

BOUGAINVILLE'S AUTONOMY



Office of the President

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT BOUGAINVILLE DAY



June 15, is a very symbolic occasion. It marks the anniversary of the day when Bougainville's political aspirations were recognized with the formal establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, in this sense, *Bougainville Day* captures the hopes, dreams and aspirations of all Bougainvilleans.

The last twelve years have been some of the most challenging yet fruitful for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville as we continue to forge ahead to decide our ultimate political future.

The Autonomous Bougainville Government has made significant progress in strengthening its faculties through passing of important laws in the Bougainville House of Representatives and revitalizing the Bougainville Public Service into a lean and effective service delivery mechanism.

We have passed many new and important laws such as the *Bougainville Mining Act 2015* which is one of the very best in the world as it gives Bougainville resource owners more control over their land and resources. The recent partial lifting of the Mining Moratorium on Bougainville is a clear indication of the ABG's drive to foster fiscal self-reliance in the

region.

Over the years our public service has been plagued by corruption; it is a deeply rooted problem that continues to hamper our development but we have since made efforts to curb this problem.

The setting up of the Auditor's Office and the recent opening of the Ombudsman Commission's office in Bougainville has provided us with the necessary means to tackle the corruption problem head on, not just in the public service but throughout Bougainville. The recent developments in the public service shows that the ABG will no longer tolerate corrupt practices.

We have set the indicative date for the referendum to be held on June 15, 2019. The ABG is already preparing for this very important event and the newly created Department of Peace Agreement Implementation will be taking the lead on this.

I would like to remind you all that our people are a people highly favoured. We have been blessed with the right to self-determination and this right

we have paid for with the blood, sweat and tears that we shed through the darkest hours of our history, and that was the Bougainville Crisis. We will not go quietly into the night, we must stand firm and stand united and make our voices heard, for at this juncture unity is our greatest bargaining power on the eve of the referendum. Today I ask all Bougainvilleans to reflect and to consider what you can each do to help Bougainville achieve its true destiny and dreams.

All of us have a role to play - our farmers, industrialists, students, teachers, health workers, public servants and our elected leaders.

By working together and moving ahead with a common goal there is much that we can achieve.

My challenge to you is to embrace this change and contribute to the journey. Together we can achieve greatness and as your President that is my ultimate goal – for a proud, united Bougainville.

Happy Bougainville Day and God bless you all.

**Chief Dr. John L. Momis GCL, MHR
President**



Veterans leader, Mr Ishmael Toroama presents a signed Joint - Commitment Document to the Bougainville Minister for Peace Agreement Implementation Mr Albert Punghau at the recent May 17th Veterans Day Observation in Arawa, Central Bougainville.

For the first time, all major factions including the self-styled Twin Traditional Monarchy Kingdoms of Papala at Tonu in South Bougainville signed the document.

The event signifies a move by all Bougainville factions to prepare for a 'free and fair' conduct of the Referendum.

First Community Government elections hailed "fair and peaceful"

The Community Government elections ended in April on a high note with no major disturbances to the process.

These are the first elections carried out under the new *Community Government Act 2016* to establish the second tier of government previously known as the Council of Elders.

Director for Community Government Donna Pearson acknowledged the support given from the different stakeholders that made the elections a success.

"We are pleased with the outcomes of the election and are grateful for everyone's support in ensuring that these elections were conducted within the timeframe set by the Bougainville Executive Council" she said.

Acting Electoral Commissioner for Bougainville George Manu confirmed that the elections were held to form a total of 43 rural Community Governments.

The four urban Community Government elections for Buka, Kokopau, Arawa and Buin Community Governments will be conducted and established before the end of this year.

Mr. Manu explained that there were no complaints raised over the delivery of the elections and he thanked the staff of the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner for their commitment and professionalism.

"Together the implementing partners, along with the candidates and voters, have ensured a fair and peaceful election which enhances the democratic process in Bougainville", he said.

30 Achievements

ABG has built its capacity to be a genuine partner in the Peace Agreement process.

