



DEPARTMENT OF PRESIDENT & BOUGAINVILLE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
OFFICE OF CHIEF SECRETARY

Media statement

**Allegations of misconduct against Mr James Tanis
Secretary, Department of Peace Agreement Implementation**

On 19 September 2018, the Bougainville Senior Appointments Committee (BSAC) decided to suspend Secretary for Peace Agreement Implementation, Mr James Tanis over allegations of misconduct. The suspension will remain in force until such time as a Board of Inquiry, established by the BSAC, reports its findings.

Under the *Bougainville Constitution* and the *Bougainville Senior Appointments Act 2014*, responsibility for dealing with disciplinary matters involving constitutional and senior officers rests with the Bougainville Senior Appointments Committee. This is to ensure that the process is fair and impartial, and free of political interference. Where allegations of misconduct are raised against a senior officer, the Committee is required to follow strict procedures. If the Committee considers that the allegations should be investigated, it must appoint a board of inquiry to conduct the investigation and report back. If the board of inquiry is satisfied that misconduct has occurred, there are a range of punishment options available to the Committee, including removal from office.

In this case, Mr Tanis has been provided with details of the allegations and has been afforded an opportunity to respond. These matters will now be fully investigated, and Mr Tanis will be provided with full natural justice. The Board of Inquiry will be headed by Chief Ila Geno. In the interim, Mr Dennis Kuiai will act as Secretary of the Department.

I understand that people will be curious to know the details of the allegations set out in my petition, but it would not be fair to Mr Tanis for those details to be made public at this stage. The formal procedures should be allowed to take their course. It should be sufficient for me to say that I found the allegations very concerning, requiring me to take this action.

I appreciate that Mr Tanis has high standing in the Bougainville Community. I do not question his commitment to peace and I acknowledge his service as a former President and commander in the BRA. But as Chief Secretary, I would be remiss if I did not refer allegations of misconduct to the Bougainville Senior Appointments Committee on the basis of standing alone. I am of the view that any allegation, no matter how large or small, must be investigated. I have a legal and constitutional obligation to do so, and whilst I understand that some may be critical of my actions, I stand by my belief in the rule of law. Mr Tanis is not being pre-judged. The Board of Inquiry will consider the evidence available and make a finding. Until then nobody should pre-judge the allegations raised, and I encourage those who may have concerns to await the outcome of the Board of Inquiry.



Joseph Nobetau
Chief Secretary to the Autonomous Bougainville Government

20 September 2018