



DEPARTMENT OF PRESIDENT & BOUGAINVILLE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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BUKA

Autonomous Region of Bougainville

Media Statement

Following my appointment to the Office of Chief Secretary on 17 October 2017, I have been engaged in a process of reform aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Department of President and the BEC and the broader public service.

As Chief Secretary I have engaged extensively with key stakeholders including Ministers, Secretaries, donors, the private sector and civil society. Through this work I have gained valuable insight into the workings of the public sector and the need for change and reform.

The purpose of this statement is to provide the general public with an update of the work that has been undertaken since my appointment, outline the challenges that I see moving forward and to canvass the priorities that are ahead.

Consultations

Ministers

Since commencing as Chief Secretary I have been able to meet with all Ministers. Through these discussions I have gained valuable insight into key ministerial priorities which has in turn informed my work with portfolio Secretaries and key stakeholders. These discussions have been invaluable in informing my Department's broader reform agenda and have assisted with some critical organisational change decisions.

Secretaries

As Chief Secretary I see it as an important part of my role to provide leadership and guidance to Secretaries. Since commencing as Chief Secretary I have convened Senior Management Committee meetings and met one on one with all Secretaries. In my discussions I have emphasised the President's key messages around organisational capability and the need to deliver meaningful outcomes with respect to service delivery and public service reform. These discussions have been positive, and whilst there will continue to be some challenges I will continue to ensure that all public servants remain mindful of their need to be accountable and responsive to Government and the people that we serve.

Parliamentary Services

As Chief Secretary I consider it essential that clear lines of communication be in place with the Office of Parliamentary Services. To that end, I have developed a strong working relationship with the Speaker of Parliament with a view to ensuring

better links between the public service, the BEC and parliament. This work is already showing dividends through more effective coordination of public service policy development and programme delivery and parliamentary business.

Community Government

I have been working with the Secretary for Community Government to make changes to Executive Manager arrangements to ensure more responsive community government across Districts. In that context, some immediate changes have already been made to realign resources so that we can better meet the needs of local communities. I will continue to work with the Secretary to ensure that resources at the District level are appropriate so as to enable effective community engagement and service delivery.

International Engagement

International engagement is a critical part of the Chief Secretary role. With significant donor representation in Buka I have reached out to key bilateral and multilateral partners to discuss how donor activities support the work of the ABG and to explore opportunities for more effective engagement and aid coordination. This has included my work as chair of the Australian and New Zealand funded GIF (Governance Implementation Fund) and work with the Australian Funded PNG Governance Facility.

Advisory Support and Donor Engagement

The ABG continues to receive support from a range of donors in relation to the key areas of governance, peace building, health, transport, law and justice and election support. As Chief Secretary I acknowledge the value of this support with a number of key advisers providing advice to my office and across government to progress important initiatives in areas including: recruitment, legal advice and support, draw down of powers, election preparations, media and communication, strategic and corporate planning, economic development, revenue and taxation, urban planning, monitoring and evaluation, financial management and strategic engagement. While in the longer term it is my hope that the ABG will develop the internal capacity to manage these important issues independent of donor support, the support we currently receive has been a critical part of our recent progress.

Aid Coordination

In terms of aid coordination, I continue to engage with key donors regarding how we can target support to get the best possible outcomes. I am of the view that any support must be clearly aligned with ABG priorities and be based on ensuring meaningful capacity building where ABG officers are able to learn from the support provided and manage issues independently in the future. A key future priority will be developing an effective aid coordination mechanism within my Department to ensure the most efficient use of donor support.

Bilateral and Multilateral Engagement

In February 2017 my office coordinated briefing for the visit by NZ Minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon. Murray McCully. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to talk with a key development partner and friend, with the Foreign

Minister committing to ongoing support to the ABG in the lead up to the referendum and beyond.

Vice President Masono hosted a visit by a delegation from the European Union which comprised of the EU Ambassador to PNG, the French Ambassador to PNG and senior officials on 20 February 2017. The visit provided a valuable opportunity to reinforce the ABG's development priorities and for delegation members to see first-hand some of the challenges that face our young and emerging democracy.

Feedback from the visit was positive, with the EU Ambassador indicating a very strong desire to provide support to Bougainville in key areas including infrastructure, water sanitation and vocational education (amongst others). These are consistent with priorities identified through the PNG-EU dialogue and present opportunities for the ABG to partner with the EU in a number of short to medium term high impact areas. It is hoped that in the near future a delegation led by the Vice President will travel to Port Moresby to meet with senior National Government Officials and the EU Ambassador to explore how this commitment for support can be translated into meaningful action.

Community Engagement

At the community level I have engaged widely with non-Government and volunteer organisations and the education sector. I consider these stakeholders to be essential from a social development perspective.

In December I was honoured to be asked to deliver the keynote address at the Hutjena High School graduation. This was an excellent opportunity for me to deliver a key message on leadership and the value of quality education. My message was that as emerging leaders high school graduates are well placed to make a long term contribution to our economic, social and development goals.

In February I was honoured to speak at the Public Service Dedication Service. I used this as an opportunity to reinforce the need for a responsive public service, noting that planning is the cornerstone of success.

