A REPORT

Third Annual Summer School for Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees, Practices, Procedures and Relationships: organised by the Public Sector Governance and Accountability Research Centre – LaTrobe University, Melbourne VIC Australia, 3–14 February 2008.

Hon. Robert Hamal Sawa MHR
Hagogohe Constituency, Northern Region

Chairman: Public Accounts Committee,

Hon Luke Karason, MHR
Member for Suir Constituency, Northern Region.

Member: Public Accounts Committee

Mr. Moses Havini, Director, Secretariat, Parliamentary Select Committees,
Mr. Donald Misang, Assistant Research Officer, Secretariat, Parliament Select Committees.

Draft:

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION:

HON. ROBERT HAMAL SAWA MHR – CHAIRMAN PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker, it now gives me great pleasure, on behalf of my team, to hereby brief and table before this Honourable House, and our people of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville the Report of our recent study tour to Australia. My team recently participated in the “Third Annual Summer School for Parliamentary Public Accounts
Committee, Practices, Procedures and relationships” at the LaTrobe University, Melbourne Victoria, from 3-14th February this year (2008). We were part of a cohort of nine (9) countries. The other countries were Solomon Islands, PNG, Indonesia, East Timor, Bangladesh, Ghana, Tanzania and Australia itself.

Mr. Speaker, this study tour on parliamentary work, procedures and practices was in two parts, as follows:

(a), the Third Summer Course for Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees mainly for parliamentarians, attended by myself, Hon Luke Karaston and Director of Parliamentary Select Committees, Mr. Havini;

And, (b), Effective Parliamentary Committee Inquiries, attended by our new Cadet Trainee Mr. Donald Misang; who recently graduated from Divine Word University and joined as a cadet trainee beginning of this year.

But firstly: let me take this opportunity to give my words of thanks to the President and the Speaker. To the Honourable Speaker, for your great foresight and vision in opening opportunities for training, not only to us parliamentarians, but also to the staff of the parliamentary services of this House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, we raise our hats to you for this road now well travelled; that you paved through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) a couple of years ago. We continue to encourage you to align our parliament, our parliamentary services and administration along the standards and good practices of the Australian and New Zealand parliaments.

To you Honourable Mr. President, (and the Speaker), for your trust and confidence in appointing me as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, in January this year. Let me assure you and this Honourable House that I take this honour seriously, and will do my utmost best to see that this PAC does its work, delivers to this parliament and to our people.

Let me also thank the former Chair of the PAC Hon Jonathan Gnati, Minister for local Level Government, for the groundwork you undertook to establish the PAC .And to my Deputy Hon Osioco for keeping the seat hot as acting/ Chairman, whilst the position was vacant.

This study trip Mr. Speaker, would not have been possible without the funding from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), The World Bank Institute (WBI) and the Centre for Democratic Intuitions (CDI),ANU Canberra. On behalf of our delegation
and this House, I certainly convey our most sincere thanks and gratitude to these three very important institutions. Not only can they assist in monetary terms but they are also very passionate about good governance, accountability and transparency within democratic institutions and political party organisations.

Let me again at this juncture, also mention two people in particular; Professor Peter Loney, of the Public Sector Governance and Accountability Research Centre – LaTrobe University. And Quinton Clements Deputy Director, Centre for Democratic Institutions, ANU Canberra. Professor Peter Loney has had many years as a politician in the Victorian Parliament, and many years also as Chairman of the PAC of that government. Professor Loney and his department at the LaTrobe University were the principal convenors of this Summer Course.

Quinton Clements, who was a former Inquiry/Committee Secretary in the Australian Parliament, conducted the last part of this study tour, “Effective Parliamentary Committees Inquires” for our parliamentary and secretariat officers. His other colleague was Mr. Steven Reynolds, currently the Clerk Assistant of Committees and the Usher of the Black Rod of the New South Wales Legislature.

Mr. Donald Misang, who is one of our new cadet trainees, attended this course, 12-15th of February 2008 at the Australian National University. He was again joined by our Director Mr. Havini towards the end of the PAC Summer Course.

THE THIRD SUMMER SCHOOL FOR PARLIAMENTARY PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE:

Mr. Speaker, the main theme of this program was to focus on building “effective Public Accounts Committee, as the Parliament’s primary means of financial security of the Executive.

