

URGENT LETTER OF CONCERN

Blaise Iruinu – Panguna Joint Supervisory Committee

August 5 2014 – Arawa

To:

The President: Hon. John Momis

Minister of Mines - Hon. Michael Oni

Member for Central – Hon. Jimmy Miringtoro

Speaker of the House of Representatives - Andrew Miriki

Acting Administrator – Chris Siriosi

Members - Bougainville Executive Council

All Members - the House of Representatives

Bill for an Act entitled “Bougainville Mining (Transitional Arrangements) Bill 2014”

I represent the peace process established by the ABG in 2011 and supported by AusAid through the programme Panguna Peace Building Strategy of which I am Chairman.

Our goal is to reconcile the up until now divided people around Panguna. We have drawn together Landowners, Chiefs, youth, women’s groups, church leaders, Me’ekamui and ex-combatants. We regard the ABG as our partner.

We are now aware of the BEC planning to introduce the May 2014 Bill Mining Policy in the House of Representatives for debate and vote in the week of August 4 - 8.

We look at this Bill as being sponsored by Rio Tinto/BCL for their own self-interest, and passage would put us back to where we were before the War by granting BCL licences to become leases over our lands. Such a Mining policy would bring great shame on Bougainville for years; it would dishonour our dead and is likely to cause social tension.

I don’t want any interference in Panguna or in Bougainville by self-interest groups that would destabilise the fragile process we have established.

I want to remind everyone that the closing of Panguna in 1989 was not a mistake. It came out of a combination of unfair benefit sharing and the frustration caused by the cultural invasion of the Panguna people and our Bougainville way of life; it came out

of tensions caused by the disturbance of our birthright identity, dignity, and integrity by foreign influences. This led to our actions – it was not an accident; it had to happen.

Don't interfere with my people's affairs at any time and particularly at this delicate stage when we are making much progress. It is likely to destabilise our society, undo our work and create division and tension.

To pass a Mining Policy into law that gives Panguna back to BCL will not be comprehended by our people. It will confuse them to ask the question "How could this be that the ABG would bring the "devil" back after all that we have suffered and grieved?"

If you continue on with this Bill you would be violating your own Constitution which Section 23 gives back the rights to the customary landowners in accordance with their customary laws. This Bill takes away the ownership of minerals once again and gives them to BCL

Somebody from the ABG will have to explain this to the people of Panguna. I am sorry that I cannot explain it - I don't understand it. How can I explain it then?

It is a great shame that the Government of the people by the people risks destabilising its own Conflict Resolution Institutions and its own Peace Building Processes.

To the Members who are elected to represent the indigenous people's rights you will have to live with the decision you make on this matter and to consider the honour of the dead and our people who are still in mourning.

You would have to answer to your children and grandchildren as to why you sold out their birthright, and you will have to answer to the people of Bougainville – we call on you to say "no" to this foreign sponsored Mining Bill.

A resolution strongly condemning the proposed Mining Bill was unanimously passed on Friday, August 1 at the ABG Mainstreaming Programme Workshop of which you have a copy. For the first time such a meeting was attended by the broadest representing stakeholders of our region, and for the first time they came together with common views.

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