influence, personnel interest, abuse. A structure that can fully cater for investment savings and generating dividends back to our beneficiary groups.

So, I concur with the Member in his question, our Government will look into ensuring that MRDC is protected and given the ring-fence it needs to ensure the funds grow from where it is today. They have also invested a lot so the report will come back to this Parliament will see in totality what MRDC has done thus far.

They have based their liability, their earnings, for instance, as indicated in the Star Mountain Plaza. If the rate of an occupant is really below the expected outcome, all these things will be seen in totality.

And we'll come back to Parliament.

05/07

If the rate of occupancy is really below extracted outcomes, all these things will be seen in totality and will come back to Parliament with recommendations also as to the way forward for MRDC to manage funds.

I look with special interest to see the success story that has emanated from the Lihir funds hopefully that can also be part of our scope of investigation to ensure we invest landowner funds sustainably for our future generations way after oil and gas fields are totally extracted

So, that it is incumbent upon us and in the interest of our country to give total consideration.

Gulf –Infrastructure Development Grant Cheque Bounced

Mr CHRIS HAIVETA – My question goes to the Minister for Finance.

The Minister and I went to went down to Kerema about couple of weeks ago and he re-presented to me a cheque of K3 million in infrastructure development grant fund.

This amount of money was firstly given to me by the Honorable Prime Minister when he was Minister for Finance. We've banked the cheque and the cheque bounced.

So the Minister, the cheque you gave to me also bounced.

(1) Can you assure me and the people of my province that the next cheque that you give to me will not bounce?

The second question is regarding infrastructure development grant under development agreement for various projects.

(2) Why do some cheques bounce and others don't?

(3) What system are you using to evaluate and to ensure that cheques from Gulf bounce and cheques from other provinces don't bounce?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr CHARLE ABEL – Thank you, Deputy Speaker and I thanked the good Governor for Gulf Province for his very important question.

Naturally, Mr Deputy Speaker it is never the intention to bounce government cheque and it is of course embarrassing when it happens.

One would expect that when the cheque is produced from the government system it is good as gold and that's how the ideal system should work.

Unfortunately, for the last couple of years, these incidents have been occurring.

But I thank the Governor for taking me down to Gulf Province to have a look at Kerema Town and the outlying hinterland areas of Gulf Province and the its roads.

In generalize, I share our good Governor concerns about the development issues of Gulf Province and its struggles.

We are very pleased that our new government through new Prime Minister and the new Petroleum Minister has gone through the process and achieved the few more wins on the Papua LNG project and that project will continue and assist the aspiration of the Governor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologize to the Governor. We have talked already about this issue and we are resolving it to make sure that they receive the infrastructure development grant in relation to the first gas project.

There is a process that we have we put in place to ensure that this doesn't happen again. It goes through budget management committee process with our public servant after being advised by the debt management committee. This comprises of all relevant departments and they working on ensuring that when cheques are issued it is against the actual cash in bank.

I encourage all members of government that when cheque are received, please must present those cheque as soon as possible to the bank so that process doesn't catch up in terms of other cheques that are coming through the system.

We developed a cheque float out there which can be quiet large. A large number of government cheese are sitting out there which have not been banked. This makes it difficult to manage cash follow when the cheque float continues to increase.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we are working on this particular issue and once again apologise to the Governor. We will make sure that it is resolved as we continue to improve the system. About 24 months ago, the cheque bouncing issue was worse and I believe it has improved significantly.

06/07

As Finance and Treasury Department get this system in order lesser and lesser of this incidents are occurring. We will work together with the Governor generally on the development aspiration of Gulf in making sure that this money goes to Gulf. I will immediately look into that.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Monitor Road Worthiness of Public Transport

Mr KONI IGUAN – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Transport and I would like to the Minister for Works to take note.

Firstly, my concern is regarding Public Motor Vehicles (PMV's). Many people use PMV's to commute on the highways and also in the city. I have experienced on many occasions congestion caused by PMV's not parking properly at the bus-stops and also many busses are not road worthy.

(1) Does the Department of Transport inspect PMV's regularly to see if they are road worthy and are fit to be travelling on the highways or even here in the city?

This is a concern because in my district hospital there are many cases of road accidents.

Mr Deputy Speaker I want the Minister to know that many of the PMV's running on the road are not road worthy and must be changed regularly lives are being put at risk.

(2) What criteria are used to inspect PMV's and issue registration of highway trucks and PMV's that transport people?

(3) Can the department of Transport look into giving a time period for motor vehicles operating as PMVs to change their vehicles every three years because people's lives are being put at risk?

Air Niugini has regulations and they are always concerned about safety, likewise we should have similar concerns with road transport

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am asking this questions because I have seen and experienced many road accidents so I want to know if the Department of Transport can have some regulations in place where PMV owners must comply with to operate their businesses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, secondly, the Government has spent a lot of money on the Highlands Highway and as we all know most big machines and heavy cargo travel up to the Highlands travel on this highway from Lae. This causes the road to deteriorate faster and regular maintenance is needed so that the highway in in good condition

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am aware that there is a weighing station in Lae at Nine Mile that has been sitting idle. Recently it was refurbished with new buildings but they are locked and not been used for years now.

(4) Can the Minister inform the public, why this Weighing Station is not being used?

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

07/07

Mr WILLIAM SAMB – I thank the Member for Markham for his very important questions regarding the transport sector. I will attempt to answer all three questions, but I would like the Member to furnish me his questions in writing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in regards to the first question relating to bus and taxi services in the Nation's Capital, the Department through Road Transport Authority is responsible for regulations and ensuring motorists have licences and permits. But assets such as bus stops, road signs etcetera belongs to NCD.

Let me not pass the buck but I have been in discussions with RTA on how to address these issues. So in the process of responding, I will go back to my sector and we will provide a written response in due time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on the issue of road worthiness of transport, it is now a trend where motorists resort to short cut methods of acquiring road safety stickers. They provide extra cash upfront to auto part dealers, mainly the Chinese and they really don't bother going to certified agencies to check the worthiness and conditions of the motor vehicle.

This is one area I need to be briefed in detail so that I can respond to this Parliament on how to review the relevant laws so that our citizens and our roads are safer. Might I say, this is a normal practice and we are all contributing to allowing unsafe motor vehicles on our roads.

That also goes for the tidiness and cleanliness of buses and taxis which will be addressed by my sectors technical team soon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the third question is regarding the weighing bridge up at 9-mile in Lae. It is an asset that belongs to the National Roads Authority. There is currently an agreement between Morobe Provincial Government and National Road Authority and RTA to clarify the regulation of fees collection and commencement of workers to start working and monitoring vehicles and their load at the weighing bridge. That asset will address overloading of vehicles and safety of motorists and passengers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst I have this opportunity let me also share my thoughts on the road maintenance of potholes. I am in discussions with our technical team in my sector and we are working on price category for road networks in the whole country. This will allow us to know whether it is an urban road or rural road. The cost is there. There is a standard costing for all these so that we don't overprice what is manageable and fixable at our reach.

08/07

Once that is finalised I will bring it for the leaders and peoples information.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Supplementary Question

Reduce Number of PMV Operators

Mr BENNY ALLAN – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, my supplementary is that in towns, cities and even the Highlands Highway the operators are individuals owning buses and PMVs.

In order for us to control public transportation in towns and on the Highlands Highway or even on other highways or roads I ask the Minister.

Is there any plans to have just one or two operators so that it will be easy to control buses and taxis in towns and on our rural roads PMVs.

For example, beginning in Hela going down all the way to Lae and in each province, we allow only one or two operators and have everybody else who own PMVs coming under those operators. In that way, it will be easy for us to monitor it and guarantee the safety of the travelling public.

Currently, if you look at the Highlands Highway, some PMVs are travelling at the speed of aeroplanes. They call them day-break to day-break. So if you travel from Mt Hagen, you must reach Lae in the morning and turn around the same time to go with PMVs heading to Mt Hagen and to Hela. We are taking unnecessary risks.

Does the Minister have plans to ensure there is only one or two operators in NCD and the rest can partner with them and come under those two operators?

In that way, we can easily monitor who is going out of hand on our roads and put more control measures in our transport systems.

Mr WILLIAM SAMB – Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for asking this important question. I think it is a good suggestion which I will take up.

Currently, this important service is provided by individuals who have an interest there. But he proposed that we bring in relevant laws to ensure that central businesses discharge this function. I believe this is a good idea.

We have a PMVs Association which is a key stakeholder in this sector. I believe I will talk to my department and we will come up with a way forward to address this important point raised by our good Member.

Supplementary Question
Establish Workshops for PMVs

Mr WIN BAKRI DAKI – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I am a PMV bus driver and operator. I have owned buses and taxis for 20 years. My father has owned buses and taxis for over 30 years. I come from a PMV operator family.