It was primarily aimed at Chairs and Members of Public Accounts Committees, Auditor-Generals, Audit Office Staff and Public Accounts Committee Staff. And the emphasis was aimed at better understanding the roles and responsibilities, procedures that the PAC can follow in order to effectively carry out its functions. In scrutinizing and auditing government’s public expenditures, promote Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability. But to also get an in-dept knowledge about the
relationship of the PAC with the general Public, the PAC with the Public Service, the PAC and Parliament, the PAC with the Auditor General and his Office.

It combined both the Theoretical and the Practical; with the main Training Course conducted for six days in a “retreat style” at the LaTrobe University’s Beechworth Campus, three and half hours north of Melbourne city.

The Practical component was visiting Australian Parliaments, namely; the Victoria Parliament, Melbourne, Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Legislature, Canberra, Australian Federal Parliament, Canberra and the New South Wales Legislature, Sydney.

During the visits to these parliaments we were welcomed by the respective Speakers and Clerks with a prepared program of lectures and Power Points Presentations of the workings of their PACs. Where it was possible senior officials of the government and especially the Auditor-General were a part of the program to give us an insight into the working relationships of their respective Offices, the government, and the PAC. In most cases the relationship was good, because the OAG and the PAC must at some stage work together especially on ‘financial estimates’ and making departments accountable.

VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT, PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE & ESTIMATES COMMITTEE, THE OFFICE OF AUDITOR-GENERAL:

Mr. Speaker, the Victorian Government has a PAC and an Estimates Committee. They are a joint investigatory committee, who will conduct estimates hearings. Government Departments (600) must provide annual reports on how moneys were spent. A questionnaire is sent to major departments and other organisations (including NGOs) to assist them in working on their audit reports for the OAG and the PAC&EC. The Auditor-General is responsible for all Financial Audits and also for Performance Audit. The interface between the PAC/EC and the AG is that of a good working relationship; and, staff of the A-G could also be seconded to the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee. They can also work together on joint programs.

The PAC will also carry out its own self-assessment and produce its report with its own set Goals, Objectives, Self-assessment, in a document that can also be tabled in parliament. Committee Meetings are private but Inquiries are public. Inquiries can be by (a), reference from parliament, (b), by reference from the government of the day,
(c), own initiative inquiries but must

✔ (1), relate to ‘financial reports’, and
✔ (2), must relate to the ‘financial reports, of the Victorian Government and,
✔ (3) relate to the Departmental reports.

The Auditor-General works for the parliament which has some powers over his Office. But the Auditor-General has absolute discretion of its work and also independent, but have mutual respect for each other. Its primary focus is the accountability of the public sector (i.e., government departments and other organisations, statutory bodies, etc) to parliament. The Auditor-General is seen as the “arms and legs” of parliament and therefore reports direct to parliament. Its framework of auditing is to see a “big picture”, in fact a kind of a “helicopter picture” from above, as it could not possibly do detailed and an in-depth audits of all the arms of the public sector and sometimes the private sector as well. Its reviews of agencies of the public sector and its finding can sometimes effect changes, but in the main their sole task is to produce reports.

The main part of the Auditor-General report will be to review Financial Statements and Compliance.

It will also look into ancillary matters such as Tenders and Contracts, to see whether there had been any fraudulency practises in issuing such contracts, etc. In the Victorian Government the AG will review more than 650 agencies. As it is such a huge task, 50% of the work is contracted to the private sector to do. In this Annual Financial Report the AG will see how the policies have been applied by these agencies; and to make sure that management by the public sector has been efficient or up to the mark of 100% compliance.

Financial statements do not however, necessarily tell you how the money had been spent, but more to see whether policies relating to such spending had been complied with, or not. In their annual plan of consultation, the audit plan must be worked together with the PAC and the Estimates Committee, so that the PAC/EC is given ample time to make its comments.

What will be the Expectations from the AG and the PAC/EC? It will be to prove accountability, protection from politics (i.e., that there had not been any undue interferences); that in policy issues/matters, whether agencies have been fair with the application of such policies. The approach is to work on the most important issues and
not irrelevant ones, and work towards positive change. The report must be on time and on important core issues. Do follow-ups with the Minister’s Annual Reports. From the PAC/EC approach, to always follow up for leverage of the report and using/consulting with other offices such as the Ombudsman Commission and other relevant Offices. The Office of the Auditor-General has a staff of 150 with an annual budget of $30m per annum.