Cracking down on corruption

- 1. President Momis requested Head of the RPNCG fraud squad assistance to help rid Bougainville public service corruption
- 2. Minister for Treasury and Finance progressing anti-corruption reforms
- 3. Fraudulent public service payment claims directed to Secretary for Finance and the Internal Auditor for investigation

Open for business

- 4. New Bougainville Mining Act and partial lifting of the mining moratorium
- 5. Work to sensitively re-open Panguna mine is well advanced
- 6. Established ABG Revenue Advisory Group
- 7. Bougainville Revenue and Tax Summit to be held 27-29 September 2017
- 8. Progressed talks with national Chief Secretary for fairer fisheries revenue based on the size of the catch within Bougainville waters
- 9. Finalised Memorandum of Understanding to govern regulation and presence of non-citizens in Bougainville with Immigration Department

Safe and secure

- 10. Community Government elections conducted without a single security incident
- 11. Bougainville Police Service examining how to get more police on the street
- 12. ABG provided K2 million for police housing construction
- 13. Large reconciliations completed to deliver peace and unity for Bougainville

Delivering good governance

- 14. All Departments have submitted corporate plans to their Ministers
- 15. Work progressed on ABG Strategic Development Plan
- 16. Departmental Organisational Capacity Assessments commenced

- 17. Community Government Elections completed for 43 rural Community Governments - declared open, fair and most importantly, peaceful
- 18. Ombudsman Commission for Bougainville launched
- 19. UNDP to establish a dedicated aid coordination mechanism in Office of Chief Secretary
- 20. First ever Adviser/Counterpart Workshop convened
- 21. Ongoing support through the joint Australian and New Zealand Governance Implementation Fund and the UN Bougainville Peace Building Programme
- 22. Prospective support from European Union across water and sanitation, infrastructure projects and vocational education and training
- 23. New Zealand support for feasibility study of hydro-power generation
- 24. Continued Australian support across good governance, justice, stability, health and education programmes

Implementing the Peace Agreement

- 25. Prime Minister and President agreed to request the Supreme Court to examine the constitutional provisions regarding calculation of Bougainville Restoration and Development Grant
- 26. Secured agreements to release 2017 Restoration and Development Grant and Special Implementation Fund funds from national government.
- 27. Finalising Terms of Reference for the Second Joint Autonomy Review

Preparing for Referendum

- 28. Target date of 15 June 2019 set
- 29. Formation of Department of Peace Agreement Implementation to coordinate and deliver Bougainville preparations including consultation and engagement to reach joint government resolution on the referendum question and voting qualifications
- 30. Charter establishing the Bougainville Referendum Commission legally cleared by national State Solicitor. Selection of Independent eminent person to head the Commission underway.

Rebuilding Bougainville

The Special Intervention Fund (SIF) has made a remarkable impact on the people of Bougainville. Numerous projects were rolled out under different development sectors starting in mid-2014 when the funds were released by the national government.

The portfolio of projects included roads upgrade, bridges, education, law and justice, health facilities and infrastructure improvements. Below are some of the major projects implemented throughout the region. (Apart from these there remain on-going projects that are awaiting the release of the SIF funds to allow the completion of these vital projects).

1. NBC Bougainville

This project included studio renovations and upgrade which allows NBC Bougainville to broadcast on the shortwave band to all parts of Bougainville.

2. Hospital Upgrades

Purchase and upgrade of medical equipment and facilities for the three major hospitals in Arawa, Buka and Buin. This project will positively impact the health and lives of the people of Bougainville.

3. Economic Development

This is mainly support to the Primary Industry sector. Eight development activities have been mobilized: cocoa, coconut products, livestock, food crops, marine products, coffee, spices and forestry.

4. Education

Construction of dormitories, classrooms, teachers' houses and upgrade of science laboratories in selected schools throughout Bougainville.

5. Buka Ring Road

30 kilometers construction and sealing of the Buka Ring Road completed.

6. Bridges

Boku Bridge rehabilitated and re-opened. Re-construction of Suun River Bridge.

7. Economic Feeder Roads

18 feeder roads have completed scoping and contracts have been awarded, most are a work in progress and will continue into the year.



On behalf of the ABG Public Service I would like to wish all Bougainvilleans, whether in Bougainville or far afield, a very Happy Bougainville Day!

I am delighted to report that from humble beginnings the ABG public service continues to mature and make great strides in implementing the reforms needed to give effect to the Peace Agreement and our unique political status as an Autonomous Region within Papua New Guinea. As Chief Secretary, my mandate is to implement these changes so that our public service can provide services for all people in Bougainville to prosper in peace.

At the same time, the public service has an obligation to the Government and the people to ensure that we safeguard public finances and ensure the most effective use of limited funds. To this end, I am working hard with

the National Government to ensure that their funding obligations to Bougainville under the Peace Agreement are met. In turn, I want to ensure that these funds are spent responsibly and for the benefit of the men, women and children of Bougainville. We must step up to the task of enhancing governance, eliminating corruption and building confidence that we are a government that collects and spends money with transparency and credibility. As Chief Secretary that is my number one priority.