I want to express my feelings about this issue. Some of you who commented have no idea what you are talking about. You are just speaking.

And the Minister for Transport must be prepared to give me some good feedback.

09/07

Mr Deputy Speaker, since the PMV buses have operated here in Papua New Guinea, no Minister has shown any concern for the PMV operators. For so long, these PMV buses were operated by their individual owners. These PMV operators are self-independent, but there are risks.

Honourable Members, you are here for our people. Several of us have busses, taxis and cars, but 75 per cent of Papua New Guineans are travelling by PMV busses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like the Department of Transport to build a workshop for the PMV busses. You do not have to tell them to be on the road for three years because you cannot afford to buy a bus. You have to build a workshop for the PMV busses. For example, for Lae and Mt Hagen, you have to build one workshop in Lae and the other one in Mt Hagen. These vehicles have to go through servicing unless if the busses operate for more than three years then you have the right to take action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am giving a brief before I ask my question. You are just talking only, you don't a bus. Please listen while I am explaining how we are feeling in providing these services to the people.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr WIN BAKRI DAKI – We are really facing hard time to transport people from province to province. When there is an accident, we have to pay for compensation for up to K100, 000 sometimes it's because of the failure of the Transport Department.

The Transport Department did not establish a proper workshop and they just award the bus operators permit without proper guidelines. There is no agreement, so in that manner, anybody just buys a bus and start to operate as PMV.

We are doing a very important job in the country. We take care of the lives of the people in the bus to every destination, because we as the PMV bus drivers are responsible for the lives of everyone in it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my questions are,

(1) Can the Minister build a workshop and give it to a particular company so that anyone buying a bus operates under that company?

Mr Solan Mirisim – Point of Order! I think the Member has to ask the government rather than asking the Minister to build his workshop. You must ask how the government can come in to assist the PMV drivers.

Maybe you were are a PMV driver before becoming a Member so you are speaking in that manner. Just ask your question since you are holding up the time so that other Members can get a chance to speak as well.

Thank you.

WIN BAKRI DAKI – Thank you, Minister for Forest. Let me ask my question.

When I refer to the Minister, it reflects the Government. The Minister is not different from the government, so whether you are a Minister or just a Member, you part of a government. Maybe your Point of Order is out of Order.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

10/07

Can the Minister provide a workshop and fuel subsidy?

Another policy you said was for transporting students, we have to accept half the bus fare.

(2) Do you provide the other half? Please provide subsidies for PMV buses, taxis and other public transport operations.

In Port Moresby as we speak, there are so many colorful taxis.

(3) Who is in control and regulating these taxis?

Please control the issuing of licenses, manage how these transports operate and manage them well.

Mr WILLIAM SAMB -Deputy Speaker, I am happy with the passionate question raised by the Member for Tambul-Nebilyer. It is good because he queried this from his heart and he represents a sector that plays a special and important role in our daily lives.

This sector of the community provides a key service in the community and we all benefit from their services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will dispute one of his comments, where he says the Government has not recognized this sector because if there was no recognition, there would be no roads for PMVs and taxis, and no licenses, so one must be considerate when making comments or statements.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

WILLIAM SAMB – He is one of the Members of this Parliament whom I have chosen to accompany me to visit stakeholders to collect such information so that we can make them known to RTA, or MVIL to address these important concerns.

In relation to providing workshops, I will not provide a workshop. We have to talk about these issues and find a good way forward. For example, we must make the ‘*Tulait, Tulait*’ concept illegal. And to make it illegal, we must have facilities in Lae, Goroka and Hagen, so that our road users and drivers learn to rest.

Service providers and the owners of businesses can calculate that into their fee structure so that the drivers are able to rest and move forward or return.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS - EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Motion (by **Mr Kevin Isifu**) put –

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent Question time being extended by 20 minutes.

Motion negatived.

Revive Village Record Book System

Mr KEVIN ISIFU – Mr Prime Minister, this is in regards to this government and the previous government spending of millions kina of public funds on information collection, management and dissemination.

11/07

Some of these money wasting programs are the current National Population Census, National Identification programs, the Common Roll update, which I must say, never seem to be updated at all despite a large sum of money being spent and pumped into all these programs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my question is,

(1) Can the Prime Minister recall that in September of 2017, he stood in for the former Prime Minister to launch a very important program called Village Record Book here at the National State Function room when I was the Minister for the Inter-Government Relation.

We thought this was the best information collection, recording and reporting, and dissemination tool for the people living in the villages, wards, LLGs, districts, and towns of our country.

This program would cost the Government K12 million to be managed by the Department of Provincial and Local Level Government office.

The village Record Book is the most practical tool to collect report and inform the Government on all the data that National Population, Electoral Commission and the National Statistics Office would need.

The common-roll update and even the NID registration process would rely on this baseline data which will be captured in the ward record books.

In a nutshell, Prime Minister, the village record book will do all that for the State instead of all the duplicated programs which are all trying to achieve the same purpose.

My question to the Prime Minister is,

(2) Can the Prime Minister agree that the ward record books is a better-established system of the Government where all the baseline data of the population is available through the 6300 ward records nationwide?

This program will be done at the minimal cost through a structured system of Government where the ward recorders and the councilors and our public servants are already paid to do the job.

(2) Can the Prime Minister guarantee that funding will be made available to roll-out this, and update of all the ward records?

This is a cheaper and available program for the population data collection exercise. Thank you.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Let me thank the Member for Wewak for asking one of the most intelligent and probing question using his former experience that gears towards assisting the Government in finding a better solution.

12/07

So let me place on record my appreciation for the former Minister in that sector, who serves despite being detached as a minister and is not sitting in the background doing nothing but using his exposure and experience in putting forward a the question that can assist us in finding the right answers going forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we just launched the Census 2020 which I assume will cost up to K200 million. In the retrospective, in the last few years, we had the NID program that consumed over K200 million. We have the common-roll update that continues to consume quite a substantial chunk of money and this has just become an event and not a systematic collection of data.

A one-stop event which once completed gets stuck somewhere and our country remains very deficient in good data. Systematic collection of those data that can be collated into better use for the planning of our country and for better use of every resource of our economy and to ensure we achieve sustainable and achievable development paths going forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Member's question is very important and nice, simply put.

I give assurance that the direction he's pointing is perhaps a sustainable and a better direction for us. I made a comment two days ago at the State Function room when witnessing the lounge of Community Development Centre and some of the plans that have been integrated, again another good work by former Ministers and current Minister continuing.

But the statement I made was , the central government just becomes an oversight to set the standard, set the policy set the direction and allow many of these programs to be embraced at the provinces and run at the districts and one of which is this our data collections for our census. Waigani will not effectively know how people are in our 6300 wards right across the country and collection of population data must be an on-going exercise as part of our activity every time.

Mr Speaker, this is not a small thing, it goes to the core of planning in determining exactly what we need to give to our people in as far as all service are concern. So, we've lacked this up till today. Let me give assurance to this House and to the Member concern.

We will embrace this part of having data collected at the wards which are actively participating to become part of our district structure and LLG structure so it is maintained. Data of population births, data of population deaths, data of population migration, and data of activities in the wards are combined into LLG data and combined into district become part of the provincial data.

During the launch of the Census 2020, I made a passing remark consistent to this view that it is not the central government that must go out to the districts and collect data. It must be the districts and provinces responsibility to collect and feed data to us.

So that is an inherent part of my view in life that Waigani becomes an overall policy setter at the macro-level and allow our programs to be run by not necessarily our departments in Waigani but departments or complementary structures that are in the province and districts.

So, let me assure the Member that what he has started when he was Minister, I agree we launched that program in the September 2017.

The village-based census or ward village recording system will be encourage and strengthened and we will link our census activities to be based out of collection by districts, LLGs and wards.

We have this intention also to ensure that our National Statistic Office (NSO) becomes the center where all data being collected are inputted into that organization.

13/07

We should have one unified population data so when it comes to the election process, the Electoral Commission picks from one live data that is available to define what is the common-roll is instead of trying to update the common-roll the eve of elections.

So, I will give assurance to this House and we will look into this processes of data collection and have one organisation that houses all these data which is National Statistic Office. I feel that National Statistics Office is the proper body that has data on everything in the country so that any organisation that needs the data can feed off that one database. There's a child being born every day and a person's life is being lost every day so the collection of data should be an updated activity that is happening as part of our public service system.

I think that is a cost effective and a better way is the Village Recording System.

I give assurance that we will work towards ensuring that process is activated and point National Census, NID and Common Roll Update to interface and interlink into one unified system that can serve our country better going into the future.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

MOTION BY LEAVE

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finchhafen-Minister for Communication and Energy) – I ask leave of the Parliament to move a motion without notice.

