

FOR PRESS

66/11

MINISTER SEES BRIGHT FUTURE FOR BOUGAINVILLE

(Statement by the Minister for Territories,  
the Hon. C.E. Barnes, M.P.)

The Minister for Territories, Mr C.E. Barnes, said in Port Moresby today that he sees a bright future for the Bougainville District in New Guinea.

"Bougainville's vast economic potential would, in time, make it a major contributor to the economic development of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea", Mr Barnes said on his return to Port Moresby after a three-day visit to Buka and Bougainville.

"The District's fertility, its magnificent timber resources and the possibility of large mining development held out the prospect of early spectacular progress."

To realise these prospects, the willing enthusiastic support of the people would be essential and he had no doubt that this would be given. Together with the efforts of the Administration and the Missions and the economic leadership of the established business community, this support would ensure the economic future of the area.

As development progresses, with large scale investment reinforcing the efforts of the local people themselves, the Administration would play its part by continued work to strengthen the existing communications, education and agricultural extension services.

Mr Barnes said that he was most impressed with the progress made in planting more coconut palms and cocoa over much of the District. Indigenous plantings of these crops in Buka alone were expected to be worth more than \$2 million by 1971.

The Tonolei project, with its plans for establishment of a new major port, the progressive harvesting of the area's large timber resources and the extension of agriculture, would ensure balanced development in southern Bougainville.

Indications of sizeable copper resources had attracted a major exploration effort by Consolidated Zinc-Rio Tinto of Australia Ltd., in the Kieta Subdistrict of Bougainville. This company had already spent large sums on the area and was preparing to spend more in an effort to test the economics of a major mining operation there.

This exploration alone had already brought new roads to the area and provided jobs for more than 100 indigenous residents. Australians appreciated the economic importance of such major mining operations as those at Broken Hill and Mt Isa to the country's economic progress. If the present exploratory work near Kieta led to a substantial mining operation its effect on the Territory could be enormously beneficial and would deserve the support of all residents.

CANBERRA, A.C.T.

14th February, 1966.