As we approach the referendum on our future political status, I am also committed to ensuring that all Bougainvilleans understand what the referendum and autonomy means for us all. I am working with the Secretary for Peace Agreement Implementation and our development partners to ensure that this occurs in a manner that includes the voices of all. The independence

vote will be critical, and is a unique opportunity that must be treated with respect and care. It is essential that all Bougainvilleans understand the question and the implications for them.

Finally, I want to re-affirm the public service's commitment to the peace building process. If Bougainville is to move forward in peace and prosperity, we must ensure that we reconcile the pain of the past. This is a key priority for the Government and the public service must do everything possible to support, not hinder, that process. Together, we can move forward in unity, embracing the beauty and enormous potential of our Bougainville.

Happy Bougainville Day!

Joseph Nobetau
Chief Secretary

Bougainville Referendum Commission set

The Charter establishing the Bougainville Referendum

Commission has been agreed to by the Bougainville and National Electoral Commissioners, and is now awaiting formal issuing by the Governor-General.

The Charter acts as the constitution for the Bougainville Referendum Commission, setting out its role, membership and functions. Adoption of the Charter implements the decision taken by the two Governments in January 2017 that the referendum is to be conducted by an independent agency.

President Momis said the signing of the Charter for the Commission is the most significant step taken so far towards the referendum.

"It is an historic step that the independent body to conduct the Referendum has been jointly agreed to by both Governments

and now to be brought to life by the Governor-General", he said.

"I commend the commitment of both governments to establishing the Commission to oversee the referendum. I particularly thank PNG Electoral Commissioner Patilias Gamato and Acting Bougainville Electoral Commissioner George Manu for their efforts in finalising the Charter." President Momis also acknowledged the efforts of the Office of the Bougainville Chief Secretary, the Department of Peace Agreement Implementation and their national government counterparts, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in this important stage in Bougainville's referendum process.

"Having set ourselves a target date for the Referendum of 15 June 2019, we now have two years to get

ready. This will require significant commitment from the Commission and both Governments, as well as all Bougainvilleans, who will finally have their say on the future of our region," President Momis said.

"I am happy that the Commission will be independent, as it is vital that our governments, our people and the international community have confidence that the referendum outcome will be a free, fair and peaceful expression of the will of the people."

A Transitional Committee will immediately begin the work of the Commission. The Committee will be jointly led by the Bougainville and PNG Electoral Commissioners, and include the two Chief Secretaries.

When fully established, the Commission will be overseen by a Board of Commissioners, comprising a Chair (jointly nominated by the two governments),

the PNG and Bougainville Electoral Commissioners, and two representatives nominated by each Government (at least one of whom must be a woman). The day-to-day work of the Commission will be undertaken by a Secretariat, led by the Chief Referendum Officer.

President Momis expressed his desire to see a Commission Chair who possessed unchallenged integrity. "We need an eminent person – someone held in the highest esteem by Bougainvilleans, other Papua New Guineans and the international community," he said.

It is expected that announcements will be made shortly as to the names of the representatives of the two Governments, with selection of the Chair to be high on the agenda of the next meeting of the Joint Supervisory Body.

Ombudsman Office established in Bougainville

The principals of honesty, transparency and good leadership are paramount in Bougainville's public sector institutions.

This is particularly important in the aspect of good governance which remains one of the major aspects of the symbolic Bougainville Peace Agreement.

The establishment of the Bougainville Office of the National Ombudsman in May this year further strengthens

the commitment of the ABG to ensure that leaders as well as public sector officials are responsible and accountable for their actions.

President of the ABG Honorable Chief Dr. John Momis welcomed this establishment saying that this is an important and symbolic occasion for Bougainville.

"As leaders, all of us in government need to remain mindful that our

actions and deeds are under scrutiny."

"In turn we have an obligation to do the right thing, to serve with honor and most importantly, to always represent the people", he said.

The establishment of the Ombudsman Office in the region was made possible following a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ombudsman Commission and the Autonomous

Bougainville Government that was signed in June 2016.

The Autonomous Bougainville Government has ensured its full support of this important office and pledged its commitment to ensuring that the Ombudsman Commission's vision to promote good leadership and good governance is always upheld.



The Australian funded project to seal many of Buin's town roads is progressing very well. The safe, more reliable roads will better connect businesses and communities. Local residents are pleased at the employment opportunities and the reduction in dust around town.

Reconciliation: The traditional way

As Bougainville prepares for the referendum in 2019, communities throughout the region also race against time and money to see that reconciliations are conducted between civilians and veterans for peace to prevail.

Money has increasingly been seen as a major issue to assist reconciliation ceremonies and many required money to assist with logistics, food and other items, whilst other reconciliations are yet to be conducted due to lack of funding.