Leave granted

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent Notice No.88 of Government Business being called on forthwith.

PROBATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Davis Steven** and read a first time

Second Reading

Mr DAVIS STEVEN (Esa'ala – Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) – I move –

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and members of this honourable House. It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Probation Amended Bill 2018 that will amend the *Probation Act 1997*.

The Probation Service within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has two main services. The first is the management of non-custodial Orders and continuation of compensation orders imposed by the Courts and the Parole Board.

The second role is the rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders back into society.

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Mr Deputy Speaker, the Probation Service currently focuses on its first service in managing non-custodial orders due to high Court circuit's demand and as result it is neglecting its second most important service or co-function which is to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders back into society.

It is my priority to address this issue in my term as Minister for Justice and Attorney General. I will soon bring to this Parliament a specific rehabilitation legislation that will address this grey area in our country to discourage re-offending and to enable productive citizens who will contribute to nation building.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is also my desire that through the rehabilitation legislation that I anticipate that all the institutions and non-government actors providing rehabilitation programs will be registered and supervised by the Department of Justice and Attorney General. Just like the developed economies around the world, in other words, the benchmark within the regions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Probation (Amendment) 2018 amends the *Probation Act 1979* (the Act) by:

- a) correcting grammatical errors;
- b) inserting additional duties of probation officers and probationers;
- c) inserting a new section relating to liability in which the State will not be liable for the livelihood and/or demise of a probationer or an offender;
- d) repealing repetitive sections; and
- e) increasing penalty fees and term of imprisonment consistent with principles of proportionality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this Bill is necessary and it is imperative that it is passed by Parliament to enable updated and modern legislation that are consistent with other related legislations and removes unnecessary confusion in the interpretation of the *Act*.

This Bill will bring clarity to the roles of probation officers, volunteer probation officers and offenders alike. In this regard, our country is blessed by the support that churches are now providing as volunteer probation officers. This Bill will help recognise and crystalize that partnership. There have been Court challenges in the past due to uncertain interpretation of the Act which this Bill intends to correct. With that, I now commend the *Probation (Amendment) Bill 2018* to this honourable House.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Bill be now read a second time – agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

15/07

Third Reading

Bill, by leave read a third time.

**PARLIAMENTARY BIPARTISAN COMMITTEE ON BOUGAINVILLE – STATUS
OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOUGAINVILLE PEACE AGREEMENT
AND REFERENDUM – REPORT AND STATEMENT –
MOTION TO ADOPT REPORT**

Mr JOE LERA (Bougainville – Chairman of the Bi-Partisan Committee on Bougainville Matters) – Mr Deputy Speaker, I present:

The Report of the Parliamentary Bi-Partisan Committee on Bougainville Matters on the Status of the Implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the Referendum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move –

That the report and its recommendations be adopted.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker for giving me the opportunity to speak to the honourable Members on the report by the Parliamentary Bi-Partisan Committee on Bougainville Matters in this honourable Parliament.

This report covers matters that are important to our young country and our people of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, namely the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the Bougainville Referendum now scheduled for 23 November, 2019.

As the Chairman of the Bi-Partisan Committee, I am privileged and honoured to report to this House on the consultations the committee had conducted with our people in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the four regions of Papua New Guinea, in Kokopo for the New Guinea Islands, in Goroka for the Highlands, in Lae for Momase and in Port Moresby for the Southern region, from Saturday March 24 2019 to Tuesday April 30 2019.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I proceed, I must take this opportunity to wholeheartedly congratulate Honourable James Marape for his elevation to being the Eighth Prime Minister of our country in the May Meeting of this House. Congratulations to you Honourable Prime Minister, your family and the people of Tari-Pori.

16/07

I congratulate you, Honourable Prime Minister, your family and the people of Tari-Pori.

Mr Deputy Speaker, may I also use this opportunity to extend my gratitude, well wishes and to pay respect and tribute to the outgoing Prime Minister, Honourable Peter O'Neill, and members of his cabinet for providing us the steady leadership over the last seven years. I thank you, Honourable Peter O'Neill, your cabinet and your families for your contributions, especially in progressing the Bougainville issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there were 3 objectives of the consultations:

(1) To inform our people on the impending Bougainville Referendum which was initially scheduled to be held from October 12, 2019, with the issue of writs on August 16, 2019;

(2) To get an update on the progress of the implementation of the BPA; and,

(3) To obtain the people's views on the above two matters as well as on the future of Bougainville and PNG.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this committee was established in August 2014, nine years after the ABG was inaugurated in 2005 following the AROB election. It is now 14 years since then, that my committee had toured Bougainville and PNG to consult with the people on the Bougainville issue. This committee when established in 2014 was not operational until 2016 and 2017 when two visits were made to the AROB: the first from October 11 - 19, 2016; and the second from March 18 - 22, 2017. From these two visits, a report was compiled and was eventually tabled only early this year.

This recent visit is the third for the committee to continue to play its oversight role, to ensure that the Government of PNG and the ABG together with their agencies were and are now playing their roles in the establishment and operation of the ABG and the preparations for the referendum consistent with the BPA and the PNG constitution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Section 118 of our *Constitution* stipulates that there shall be a system of permanent and other parliamentary committees to cover all major fields of the activities of the National Government in order to ensure full and active participation by backbenchers in the work of the Parliament and of government.

If the committees are to carry out their constitutional duties and responsibilities to enforce good governance under our parliamentary democracy, they must be properly and adequately resourced and funded. My committee faced funding challenges during its consultations and this needs to be addressed by the government. Despite this handicap, our work has been done and my commendation goes to members of my committee and the Parliamentary Committee Secretariat for their support.

Mr Deputy Speaker, during the committee's consultations in the AROB, seven meetings were held with about 3 600 people and leaders of Bougainville in the three regions of North, Central and South Bougainville. More people would have attended had it not been for the transportation difficulty. However, for those who could not attend, the meetings were broadcast live by the *Bougainville NBC Radio* and the local new *Dawn FM*, so they would have heard the proceedings. The committee also conducted consultations in the four PNG regions.

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Mr Deputy Speaker, in the consultations, the committee heard from all sections of the community (the leaders, the ABG representatives, the women, the youth and the ex-combatants in the AROB) and leaders, common people and students in the four regions of PNG. Consultations were held on these three pillars of the BPA: the autonomy arrangements, the Referendum and the weapons disposal plan, and how they are viewed on the ground in their implementation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in addition to our consultations, the committee also consulted and obtained useful and relevant information from these sources:

The two reports on the joint review of Bougainville's Autonomy arrangements by the PNG Government and the ABG, carried out and approved by the joint supervisory body (JSB) in 2013, and in 2018;

The presentations made by Dr Thomas Webster, the team leader of the National Research Institute Bougainville Referendum Research Project (NRIBRRP) during our consultations; and these eight reports sanctioned by the NRIRRP research team:

- (1) Communication issues. (Issues paper and comm. strategy);
 - (2) Independence referendums; history, practice and outcomes;
 - (3) Administration of referendums: a comparative study of Independence Referendums;
 - (4) Options for Bougainville's autonomy arrangements: a study from a global perspective;
 - (5) Financing for fiscal autonomy: fiscal self-reliance in Bougainville.
 - (6) What are possible outcomes and issues?
 - (7) Progress in implementation of the peace agreement and issues for the referendum;
- and,

(8) What is the peace agreement and how did it come about?

This report contains information from all these sources which formed the basis of our recommendations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at this juncture, I would like to thank the NRIBRRP team leader, Dr Thomas Webster, and his team for assisting with logistics on the ground and for accompanying the committee on its consultation tour.

The NRIBRRP team conducted awareness on the Bougainville peace agreement and the referendum ahead of the committee hearings which were conducted after his awareness exercises at the same venues. This arrangement worked very well for the committee and I extend my gratitude to Dr Thomas Webster and his team of eminent and seasoned researchers for making invaluable contribution to the committee's work. Without the NRI support, this consultation would not have been as successful as it has turned out to be.

My committee also extends its heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our friends and members of the referendum, peace, reconciliation and unification committee (RPRUC) of the Bougainville House of Representatives; Chairman Honourable Joseph Watawi, the Members; Honourable Marcellin Kokeai, Honourable Isikiel Massat and Honourable Steven Popesi who accompanied the committee in its consultations in the AROB. Except for Honourable Steven Popesi, the other members accompanied the committee in its PNG regional consultations. The RPRUC Members made very useful contributions to the consultations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to firstly bring to the Parliament's attention, the views of our people both in the AROB and the PNG regions.