In Victoria the PAC does not investigates corruption. All its reports must go to parliament within six months; and there have also been occasions where parliament had actually not accepted a report. Its reports to parliament are not debated, but there is time during Question Time, where Members can make comments on the PAC Report. In 2007 the PAC & Estimates Committee had a total of 42 hearings. The Reports must stand on their own merits, thus ALL Parties must AGREE as this would give it more chance of implementation. The Powers of the PAC comes from parliament and has the power to:

(a), Power to summon witnesses, to appear before the committee and provide documents, and,
(b), interview witnesses,
(c), Government Ministers, may also be summoned to appear before the PAC.

Public Accounts Committees in Australia have the mandate:

- To review public accounts and Auditor-General reports.
- They also have the power to investigate any items or matters to do with such accounts or reports,
- Capacity to kick-start their own inquiries and,
- To a large extent, determine their work priorities.
- These PAC powers are unique among parliamentary committees.
- It therefore gives the PAC a significant degree of independence from the executive arm of government.
- PACs have considerable power to access accounts, records and people.

In examining government policy, some states of Australia limit the extent to which their PAC will examine government policy. In the New South Parliament the PAC will not investigate or report on a policy matter of the government, unless it has been given permission to do so by the Parliament or by a Minister. Powers of the PACs in Australia to examine the budget vary from jurisdictions to jurisdictions, limited in some form except for the Government of Victoria. PACs also carry additional responsibilities,
some of which would be to: (a), the review and approval of the guidelines that agencies will have to follow in preparing their annual budgets, (b), conducting of financial reviews to see how government departments and agencies have worked into their budgets, (c), will also review government’s input/involvement, in economic developments and other business laws and regulations.

MEMBERSHIP:
Memberships in PAC makeup once again varies from jurisdictions to jurisdictions, ranging from 3 to 16, with the most common number being six members. The Party membership will be made proportional to party membership in the government of the day.

CHAIR:
Large majority of the PACs in Australia and New Zealand are chaired my members of the government. The reason according to their thinking is - being members of the government, the Chair has more chance of arguing the importance and significance of the recommendations with the government. This is not however, the case in Africa, Asia, some Pacific Jurisdictions including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, where the Chair of the PAC is from the Opposition or Minority Party. Even though the Chair is usually from the minority party, once he assumes the chair the ‘hat’ of the minority party is left behind.

TRIGGERS OF PAC INQUIRY:
What would trigger an inquiry in Australia varies from state to state. The number of reports released by each committee would be one indicator. The follow-up or further investigations of an Auditor-General’s report would also be another reason for an inquiry. But as has been mentioned earlier committees and PACs would also instigate their own inquiries.

Some of these committees would also be involved in the ex ante oversight consideration of budget estimates. And again would also conduct “financial and performance reviews” ex post oversight to see how agencies performed within their budgets. And in fact, whether they had met their perceived outcomes. Once again the Victorian PAC fits into this category.

I am of the strongest opinion that this system should be now followed within the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. There has been too much misuse and the now too
common practice of unauthorised re-allocation of funds to other projects; other than the projects by which they had been allocated in the budget financial estimates.

In terms of their ‘working practices’ an average of 22 meetings would be held in a year. The chair schedules the meetings with consultation with other committee members. The meetings are planned well in advance, six to twelve months. The average time that a committee would undertake an inquiry ranges from three months to twelve months. And the number of inquiries that the committees would run would again be from one to six.

Here I have catered for a maximum of 4 inquiries, but realistically for this year we may only manage to undertake one. With staffing and as they are much better resourced than us, they can have from up to seven staff. Here, I have catered for a maximum of three staff who will be involved in
(a), administrative support, (b), research,(c), report drafting, (d), media and (e), organising meetings and travel.

THE ACT LEGISLATURE AND COMMITTEES:

Mr. Speaker, it is worth noting that the other State/Territory Legislature that hosted us, besides the Victorian and New South Wales Parliaments, was the Australian Capital Territory Legislature, Canberra. This new parliament is of great interest to us because it is one of the smallest in Australia with the legislature of just 17 members.

The Australian Capital Territory is ‘self-governing’ having been given this autonomy through the 1988 ACT (Self-governing) Bill passed by the Australian Federal Parliament in 1988. This self-governing legislation created the ACT as a government in its own right under the Crown, consisting of the Legislative Assembly, with legislative power and an Executive exercising executive power. From the 17 members one is elected as the Chief Minister who in turn appoints his Ministers. This Legislature is in a very unique position as it has responsibilities both at state and local levels.