However, Makis Constituency in Buin, South Bougainville has taken a bolder stand to do away with this trend of using money to reconcile.

Honourable John Vianney Kepas, ABG Member for Makis Constituency, has taken the lead to change the mindset of his people to reconcile amongst themselves without the use of money.

Mr Kepas began this change with awareness based on three principles: upholding the customs of the society; the church and the government and its Constitution.

He used this as a basis to get people to reconcile and ask for forgiveness spiritually through the

heart instead of waiting for funding assistance. “After identifying crisis victims and offenders within Makis Constituency, I formed a committee to conduct retreats for ex-combatants and youths to help them understand the spiritual side of reconciliations before actually conducting the reconciliations”, Mr Kepas revealed.

The retreat was based on two topics: Healing of Memories and Healing of Marriages, in which they targeted the ex-combatants, youths and families to understand the love of God in their lives, to accept each other and forgive and reconcile each other with the love and peace of Christ.

“I wanted people to see and understand that money cannot buy forgiveness. If we relied on money to say sorry and ask for forgiveness, will God forgive us later? Will He (God) judge us for wanting or accepting money in order to ask another’s forgiveness? These are the questions and challenges I asked my people to reflect on and the result has been positive”, he said.

After the retreat, victims and offenders with their families attended a reconciliation mass in the churches and openly shake hands in public followed by exchange of food between both parties, upholding their local customs and traditions of reconciling and accepting one another.

The Member added that he had only used about K1, 000 from his funds to conduct the retreats leading up to the reconciliation mass.

So far 44 high impact reconciliations in Makis Constituency have been conducted in nine Sundays using this approach and the people have changed their attitudes towards the use of money to reconcile.

“The first and second House of Representatives had problems in conducting reconciliations due to money and learning from this experience, I have urged my people take this approach in conducting reconciliations in my Constituency,” Mr Kepas said.

“My constituency is 98 per cent weapons-free. Unification is paramount to my people and we should be ‘referendum-ready’ by the end of 2017”, he said.

The Member called on his fellow colleagues to take ownership of the reconciliations in their respective constituencies.

Reconciliations for other constituencies are still continuing and it is hoped that this approach by the Makis Constituency should set the pace for others to follow.

Referendum Update

Minister for Peace Agreement Implementation Honourable Albert Punghau has said that implementing the terms of the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) is the ‘key’ to solving the issue on the political status of Bougainville.

“All ABG organisations, political and economic structures and our international engagements, exist because of one vital document - the Bougainville Peace Agreement. My responsibility is to ensure that the terms of the agreement are implemented”, he said.

Mr Punghau said Bougainvilleans must know that the peace agreement was negotiated to bring sustainable peace on Bougainville. The Minister also said that since 2001, the government had progressed in terms of implementing the BPA.

Some of the positive developments he highlighted included agreeing with the national government on the referendum target date in June 15 2019, set up of the Bougainville Referendum Commission to conduct the referendum, ABG’s decision on the option/questions to be asked as ‘YES or NO’ on independence, and a work plan to involve Bougainvilleans living outside Bougainville to vote.



Former BRA factions members, women’s representatives and ABG representatives stand together in a show of unification towards a peaceful referendum.

The Minister also outlined the positive achievements in the autonomy arrangements.

“We have made significant progress in terms of drawing down our investments, taxation powers, set up of our own constitution and parliament, transfer of powers and functions of vital government departments such as health, education, police, rehabilitation of our cocoa and copra industries, improving our road systems, enactment of the ABG Mining Law, and the various reconciliation and referendum dialogue programs currently being conducted across the region”, he said.

Another positive development that

happened under the weapons disposal program was the achievement of a positive level of compliance with weapon disposal. A total of 1,896 weapons were destroyed from 2,016 weapons that were kept in the containers. The United Nations Observer Mission on Bougainville collected and destroyed an additional 155 weapons that brought the total to 2,051 weapons.

Mr Punghau said the new weapons disposal plan would be community-based in order to allow communities to take ownership of this important process.

“The approach for final weapons disposal and controlling of new weapons demands for commitment

and collaborative partnership at all levels. This must evolve from within and among Bougainvilleans, the Government and people of Papua New Guinea and the International Community”, he said.

He said the new approach to weapons disposal was based on the understanding that Weapons Disposal is an integral task within the Bougainville and Papua New Guinea overarching peace-building process rather than a “stand-alone” agenda.

The department has also developed a plan for communities through their local authorities to carry out weapons data collection to record how many firearms remain in each constituency.