18/07

From the Autonomous Region of Bougainville consultations, the committee received these views:

- There is concern that the implementation of the Bougainville peace agreement, in terms of autonomy arrangements, weapons disposal, and constitutionally guaranteed referendum have been delayed for almost 12 years after the endorsement of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001, and the first ABG election in 2005;
- The two governments (Government of PNG and ABG) have failed in dispensing their responsibilities under the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the PNG and the Bougainville Constitutions;
- Public servants in both Governments have failed to implement important joint

government decisions and resolutions of the joint supervisory body with regard to Bougainville Peace Agreement implementation;

- There should be improved and strong partnership/relationship between the two Governments and all stakeholders on the preparations towards the upcoming referendum and the post-referendum period;

- There is currently no effective cooperation between the two governments' officials;

- The Government of Papua New Guinea is using delay tactics and not releasing funding on a timely basis to facilitate the implementation of Bougainville Peace Agreement and the preparations toward achieving self-determination through the referendum on 23 November, 2019.

The PNG Government is purposely and excessively withholding money that is meant for the referendum preparation, and this is suspiciously perceived by Bougainvilleans as a sinister delay tactic by senior officials of the PNG Government so as to frustrate Bougainville's journey towards self-determination or Independence;

- Many people are unsure and insecure as to what the future holds or will become after the referendum outcome is known and what becomes of the outcome of the ratification process when Parliament has the final say;

- Bougainville must obtain Independence. It has abundant natural capital and resources to harness to sustain economic independence;

- As Bougainvilleans we are practicing now to be self-sufficient and self-reliant and training ourselves to live as a group of people in an independent nation;

- The Bougainville people have a history and cultural identity that makes them extraordinary and unique with these cultural attributes and values, therefore attaining freedom through Independence will realize this uniqueness as an ethnic group in a new island;

- Several church denominations said that the churches are playing an important role in the BPA towards training people to become better citizens of an independent Bougainville;

- There is still confusion over these definitions: *Autonomy*, *Greater Autonomy* and *Independence*;

- The Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) must clearly define *Greater Autonomy & Higher Autonomy*, and explain the two levels of autonomy and the different types of funding for each level;

- There is confusion among the Bougainville as the National Government had placed a heavy burden on the ABG to prepare for the referendum when it should be a shared

responsibility in terms of funding and manpower;

- It was queried whether there will be another referendum if the current referendum to be held on 23 November for Independence fails;

- There is concern as to why the PNG Parliament will decide on the referendum outcome when the Bougainville people have already decided on their political future through the ballot box;

- The majority of the people want the outcome of the referendum implemented swiftly without delay; and,

- A total of 35 per cent of Bougainville population who were born during the crisis and or growing as school age now are in the category of "lost generation" who are illiterate and cannot read and write, therefore, the referendum awareness for them is paramount to express their rights in the referendum.

19/07

Mr Deputy Speaker, from the four PNG regions, these views were received:

- Not enough awareness exercises have been carried out throughout Papua New Guinea to inform the general public on what entails the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

- Bougainvilleans living in other parts of Papua New Guinea must be given the opportunity to enroll in the referendum roll to vote.

- The PNG Government and the ABG must establish a monitoring group to specifically assist with security issues;

- The reconciliation ceremony between Bougainvilleans and Papua New Guinea, especially the Defence Force and the Police, must be held prior to the referendum;

- Voter statistics collected in the past national and Bougainville elections have revealed that voter turnout in Bougainville is very poor so steps must be taken to ensure a higher voter turnout to vote in the referendum;

- There is no need to rush into getting independence for Bougainville;

- Both governments must build infrastructure like schools and colleges to educate the people on how to run the government of Bougainville in the future;

- The focus of the new Bougainville government must be on raising its own revenue to have fiscal autonomy and to fund its own recurrent priorities;

- Many lost generation Bougainvilleans are illiterate and therefore don't fully understand autonomy or independence options on the referendum ballot;

- Give independence to Bougainvilleans. And Papua New Guinea must assist in every way possible to maintain the welfare of Bougainvilleans; and,

- The Bougainville copper mine built PNG's economy and human resources so it is now PNG's turn to give back to Bougainville.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is worth noting that the people's views are similar to those echoed in the 2 JBS reviews by both governments in 2013 and 2018 respectively, and further, even the NRI reports also draw attention to some of the issues raised by the people.

The fact that the people still hold these views after the JSB reviews of 2013 and 2018 with their recommendations, means that the recommendations from these reviews are yet to be implemented.

The important point is that; there is common ground and general agreement that important provisions in the Bougainville peace agreement and the Papua New Guinea constitution have not been implemented and this has implications for the preparation for and the conduct of the referendum.

For the Bougainville Peace Agreement, there are many Bougainvilleans and Papua New Guineans at all levels of our communities, who have not read, nor understand what it entails.

My committee is assuming that some Members of this Honourable House are also in the same situation, we still do not know much about the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the issues surrounding Bougainville, yet it is the Members of this House who will decide on the referendum when the result is brought before us. I, therefore, appeal to and encourage each and every member to understand the Bougainville Peace Agreement and our role in implementing it.

The Joint Supervisory Body chaired jointly by the Prime Minister and the ABG President, with equal membership from both governments, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement

To this regard, the leaders and officials of both the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville Peace Agreement, who in their joint pioneering efforts, have demonstrated the strength of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in the last 18 years by achieving these significant milestones.

(1) The coming into effect of the constitutional arrangements for autonomy and referendum;

(2) Implementation of the weapons disposal plan contained in the Bougainville Peace Agreement

(3) The holding of the first and subsequent elections of the Autonomous Bougainville Government and establishment of government structures;

20/07

(4) The Organic Law on Peace-Building in Bougainville Autonomous Government and Bougainville Referendum in 2002;

(5) The Constitution of the ABG having been adopted by the Bougainville; Constituent Assembly at Buin 12 November, 2004;

(6) The establishment of structures: a legislature, an executive government and a judiciary (ombudsman and electoral commission, etc);

(7) Establishment of a 3-tier Government System;

(8) Elections for the 33 constituencies to comprise and constitute AROB House of Representatives (Parliament) (2005, 2010 and 2015);

(9) Establishment of institutions such as the Bougainville Constitutional Commission, Bougainville Electoral Commission, Bougainville Ombudsman, and Bougainville Auditor General;

(10) Drawdown of powers and functions;

(11) Establishment of the Bougainville Public Service;

(12) Implementation of the weapons disposal plan contained in the Bougainville Peace Agreement;

(13) Continuing peace reconciliation ceremonies inside Bougainville, amongst the communities, between groups in Bougainville and between groups from Bougainville and groups in Papua New Guinea;

(14) Successful planning of the Referendum by a technical committee from both Papua New Guinea Government and Autonomous Region of Bougainville Government;

(15) Creation of an Independent Electoral Body: (BRC) to plan, manage, oversee and administer the Referendum, and deliver results to both Governments;

(16) Creation of the Bougainville Strategic Development Plan 2015-2022;

(17) Under the joint weapons disposal secretariat:

17.1 - The four phase weapons disposal plan (succession to the weapons disposal plan);

17.2 - Initiative on verification of weapons disposal in constituencies that disposed weapons by destruction and monumentation or collection and storage;

17.3 - Veterans affairs rehabilitation and reintegration;

17.4 - Autonomous Region of Bougainville's Referendum ready constituency initiative;

17.5 - Declared 28 Referendum ready Constituencies through reconciliation and peace ceremonies;

17.6 - Benchmarks to fulfil the two conditions in the Bougainville Peace Agreement: weapons disposal & good governance to set Referendum Dates

Mr Deputy Speaker, while the two governments, through the JSB, were satisfied with the first joint review in 2013, three years behind the due date, and the subsequent one in 2018 covering the period 2013 to 2018, both governments have not complied with the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the Papua New Guinea Commission Constitution, which require that:

- the reports of all reviews shall be tabled in the National Parliament and the Bougainville Legislature;

- in addition to the above reviews, the two governments shall hold annual, wide-ranging consultations on the general operation of the autonomy arrangements; and,

- unless the two governments agree to some other method, these consultations shall be held through the JSB;

In all, Mr Deputy Speaker, these reporting and consultation mechanisms have not been honoured by both governments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to the constitutionally guaranteed Bougainville Referendum, "the Bougainville Peace Agreement provides for the right, guaranteed in the National Constitution, for a referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's future political status."

What is clear is that the Bougainville Referendum is constitutionally mandated and guaranteed under the Papua New Guinea and Bougainville Constitutions.

Furthermore, the choices available in the referendum will include a separate independence for Bougainville.

The referendum is an internationally recognised process to help inform the final decision on Bougainville's future political status: independence, or greater autonomy.

