

BOUGAINVILLE REFERENDUM 2019

What is the Bougainville Referendum Commission?

The Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) is the independent body established by the two governments to conduct the Referendum. The BRC is made up of seven members appointed by the governments of Papua New Guinea and of Bougainville. It works with, but is separate from, the two electoral commissions. The BRC is not subject to the direction of either governments and does not promote any particular outcome to the Referendum.

Hon Bertie Ahern
International Chair
(former Prime Minister of Ireland)
Appointed by PNG and ABG Governments



Dr Thomas Webster
Referendum Commissioner
Appointed by PNG Government



Ruby Mirinka
Referendum Commissioner
Appointed by ABG



Patilias Gamato
PNG Electoral Commissioner



George Manu
Bougainville Electoral Commissioner



Robert Igara
Referendum Commissioner
Appointed by PNG Government



Patrick Nisira
Referendum Commissioner
Appointed by ABG

The BRC takes decisions together. The Commissioners are non-partisan and impartial. All Commissioners draw on their personal and professional experience to inform the work of the BRC, and decisions are made collectively at BRC meetings. The Chief Referendum Officer (CRO) heads the Secretariat, and is in charge of operational planning and implementation.

BRC's Role and Guiding Principles

Preparation and conduct of a free and fair referendum on the future political status of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

The guiding principles for the BRC are set out in the Referendum Charter establishing the BRC. These include:

- **Neutrality:** The BRC should make its decisions free from undue influence or partisan control, including from political interest groups, observers, the National Government, the Autonomous Bougainville Government and any other person.
- **Impartiality:** The BRC should be impartial in all its work and, in particular, in its dealings with voters and interest groups and should treat all persons equally, fairly and justly according to formally established rules and procedures.

- **Transparency:** The Commission should communicate matters relevant to its operational and financial decisions in a regular, concise and timely manner so as to ensure that persons are fully informed about matters relevant to their interests and to promote effective consultation, with a view to furthering the integrity of the referendum process.
- **Professionalism:** The Commission should conduct its operations in an accurate, competent, efficient and cost effective manner through competent Commissioners and staff so as to maintain trust and confidence in the referendum process.
- **Inclusivity:** The Commission should seek to consult interested persons and address concerns and questions as effectively as possible to guarantee inclusive participation.

These principles are to be abided to by all people that are being engaged by BRC.

What is a Referendum?

A referendum is a process of voting, like an election, but with the choice of a question instead of a choice of candidates.

Like elections the referendum will have a ballot paper, ballot boxes, polling places, scrutineers and observers. However, unlike ABG and national elections which happen every five years, the Bougainville Referendum will happen only once.



The Bougainville Referendum will offer a choice between independence from Papua New Guinea and greater autonomy within Papua New Guinea. The result will be non-binding. This means that once the results of the Referendum are determined, the governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville will consult on these results before any final decision is made.

Enrolment Eligibility

For resident Bougainvilleans (Bougainvilleans living in Bougainville) or non-Bougainvilleans who are living in Bougainville, the eligibility criteria for enrolment are:

- Have been living in Bougainville for at least the past six months
- Were born before 12 October 2001
- Are a PNG citizen
- Are entitled to vote in PNG National Elections

For non-resident Bougainvilleans (Bougainvilleans living outside Bougainville), the eligibility criteria for enrolment are:

- Have clan/family links in Bougainville
- Were born before 12 October 2001
- Are a PNG citizen
- Are entitled to vote in PNG National Elections

o **Bougainvilleans outside of Bougainville but in PNG**

Non-resident Bougainvilleans are eligible for enrolment under the categories as outlined on the Claim for Enrolment form and will be enrolled in specific locations outside of Bougainville within Papua New Guinea.

o **Bougainvilleans outside of PNG**

The BRC is still discussing with the two Governments if enrolment and voting outside of PNG will be possible. If not, those who met the criteria will have to return to Bougainville or PNG to enroll and vote.

Referendum Roll Update Process

To vote in the referendum, your name must be on the Referendum Roll. Only people whose name is on the Referendum Roll will be able to vote in the referendum. It is very important that the roll is accurate and inclusive.

Work on updating the Referendum Roll has begun. You can help by talking to your ward recorder and checking your name when the list is displayed. The roll will be updated in 3 phases.

Phase 1 - Roll Verification

Comparing the 2015 ABG voter roll with ward records and 'cleaning' the voter roll by removing anybody who should not be on the roll, for example they are deceased or have moved overseas. This is done by your ward recorder. This phase should finish in April.