I continue to work with local mainline churches to progress aerial surveys of available land to enhance housing and community infrastructure. This work has included undertaking aerial surveys in Buka, Arawa and Buin to aid town planning, including the potential development of a teachers college in Buin and new housing development in Arawa and Buka.

Organisational Reform

Communication

Communication is the cornerstone of any well-functioning public service. As Chief Secretary my primary aim has been to enhance communication within Government and to our key stakeholders. I have achieved this by chairing Senior Management Committee meetings, engaging with Secretaries and senior leaders, connecting with Districts through radio programmes and working with our civil society partners.

This process is now starting to show results. Department Heads are becoming more engaged and my office has increased visibility of key public sector initiatives.

Despite this it is clear that much more needs to be done, particularly with respect to communicating initiatives to the broader community. In that context I am working with officials in my Department, including my Deputy Secretary, to enhance our media and communication strategy. Whilst there has been some good work in this area many of the initiatives that we need to enhance community awareness have stalled. With the referendum fast approaching this is not acceptable, and a key future priority will be to enhance mechanisms to more effectively communicate with the people.

Corporate Planning

A functional public service requires well thought out policy measures that respond to the needs of Government. This has been lacking in the past. It is clear to me that the public service must be more accountable and responsive.

To that end I have commenced a process to put in place departmental corporate plans. I see these documents as being key to addressing issues of accountability and ministerial expectations. By having in place well thought out plans that reflect Government and ministerial priorities the public service has a means by which to measure whether or not we are meeting core goals and responsibilities. It is my hope that these plans will be finalised in the coming month and that they will in turn help inform the development of a longer term strategic development plan that maps our key development priorities over the years to come.

Recruitment Processes

Open and merit based recruitment processes are an essential part of ensuring that we attract the best and brightest to our public service ranks. I have therefore taken a very close interest in recent recruitment rounds with a view to ensuring that the public service fully adheres to the principles of fair, open and transparent recruitment.

Retrenchments

In late 2016, in consultation with the Secretary for Personnel Management and Administration, arrangements were made to retire a number of officers who had reached the mandatory retirement age. This process was undertaken to ensure compliance with the Public Service Management Act and as part of a broader strategy of ensuring the appropriate resourcing of the public service in the longer term.

Senior leaders Training

As Chief Secretary I have participated in the Australian Government funded senior leaders training which is being conducted by the Queensland University of Technology. I see this training as being a valuable tool through which principles of management can be reinforced, whilst providing an ongoing opportunity for senior leaders to work closely with Ministers.

Overarching MoU on Draw Down of Powers

Work is currently underway to enable the signing of the overarching MoU on the draw-down of powers by the ABG and National Government Public Service Ministers. This will be a critical enabling step in achieving further autonomy.

Financial Management and Elimination of Corruption

Financial Management Systems

In line with the President and Government's expectations I am heavily focused on financial management and accountability. As Chief Secretary I am conscious of my role in ensuring whole-of-Government financial accountability and working with the Secretary for Finance to enhance our financial management accountability frameworks. In particular, I am actively engaged in work to fast track implementation of the new Integrated Financial Management System within the ABG.

Revenue and Taxation Summit

For some time now it has been proposed that the ABG convene a Revenue and Taxation Summit to review existing revenue raising capacity and to explore means through which the ABG can enhance and consolidate our revenue base.

I am pleased to advise that work in the area is now progressing and that I am working with the Secretary of Finance to convene the summit in the coming months. The summit will provide an opportunity for key stakeholders and subject matter experts to convene.

Referendum Preparations

Bougainville Referendum Commission

On the 24th of January 2017 I travelled to Port Moresby to co-sign the enabling agreement with my national Government counterpart to establish the Bougainville Referendum Commission. The Commission will be an essential mechanism through which the operational management of the referendum will be conducted, and importantly, through which stakeholder and community engagement can occur.

I am currently working with the Secretaries for Peace Agreement Implementation and Law and Justice to ensure that all constitutional and organic law requirements have been met prior to the final charter establishing the Commission being signed off by the Governor-General.

Challenges and Upcoming Priorities

Despite some achievements it is clear that much more needs to be done. Key priorities include:

- Enhancing engagement to ensure a more joined up approach to Government service delivery;
- Ensuring effective coordination of donor support so that we can maximize the value of existing international development assistance whilst harnessing new and emerging development opportunities;

- Ensuring effective community engagement so that our people understand what it is that the Government is doing for them;
- Ensuring that corporate plans are adhered to and remain reflective of Government objectives;
- Ensuring that the BEC remains well supported and that submissions reflect whole-of-Government considerations and priorities;
- Continuing work to undertake urban and town planning activities to enhance infrastructure and housing to address need;
- Getting the new integrated financial management system in place to deliver more effective, transparent and accountable financial management practices across Government;
- Continued work on the draw-down of powers to support autonomy;
- Convening the Revenue and Taxation Summit; and
- Ensuring that the Bougainville Referendum Commission is fully established and that important stakeholder and community engagement work commences.

Conclusion

In conclusion the challenges that we face are immense. As Chief Secretary I am honoured to be able to serve Government and commit to maintaining the full degree of energy, integrity and direction required to help the Government achieve its objectives. Whilst much has already been done, it is incumbent on all public servants, both senior and junior, to ensure we deliver the public services that all Bougainvilleans so richly deserve.

Joseph Nobetau