21/07

Mr Deputy Speaker, to manage, prepare and conduct the referendum, the Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) was established in August 2017 by both governments as an independent commission. Until May of 2019, the BRC has been operating in a dire state of insolvency and unpreparedness due primarily to the unavailability of funding from the GOPNG. Delays in funding and in the operational establishment of the BRC have accumulated over the years and have already negatively impacted on the referendum preparations.

Based on the committee's assessment, the preparations towards the referendum date of November 23, 2019, is still a matter of concern as things appear to be still up in the air. If this referendum has to take place as scheduled, it requires and demands active engagement of both governments. Despite these funding hiccups, the referendum has to commence as scheduled, and no doubt the BRC is hard at work to deliver it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we should all be aware by now that the referendum outcome is non-binding.

The outcome of the referendum will be subject to ratification (final decision-making authority) of the national parliament.

The process to follow after the referendum outcome is known, is that the BRC will return the writ to the head of state, the governor-general, then, according to the BPA, the two governments will consult each other over the result of the referendum. Thereafter, the result will be tabled in this Parliament (as the final authority to endorse the referendum outcome) for ratification. In the event Parliament for some telling reason does not ratify due to disagreements, the existing legal arrangements under the BPA will continue until a final decision is reached.

Mr Deputy Speaker, considering all of the information we have gathered from our consultations and the reviews conducted by the JSB, the committee draws the following conclusions:

(1) The consultations was a good opportunity and very timely for the committee which successfully informed the people on the Bougainville Referendum and the BPA, though more needs to be done to bring these information to more people, especially the voters, prior to the referendum;

(2) The consultation was successful in receiving an update on the BPA and the referendum on the ground in AROB from the people and the Bougainville leaders; and

(3) The consultation was successful in receiving wide ranging views on the future of Bougainville and PNG, though it was obvious from the views of the people of AROB that most Bougainvilleans who spoke, advocated independence for Bougainville.

Mr Deputy Speaker, again, based on the views received from the people in the AROB and the four regions of PNG, and based on our assessment of the two reviews conducted by the JSB and also our assessment of the 8 eight reports prepared by the NRI research team, the committee makes the following recommendations:

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(1) That the Government of PNG (GoPNG) and the ABG present the reports of the two reviews conducted by the JSB in 2013 and 2018 respectively to the Papua New Guinea Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives consistent with the BPA and the PNG *Constitution*; and that the relevant recommendations in these reviews be implemented by the JSB and/or the relevant agencies;

(2) That the GoPNG and the ABG take serious consideration of the views of the people that have been conveyed during the consultation process and jointly take steps to address them, where necessary, before the referendum;

(3) That the GoPNG and the ABG hold wide-ranging consultations on the general operation of the autonomy arrangements; and unless the two governments agree to some other method, these wider consultations be held through the JSB both in the AROB and PNG.

(4) That the GoPNG and the ABG jointly and clearly develop and agree on the definitions of "independence", "autonomy" and/or "higher autonomy" and develop a joint public awareness and educational program disseminated through the public and the private sector institutions, including the mass media, the Social Media and the Print Media.

(5) That the GoPNG and the ABG, through the JSB, develop a comprehensive program of actions as required by the BPA and the PNG and Bougainville constitutions to ensure that all formal governance structures deemed to be established, or partially established and not functional, be made to operate adequately under the legal framework for which they were to function. These institutions and structures, are not limited to, but are identified as: the Bougainville Autonomy system of courts; the Bougainville Ombudsman; the Auditor General; the two lower-tiers of government the council of elders and the village assemblies; the Bougainville public service; the Bougainville police service; and the auxiliary police.

(6) That the GoPNG and the ABG to clarify the current status of Bougainville's autonomy arrangements as envisioned in the BPA and that since the outcome of the referendum is non-binding and subject to negotiation between the two governments, that a comprehensive post referendum plan be developed on the political status scenarios, such as under high autonomy status, independent statehood, and a full integration in a federal form of statehood.

(7) That an extensive review be carried out of powers and functions yet to be drawn down with a timeline for drawdown and resource needs identified and a management plan be developed for implementation now and the post referendum period through a joint inter-government body responsible for monitoring and supervision.

(8) That the GoPNG and the ABG ensure that a full compliance audit is undertaken on the exercise of the transfer of powers and functions, the legal and policy processes employed and identify the strengths and weaknesses, and develop a management program for implementation to go beyond the post referendum period.

(9) That the GoPNG and the ABG address "serious capacity issues" as a matter of priority across the autonomous Bougainville administration in order to enable the ABG to have skilled human resources and the capacity to, not only drawdown powers and functions, but to enable the ABG administration to make the autonomy arrangements under the BPA to function differently from the Provincial Government system.

(10) That the GoPNG and the ABG develop a strong joint inter-governmental relationship by restructuring the current national coordinating body for Bougainville affairs, and to work with the development partners to provide adequate skilled manpower and resources required to implement the BPA, especially the legal and technical aspects of autonomy arrangement beyond the referendum date and during the post referendum period.

23/07

(11) That the GoPNG and the ABG to establish the Bougainville Fiscal Commission to be manned by "independent expertise" to review the finances, the fiscal regimes and the revenue generation measures and initiatives and become the sole monitoring and supervisory agency for the economy and finances of the ABG.

(12) That the GoPNG and the ABG, through the JSB, conduct a comprehensive Review of the financial arrangements which partially guarantee grant funding while Bougainville moves to fiscal reliance using a wide range of taxation measures. This review to

take account of the four kinds of grants under the BPA (the recurrent unconditional grants, restoration and development grants (RDG), the specific purpose grants including the recurrent grants for policing, and the one-off establishment grant), the formula for calculation and the taxation regimes, and to recommend new revenue measures and initiatives for Bougainville to achieve fiscal autonomy within the next 5 years (2020 - 2025) commencing on the eve of the next ABG elections in June 2020.

(13) That the GoPNG and the ABG ensure that the 33 Bougainville constituencies under the supervision of the JSB and the joint weapons disposal secretariat are declared "referendum ready", the community peace and reconciliation ceremonies are ongoing, the BRA and Me'ekamui weapons disposal plan including other militants and outlying factions has been effected in the peace process and that all known (documented) and residual weapons and armoury have been disposed through methods and technics devised by the joint weapons disposal Secretariat.

(14) That the issues raised in the current eight NRI reports and any future relevant research reports on the referendum and the BPA be widely disseminated to the people prior to the referendum; and,

(15) That the Bipartisan Committee on Bougainville be directly funded by the GOPNG to effectively carry out its oversight role on the implementation of the BPA and related matters between now and immediately following the referendum on November 23, 2019.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask this Honourable House to accept my report and to endorse the committee's recommendations as presented here and also those contained in the report.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker and the Members of Parliament, for giving me this opportunity to speak on and about Bougainville.

Mr PUKA TEMU (Abau – Minister for Bougainville Affairs) – I move –

That the Parliament take note of the paper.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as Minister for Bougainville Affairs and on behalf of the Government, I wish to thank the Honourable Joe Lera, Chairman of the Bipartisan Committee on Bougainville Affairs, and his committee members for the very comprehensive report to this Honourable House on the status of the implementation on Bougainville Peace Agreement and the referendum.

I want to express my sincere thank you to the honourable Chairman for the wonderful report.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the work of the committee in the Ninth Parliament, led by the Chairman, Honourable William Powi, Governor of Southern Highlands and Deputy Chairman, Honourable Joe Sungi, Member for Nuku, and the other committee members of the Ninth Parliament who continued to the Tenth Parliament, with the change of some of the committee members, which included the Honourable Isi Henry Leonard, Member for Samarai -Murua and Honourable Thomas Pelika and Honourable John Simon.

24/07

When the government changed this year, we reformed the Parliamentary Committee with the current Chairman being the Honourable Joe Lera, who has presented this wonderful report, and new committee members that the Parliament approved.

When the Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in 2001, and the JSB became the coordinating body between the two governments, the issue of the sensitivity of Bougainville was one of those issues that was retained in this Chamber until the Ninth Parliament when the Governor of Southern Highlands, Honourable William Powi, became the Chairman.

The former Chairman passionately pleaded to us that the Bougainville issue must no longer be given that sensitive nature, but that the nation must now begin to have a national conversation about Bougainville. I thank the then Chairman and his committee for taking the bull by the horn by visiting the four regions of the country to discuss the Bougainville issue, which emanated in this very comprehensive report.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to assure the Chairman and the House that I will make sure that those two reports that were alluded to by the Chairman are presented to this Honourable House. The issues that have been highlighted in the report are real issues and I must say that because the nation was exposed to this brand-new arrangement called Autonomy. And following the crisis, I must say that there was a sitting period where the bureaucracy and the political leadership really did not know how to handle it well, and therefore, the report has highlighted many of the deficiencies.