Phase 2 - House-to-House Enrolment

Your ward recorder will visit each household in the ward to add the names of eligible people who were not on the 2015 ABG voter roll. Your ward recorder will bring the necessary form to fill in and help you to fill it in. All eligible voters have the responsibility to meet the ward recorders when they visit their areas. This phase will start in May.

Phase 3 - Public Display

The Referendum Roll will be displayed publicly in each ward. You should look up your name on the roll to check that your details are correct. If your name is not on the roll, or your details are not correct, tell your ward recorder immediately. This phase should start in July.

Clarification on Enrolment Update Phases

One of the misunderstandings that people are having about the enrolment update process is to do with the compilation of the roll that will be used during polling. Many still do not understand the three different phases involved towards the finalisation of the Referendum Roll.

Phase 1 involves the verification of the 2015 ABG voter roll against the ward listings of every wards within Bougainville.

The ward listings, which have been compiled by the ward recorders, contains names of people that are currently living within their wards that are eligible to vote in the referendum. Following the completion of Phase 1, BRC will then come up with the working roll which will be used during Phase 2.

Phase 2 involves the actual visitation to every household. During this phase, all eligible voters need to confirm if their names are on the working roll or that their details are correctly entered. After Phase 2, BRC will input all the necessary changes and then come up with the preliminary Referendum Roll, which will be used during Phase 3.

Phase 3 is the public display period, whereby all eligible voters will have to check if their names are on the preliminary Referendum Roll. In this phase, voters will be given last and final chances to make sure that their names are on the roll or their details are correctly entered. Those that do not have their names on the roll or have their details not correctly entered will be given the final chance to fill in the necessary document so their names can be added onto the Referendum Roll.

The roll that will be used during the conduct of the Bougainville Referendum will be ready after the completion of Phase 3.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between a resident Bougainvillean and a non-resident Bougainvillean?

Resident Bougainvillean refers to a person who resides within Bougainville who is entitled to vote at the Referendum according to the criteria defined. A non-resident Bougainvillean is a person who resides outside of Bougainville who is entitled to vote at the Referendum according to the criteria defined

2. Who will be responsible for updating the Referendum Roll?

BRC will be engaging ward recorders of each ward assemblies throughout Bougainville to update the Referendum Roll.

3. Where will the data entry process to update the preliminary Referendum Roll take place?

Work on compiling and updating the preliminary roll will take place in the respective districts within Bougainville.

4. I am a non-resident Bougainvillean living within one of the provinces in PNG, am I eligible to enrol my name on the Referendum Roll?

Yes! If you meet the enrolment eligibility criteria than you must ensure that your name is registered on the Referendum Roll.

5. For the non-resident Bougainvilleans, how will they be enrolled?

Non-resident Bougainvilleans will be enrolled in specific locations outside of Bougainville within PNG. More information on the exact locations for them to go and enrol will be released shortly by BRC.

6. Why should I enrol my name on the Referendum Roll?

The electoral law states very clearly that only those that have their names on the Referendum Roll will vote during polling. Therefore, it is important for people to note that in order to vote during the Referendum, your name must be on the Referendum Roll.

7. If my name is not on the roll, am I still going to cast my vote?

No. If your name is not on the Referendum Roll, you will not vote in the Referendum. Only those that are on the roll will be able to cast their votes during the referendum.

8. I am a person living with disability, can I enrol my name on the Referendum Roll?

If you are a person with disability and meet the enrolment eligibility criteria, then you should enrol your name on the Referendum Roll.

9. What type of question will be put on the ballot paper?

People will vote on a question the two governments have agreed to put on the ballot paper. The question for the Bougainville Referendum is whether people want Bougainville to remain with PNG with greater autonomy or to be independent from PNG.

10. Why did the two governments defer the referendum date from June 15 2019 to 12 October 2019?

We know some people are disappointed that the referendum is not taking place in June, but June 2019 was never a set date, but rather a target date. We need to remember that the JSB set the June 2019 target date over two years ago, well before the BRC came into existence. Most importantly for the BRC, there were no funds to undertake enrolment activities. Therefore we had to advice both Governments that the referendum should take place in October.

11. When will the writ be issued?

The two Governments have agreed that the issue of writ will take place on 16 August 2019.

12. When will polling commence?

Polling will commence on 12 October 2019.