Therefore 16 recommendations have been made in that report to this Honourable House. And they include three key areas; autonomy arrangement, fiscal economy and the referendum. As highlighted by the report, the autonomy arrangement did not work out well. For example, successive national governments led by their prime ministers and the ministers were supposed to work closely with their colleagues in Bougainville to arrange for transfer of

powers that were identified, including helping Bougainville to establish a bill to pass on the Floor of their Parliament and the administrative arrangement arrangements, but that did not take place as expected and they are now being highlighted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, so the arrangement really did not progress as expected. The issues of governance which also have been highlighted were also part of our sitting process. In presenting my statement I gave everyone a copy of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. If you had taken time to read it, you would have realized – and it has been echoed by our international friends - that the autonomy arrangement we gave to Bougainville included more powers than what other nations have given to the other countries when they asked for autonomy.

25/07

So, we gave a lot of powers under the agreement. In the process we were also going through our own arrangement as well. We went through the new *Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments*. The year 1977 was the first experience. In 1995 the *Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments* was passed on the Floor of Parliament. Then in 2001, six years after the new Organic Law we went with the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

So, Autonomy came in while we were trying to arrange how to develop further powers for provinces and local level governments, and you can imagine the lack of priority and the confusion not only at the political level but also at the bureaucratic level.

This report highlights the realities that we had faced during the processes but, Mr Deputy Speaker that is now ‘water under the bridge’.

But, we have that hindsight experience of the discrepancies and the mistakes that we have made under the Autonomous arrangement but I think with that hindsight experience we are in a better position now to look at the future under the referendum arrangement which we are going to conclude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the Parliament for allowing the Grand Chief Dr John Momis, President of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Government, to address this Honorable House last Thursday.

I thank the Speaker, I thank every one of you for giving that rare opportunity only given to officials from outside the country. But, we did a special thing by agreeing to allow the President of Bougainville to come and address us last Thursday.

I hope all of us have taken the strong message particularly on the position and the status and the experience of the President of Bougainville, and how he took us to the history way back in 1941 right through to the crisis period in the 80s and finally the Bougainville Peace Agreement early in August 2001. He also stated how we are preparing for the referendum. In 29 of September the writs will be issued and in 23 of November we will be voting. This includes the efforts that the bipartisan committee has made in creating awareness throughout the country. And the efforts that we are making under what we call 'joint road-thought.'

My counterpart and my former predecessor Honorable William Samb and I had taken the lead in the 'joint road-thought' with the Honorable Albert Punau in Bougainville and those road-thoughts are creating more awareness and they will be continuing even right after the issue of writs.

Those of you who came yesterday at the presentation organized by the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Committee at the State Function Room, would have noted that after the issue of writs, it's not going to be a campaign time but more of an awareness program.

There is no time period. You don't have to wait for the writs to be issued to go out and create awareness. We are beginning today. We began long time ago and that is the spirit of the Bougainville referendum.

It's different from the normal election process because we will be continuing to create awareness and I pay credits to the former Bipartisan and Parliamentary Committees, the Chairman and the current committees who are doing an excellent job.

I hope that after the President's statement, we are fully aware of where we are now, as well as gaining from the briefing yesterday at the State Function Room where the Bougainville Referendum Commission made a presentation on their preparedness of the referendum.

The Chief referendum officer told me yesterday that they were glad that both Government allowed six weeks extension. This will allow them to properly do the referendum common roll and give time for those Bougainvilleans on the mainland, Solomon Islands and Australia, particularly those in Brisbane and Cairns to enroll.

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They are now enrolling so we are now geared up for the referendum vote on the week beginning 23 November, and I hope that all of us are very well aware of the ratification processes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have requested the United Nations to help us when we come back in the October Sitting of Parliament in terms of awareness for Members of Parliament on the rectification process. This includes the period after voting is concluded and the Chief Referendum Officer or the Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission hands over the result to the Governor General. How do we announce it in the Floor of Parliament? How is going to be announced at the Constitution Assembly in Bougainville?

Mr Deputy Speaker, what does it mean when we say it is a non-binding referendum? I It means, as President Momis stated, we are going to sit down, consult and negotiate. Even if they ask for independence, the majority votes are for independence from the referendum.

Our leaders in 2001 recognised that the National Parliament which is the Parliament of Papua New Guinea including Bougainville has the final authority. This is why the final ratification was allowed under the Bougainville Peace Agreement and that non-binding nature of the referendum was also allowed for under the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

So when the final negotiation outcome is brought to the Floor of Parliament for final ratification, the decision of the National Parliament must be received by Bougainvilleans and by people around the world and in Papua New Guinea.

Our commitment under the Bougainville Peace Agreement is to do everything under peaceful means to maintain peace. We do not want to go back to the crisis period ever again. So many people lost their lives and so that is the spirit of the peace agreement that all these processes, the referendum, the weapons disposal - and I want to say at this stage that only two weeks ago, I visited the ex-combatants in Panguna where they showed me 57 firearms that were handed over. And last week, they did what we called the containment, they locked all those firearms up to guarantee the security of the referendum process and guarantee the security of the voting.

The ex-combatants who were not part of the peace agreement have recognized the Bougainville Peace Agreement and that they are going to fully participate in the referendum process. We are now allowing the ABG and their various faction groups in Bougainville to continue the reconciliation program. They have advised us that once they have concluded their reconciliation program then we will hold the National Reconciliation Program. The National Reconciliation Program will begin in Kokopo. We will bring one or two widows of our soldiers here and from Bougainville and have a ceremony in Kokopo and from there, we will fly over to Arawa and most likely go to Panguna and we then reconcile. The churches have agreed to lead the National Reconciliation Program.

The Parliament allow the President to come and address us on Thursday and we been advised when our Prime Minister visits Bougainville next week on 12 September 2019, their Parliament will also allow our Prime Minister to address them as well.

And that is part of our continuous building relationships process that there is a greater understanding amongst the two of us that we are one country. But under our constitutional arrangement prescribed under the Bougainville Peace Agreement, we have given autonomous government to one part of our country.

27/07

And as a result of the crisis, which was the worst in our history and worst in the region after World War 2, we have agreed to let the Bougainvilleans express their opinion on their political future on 23 November, 2019.

I hope that those of us here on the Floor of Parliament will take the time to follow the lead of the Bipartisan Committee at our time as Ministers leading our departments and even the Opposition Leader paying a visit to Bougainville. It's not too late, these things can be done as part of building our relationships.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one area that I would like to highlight is the issue of the fiscal economy that they have highlighted in the report. The Restoration Development Grant issue is one of the areas that over the years since the agreement was signed both Governments have not agreed to as to the value of the Restoration Development Grant. As highlighted in the report we have not been able to give the appropriate amount that was guaranteed in the *Constitution*.

So, in the last JSB there was an agreement by both governments under the leadership of the former Prime Minister, Mr Peter O'Neill, and the current President that we would bring an outside advisor from United Nations to give the final interpretation and valuation of the Restoration Development Grant.

I would like to inform the Parliament that the report is before us. As Minister for Bougainville Affairs, I have consulted with the Prime Minister and I am now consulting with both the Treasurer, his team and the Finance Minister so that we can bring this final report to the Buin JSB on 14 September this year where the final agreement can be made. This is so that the first reflection of the value of the Restoration Development Grant can be included in the beginning of 2020 and a timeframe under which we will be able to capably and

retrospectively in the future Budget restore the fiscal capability of Bougainville as required under the *Constitution*.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, we have made a lot of progress more recently, although we have wasted a lot of time in the past 18 year. I think over the years since 2014 we have really dulled up the issue of Bougainville.

Beginning with the former Chairman of the Bipartisan Committee, now the current chairman, and now I am the Minister for Bougainville Affairs, originally led by my predecessor, I hope that we the leaders of the Tenth Parliament are now more aware of what the Bougainville Peace Agreement is and how we are going to participate.

On the awareness issue, I just want to inform the House that apart from the fiscal awareness that we have done in Bougainville and we are now going to be doing the last roadshow with my counterpart. We have not covered the Atolls yet so we will be doing that next week. We will also cover three other areas that we did not go to but in my program we will complete all of those places before the writs are issued. But an ongoing awareness program must continue. This is something that the Bipartisan Committee Chairman and I must discuss to work together and continue this awareness program to create a better understanding of what independence is and what greater autonomy is.

28/07

On the ratification process, Parliament is the final authority and whatever Parliament decides in the negotiated outcome towards a new relationship and however we call it must be well received. Those are the kinds of awareness that are needed right at the moment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish this report was presented to this Parliament seven years ago and that we had a Bipartisan Committee that was pro-active so that there would be some sort of recommendations like the 16 recommendations that are before the Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the recommendations made by the Chairman and he states and I quote, 'I ask that the Parliament accept my report and endorse my committee's recommendations as presented here.' I urge the Parliament as a whole to accept this report and also accept all the recommendations because they will be very valuable for not only building our relationship with Bougainville but also because autonomous issues are being raised by other leaders from other provinces.

As a nation I believe we have to institutionalise an autonomous government system so that we know how to handle autonomy so that we can give more powers down to all the

provinces. Our Prime Minister is already talking about creating 22 economies with delegation and transfer of more powers right across.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those are the structures that we as a nation must begin to build so that it is easier to manage unlike the first time when autonomy was given to Bougainville public servants and political leaders did not know how to handle it and there was a prolonged teething period.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as Minister for Bougainville Affairs, I want to assure the Honourable Parliament and our people that the work that we are doing, particularly the awareness program, the National Research Institute-led analysis invoking consultants around the world who have deep knowledge of constitutional autonomous arrangements around the world to help us guide us in the negotiation process. So right now we are going to establish a permanent secretariat and we have agreed that there will be one secretariat serving the two negotiating teams so that we continue the spirit of the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

As I stated in my last parliamentary statement, the outcome post referendum must still be a joint creation.

Mr JOE SUNGI (Nuku) – Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Chairman and Regional Member for Bougainville and also acknowledge the efforts put together by the former Chairman, Honourable William Powi, and of course the new Chairman, former Minister, the current Minister.

The new Minister for Bougainville Affairs has taken office in this very short time and has moved very fast in what we currently have now on the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the Bougainville Referendum. I also acknowledge the Prime Minister in having confidence in Sir Puka and boldly appointing him as the Minister for Bougainville Affairs.

I also acknowledge the Prime Minister in having confidence in Sir Puka and boldly appointing him as the Minister for Bougainville Affairs.

I also acknowledge the Members of Bougainville both past and present leaders for their great contributions in the likes of Deputy Opposition Leader, Honourable Timothy Masiu, the Regional Member for Bougainville, our Senior Honourable Joe Lera and Member for North Bougainville, Honourable William Dakin and Honourable Sam Akoitai.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as member of the Committee myself and having a lot of relationship with Bougainvilleans our ultimate outcome that all of us desire is basically for

Bougainville not to break away from Papua New Guinea. That is the general feeling and we expect the Prime Minister and the Government to make sure of this.

29/07

There are two windows of opportunity, one is very, very short, before the issue of writs and the other is after the referendum that is going to be bit longer. For these two windows of opportunity to be realised I think the government of Papua New Guinea must work very closely with our Members from Bougainville in the current Parliament.

There is a lot of work to be done with them. Ministers must listen to them, consult with them and move as fast as we can within this very short time.

I'd like to commend the Prime Minister for bringing the NEC to Bougainville next week and more so to Buka. When the NEC goes there I hope some brilliant ideas and decisions can be reached there. I appeal to the Cabinet Ministers to support the Prime Minister to give whatever support he can give within this short time, announcement and at the same time action. Not only announcements without action. That is the first window of opportunity.

Campaign as I see it is basically awareness. It is the projects to be implemented. The sealing of Kokopau to Arawa Road, those infrastructure that needs to be re-built, some machines must work on the roads and some kind of work must be done. That is the essence of campaigning that we are now talking about. If we speak only on paper these may not eventuate. So, I'd like to appeal to our government that within this short period on time some work has to be done.

I know the Prime Minister has already taken that on board because when we talk about campaigning it is similar to politics. You want to recontest your seat and to win you election you will not waste your time campaigning without any tangible result of what you have done over the last five years.

So, basically on the part of Bougainville I see that as Members of Parliament we need to support our current Members of Parliament from Bougainville.

The President has spoken. You heard his message very loud and you and you have already concluded what his thoughts are. His thoughts are that they want to see things happen. They are human beings and we are dealing with human beings. They know that if you are really interested in them, they want to see action.

One relevant issue we noticed when we visited was the capacity of Bougainville administration itself. They have a serious problem of capacity in terms of how they will be able to manage themselves in terms because most of the Bougainvilleans who are now serving in the administration were actually at the crisis themselves. They also suffer from post-traumatic disorder so how do you expect them to clearly perform their duties.

So, I would like to suggest, Mr Deputy Speaker that once the Prime Minister and the NEC goes and make some announcements next week there must be a project implementation and management team of professionals put together and they should implement those projects outside of the ABG Administration. So they will run with these projects and actual tangible work must take place in terms of real infrastructure.

When we visited they said you are saying it but where is it. I brought my LLG presidents and we spent two nights in Siwai. All my LLG presidents wanted to go and experience how they feel in South Bougainville.

I saw that we have to do the work and not expect Bougainville Administration to implement those projects. We need to put up a team together, an oversight team of engineers, professionals. Put them there and give them the money and the tasks and start immediately.

Do not worry about the referendum. It will take place. But we have a bigger window of opportunity and that is after the outcome. When the referendum has been conducted and the results come out, if they vote for independence, that's okay, don't panic. Go ahead and implement the projects. You as national government continue to do your work because they are humans. Later if we complete the projects and things work out fine, eventually they'll say Oh we made a mistake and voted for independence. We should be a part of Papua New Guinea.

So, I want to encourage the government is this way. Even after the referendum and the vote for independence we still aggressively implement and restore fully Bougainville. You will change the mindsets of the people. Even though they have already voted for independence but they will change depending on how you work.

That is my appeal because I noticed that when we went and sat with them I spent a lot of time talking to them and understood very well that what we need to do is to make sure that we do our part.

30/07

Forget the past. That has already gone. We have these two windows of opportunity.

When the Prime Minister and the NEC go to Bougainville next week, it is a timely intervention. Go and make announcements, and at the same time put the think-tank together, it is not a think tank for chatting in conference rooms but rather one of action. Bring in the best engineers, mobilize this team so that they can implement the project for Bougainville.

Do not depend on Bougainville Administration to implement, they will not implement. They are now at a time were, they are not thinking right, because Bougainville is just months away from referendum.

Let us leave them to concentrate on the referendum while we do their work by implementing projects in Bougainville. Then after the referendum, when the results are out, we'll manage that.

While we have the good ideas, I would like us as a Government and I am appealing to the Government, I know the Prime Minister has already taken that on board and let us continue to do what we are supposed to be doing for them.

Even if they vote for Independence, they will still see how serious we are in terms of making sure that, we do not see Bougainville as a breakaway province or another region. It is part of Papua New Guinea and it will always remain an integral part of this country. So we continue to implement projects and make sure that we do our part, as a way of campaigning and telling people of Bougainville that they are still an integral part of this country.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr ALLAN BIRD (East Sepik) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Now the brothers and sisters in Bougainville have grievances which they brought to us for consultations early this year has made me feel quite concerned that over the last eight or ten years, we have wasted a lot of opportunities. I could recall one of the statements made by our Prime Minister saying that, we have been lazy.

I think that is relevant also to Bougainville, we have been lazy. We have been lazy all this time and at the last minute when the vote is about to take place we are beginning to step on the accelerator.

As for myself, the way we do things in my area is different. If you are interested in somebody, clan or tribe, you will have to show your interest by giving them a pig. How they divide the pig is entirely up to them. Our custom here in Papua New Guinea, we just give and not dictate how they divide the pig to them.

For me, I totally agree with the grievances of the Leaders of Bougainville, because we are not following our Melanesian culture. I see that we do those little tricks, by cutting funding and trying to force people to submit.

If you like a girl, there are two ways to get her. You can court her with inducements or you can force her. Similarly, I think, it applies to the case of Bougainville. I feel that we are trying to threaten them into a situation. Whereas in luring them with the correct courtship culture and in a peaceful manner we lack.

And now, as the hour is fast approaching, we are trying see how to steer the car, how do we accelerate in and what do we do? I think it is important that, in order for us to accelerate things, we need to have more conversations. We have to converse with them on an equal footing.

For me and one of the reasons why I have been pushing for a greater Sepik Region, is because, I see an advantage in size.

My fear is that, our Bougainvillean brothers and sisters are in angry. So many lives were lost and resentment remains in their hearts. While they are still in angry, we are adding fire on to that resentment by cutting funding and doing all these naughty things, basically behaving badly.

Now in such a situation and if you do it to me, I will totally break away.

31/07

I think that is precisely what Our Bougainvillean friends are saying to us in a very polite way, covering up what they are truly feeling and as leaders. We should understand when someone is talking nicely to you about something that is very painful. We are supposed to pick it up. We continue to create delay tactics with so many little technics and it has taken almost 10 years and we want to settle it.

I bet that, if you did it to the Helas', they would say we want independence, if you did it to the Sepik's, they would say, we want independence and they would say this out of anger and frustration. We need to create an environment where everyone is sitting down calmly and in good spirits before we can resolve the issues so that the people of Bougainville will be satisfied. They have lost a lot. My fear is this and I am drawing my example from the Solomon Islands because as a country they are struggling right now.

If we move down to Vanuatu, they are also struggling and there are other small countries in the South Pacific who are also struggling. But our Bougainvillean friends do not

see the struggles of the people in Solomon Islands. They are being blinded by their frustrations and anger and rightly so. If 5000 to 10 000 of your people die because of a mining disagreement, how would you feel? And we have to put ourselves into the shoes of our people on Bougainville. We have to be emphatic with them. We are all Melanesians here but we have not handled our Melanesian family well. We have hardly handled it as we are supposed to have, like our forefathers did. And now that we have a good Prime Minister and with our new beginning I want to encourage the Prime Minister to have an audience with them and let's try to get them to look beyond their pain and grievances, because we all have grievances too.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us try to create a new way of doing business that is good for all of us and not just Bougainville. But I think whatever is good for Papua New Guinea is also good for Bougainville, the thing that I do not want is 20 years from now they are going to end up like Solomon Islands. But there are hardly many small Pacific Island countries that are successful, apart from Fiji. You meet with their leaders and they are over there looking for aid.

So, I want to encourage you Prime Minister, as it falls upon your shoulders and this House; for us to start and feel what our brothers and sisters on Bougainville have been feeling. For us to start and act Melanesian. For me I am happy to give them independence, if that is what they want. But, sometimes what we want is not necessarily what we need.

Out of anger, we will want something, when really, we won't take what is offered to us. I think this is my appeal and personally I do not want to see the Bougainvilleans leave because I do not think it is good for them in the long run. However, if I put myself in their situation and I feel their pain, I would listen to their leaders.

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori –Prime Minister) – Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I note that few of our leaders want to speak. In the interest of time we have sat long enough, right through our lunch period so let me make a couple of statements and I will probably recommend the Leader of Government Business to defer further the debate on this, so that we can continue to talk on this matter.

There can be no greater issue on this, than the issue on Bougainville facing our nation. On the eve of 44 years of Independence as a nation, this issue is right in our face. Our Government remains committed to the intention and spirit of the 2001 Peace Agreement. What has happened in the past, we can never really go back and unwind the clock.

32/07

It's part of our history now, for better or worse, the legacy of the Bougainville crisis is something that continues to tear into our moral conscience as a nation.

The loss they felt on island, including some losses we felt on this side where some deaths took place. But, greater loss, in my view took place on the island. The loss of their lives, more lives lost but more importantly, the loss of their livelihood and their future. Something that no amount of money or words we render to them can fully compensate for the loss they felt. But, the best we can do is to find a better way, better solution, and an ambit of peace.

The most peaceful way and offer, hearing them and also getting deeper into what the conversations they are saying and what really their cry is.

Mr Speaker, let me commend many of our good leaders of the past who have worked on this matter until today. This includes our current Minister for Bougainville Affairs as well as our past Bougainville Affairs the Honorable William Samb and now the Honorable Dr Puka Temu.

They have burned midnight oil and energy to ensure that they are on the ground and interface with the leaders of the Bougainville trying to catch up on lost time and lost ground.

Since 2001 we have not really ramped up our support despite giving some money to them but the elements of trust factor between Waigani and Bougainville has reached such a huge gap that bridging the divide in a short time is not possible.

However, we can give our best shot to show to them that we are brothers on this side and they are brothers on that side. We are sisters on this side and we are sisters on that side. We belong to the same family. A family of a nation of a thousandth tribes.

For I speak different language in the Huli Basin, I come from a very beautiful basin. Mountains surrounds me but the entire valley is so beautiful. My people in the Huli Basin is completely different from the Duna people of the Hela tribe. The Duna people are similar to those people on the Min side, Oksapmin and Telefomin but they are also different.

Our nation is a nation of diversity, the shade of our color and the color of our pigmentations of our skin is different from one and other. However, that diversity is the reason why we remain one united nation thus far.

There are many issues facing us but, this issue is the biggest issue and we need to give them due respect.

Our language spoken here in Waigani can be misconstrued although we mean well. The money that we've given them to the island thus far also. Per capita speaking, I speak as Finance Minister in the last seven years, that combining DSIP, PSIP, combining some of the intervention funds we've given them. Per capita based on population numbers, a shade more than per capita to every other district and provinces in the country.

But that doesn't mean that is enough because they've suffered more. I think finding the right answer for them and giving them an opportunity to decide their own future.

Whatever context and frame and shape and size that unfolds into the future is something that both sides can sit down and work towards.

I was encouraged by the President Momis's conversations with us. He gave an indication that there are possibly is a third option instead of only two options. So, greater consensus, greater wisdom and understanding on both sides can allow us to reach a third destination. And I believe there's a room for third destination that both sides can settle in.

Some things that gives them the economic independent they want. Independence is really about economic independent. Same issue, the rest of the tribes on this side are aspiring to. So, citizens can decide their own destiny, they can make their own choices.

Down the line, parents are not begging for Waigani to pay school fees for them. Down the line, health services whether private or public is available for choice of citizens to engage or use, down the line, we have money in the hands of land owners of land, gold, copper, oil, gas, coffee, copra, and every other resource come out from. So, finding the right balance is very important for us.

We will go the region next week and have a Cabinet meeting in the region next week. Sir Puka will go ahead of us. He is preparing a paper that will deal with the Bougainville matters and issues. Whilst we have a lot of grounds to cover and the past has been lost, the future is ahead of us. And what we do and as we commit to do, honoring those commitment is very important.

I appreciate a very important principle that Governor Allan Bird alluded that if you want to give something, you let it go and let them decide for themselves. We've had strings attached from Waigani for what ever the string was, but we want to ensure good governance. Again, in the context of autonomy and self-government and self-rule, how do we detach ourselves fully and give them support at the macro end. Some of these discussions need to be made clear.

So we'll try our very best. God who is fair in every human being will be fair on both sides of the House as we find a way and mitigate ourselves to this very important but trying time for our nation.

33/07

So, let's commit ourselves to this course and let us find a solution that will bring lasting resolve to ensuring that our people in Bougainville make up for lost ground, lost time and ensuring that we secure the future in as much as we secure the future of our country in totality.

I ask this Parliament to be very, very cognizant and mindful of the words we use so that we don't send wrong signals but we ensure that we maintain unity in the diversity we have as a nation. And finding the right balance is something we intend to do.

I commend all past leaders of the region who have been in this House including our present four. They don't have an easy task just like President Momis.

President Momis' statement can be misconstrued by his people on the island and can be also misconstrued by us, but he rose above local issues and he spoke as father of this country. One of the fathers in this country in fact as Sir Julian Chan is known as father of kina and toea. Momis is known as father of decentralization to our country.

I had the greatest privilege of interfacing with him in my life both as Minister before and as Prime Minister. I've seen the man quiet clearly and I reserve some of the personal inter reactions that we have had out of respect for the man and his public character and his private character back home in his region.

But he means well but the cue we can take is his conversation as a third option what is shape and form of the third option. Don't harm our nation in totality but give them the freedom they so desire and funding that third option is the task that we are faced with so be it. But we can't pre-empt the outcome of the independence let me end with a story, an experience I had in 2004.

In 2004, I walked up to the Independence Hill. I wasn't a Member of Parliament yet and at the dawn ceremony where the flag is being hosted. I stood under drums and pipes were going off with PNG national anthem. The flag was being hosted standing next to me, on the side I could hear someone sobbing and that's 2004, you know. The Bougainville crisis is very fresh in our mind. Someone sobbing as the PNG flag was being hosted and national anthem was being played.

And I kind of respectfully try to see who the person was and you could see the darkest person you could ever see was a lady of Bougainville origin she was standing there with a child on her shoulders. And a child obviously a child of someone from this side who, maybe was the father of that child and she was crying, basically sobbing away. That gave me a completely new better impression on some of the struggles that were going on through the minds of people of Bougainville, for we can never fully understand what they are going through.

The least or best we can do for them is to hear them out and shepherd them and comfort them in these moments. As I've said they have lost grounds. We need to allow them to catch up ground. Before crisis that place was the most advanced province. Today their place is most backward province.

They carried us for those of us who enjoyed National Scholarship (Natschol) in 1980's and 1990's, the K13 allowances, and those of us who enjoyed lives in the 80's and 90's, it was Bougainville Copper Mine that carried our country, lest we forget this. We owed it to them to help rebuild the place.

So let us all come together in one accord as we find the solution for our people on the island so that they can get on with their lives and rebuilding their lives for the better

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker,

Debate (on motion by **Mr Rainbo Paito**) adjourned

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned 1.50 p.m.