The committees are formed by the Assembly. They are to consider in detail the issues of concern to the Assembly and the community and advise the Assembly on these matters. Committees can:-

- Invite submissions from interested citizens and community groups,
- Hold public hearings on the various inquiries before them,
And also involve the community in such hearings,
Report to the Assembly by way of specific recommendations for the government to consider and action.

There are 6 Standing Committees of which the PAC is one of them. Committees have their own TOR but may also adopt their own references on any matters under investigations. In detail they will:

(a), examine all government finances,
(b), Auditor-General Report,
(c), carry out inquiries,
(d), may also examine matters related to business matters

Mr. Speaker, once again, the relationship between the PAC and the Auditor-General is good and they have mutual respect for each other. The Auditor-General Report is always referred to the PAC for their close examination to see the AG’s own performance level. In terms of Inquiries, this is open to the public. The report of the auditor-General becomes part of the PAC’s TOR. The MEDIA plays a very important part in inquiries and investigations. And in many cases can actually assist and had assisted in uncovering issues through publicity that otherwise, would not have been brought to the fore.

The PAC Challenges and Priorities, Past, Present and Future, is to continue to work on improving its own performances starting with the Office of the Auditor-General, who is an independent statutory officer, approved by PAC. His job is to promote public accountability, audit government financial statements and other requirements. In a Performance Audit Report, will try to reveal how effective departments have performed, or if there had been any misuse of moneys, and results from other financial investigations.

\[During their 2006 – 2007 programs, the PAC produced the following work:\]

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Public Hearings</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**  
2006 PROGRAMS:

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<tr>
<td>Public Hearings</td>
<td>77.50 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Meetings</td>
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**TOTAL** 106.8 hours.

**WHAT IS THEIR DESIRED OUTCOME?**

“AN ACCOUNTABLE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT) PUBLIC SECTOR”.

**PARLIAMENT AND FINANCIAL SECURITY:**

Mr. Speaker, Public Accounts Committee is part of parliamentary tool to ensure that there is financial security. This tradition begins in 1857 when financial issues and matters led to the establishment of the first PAC in England, by one William Gladstone¹.

This was over the issue of the control of “taxation powers”, which at that time rested with the King. As he needed to raise funds to fight his wars, this soon became quite a contentious issue between the King and his Executive. But this power soon rested with the Executive as the holder of taxation powers who then needed to bring all to be accountable with public monies.²

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¹ Loney, Peter, Prof- on Parliament and financial Security, Power Point Presentation – 3rd Summer Course on PAC – LaTrobe University, 5Feb08.
² Loney, Peter, Prof- Public Sector and Accountability Research Centre, LaTrobe University- on Parliament and Financial Security, PP/Pres-Feb05, 2008.
Central to Financial Security of the State, are the three “E” of:

- Economical - *purchasing approved resources (inputs) at least cost, i.e., spending less,*
- Efficiency – *maximising output for any given level of output, i.e., spending well, and,*
- Effectiveness – *achieving objectives or other intended results (outcomes) of programs, operations, or activities, i.e., spending well.*

This is where in the examination of legislative audit reports; many PACs would have the opportunity to examine questions of economy, efficiency and effectiveness of such reports. Others may only just want to look into the issues of fraud, waste and abuse of public moneys, instead of looking into the broad issue of public funds as above with the three “Es”. That is, did the public/citizens get value for money, or was money spent properly?

Stemming from this tradition the modern Public Accounts Committee then continues to become the strong arm of the government in terms of the mechanism for financial scrutiny of the Executive. It therefore will examine public accounts *ex post* after public finances have been spent.

My own choice for my PAC would be to undertake both, *ex ante* and *ex post*; so that the PAC has the full bird’s eye-view of the complete cycle of financial spending in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

**PAC AND CORRUPTION:**
Mr. Speaker, what is the role of PACs in as far as corruption is concerned?

Can this be part of any PAC investigation and/or inquiry? As has already been mentioned, some PACs in other jurisdiction will not fight corruption. This is maybe from the point of view that other mechanisms within their government system exist, to fight corruption. But in other jurisdictions, this may not necessarily be the case, as for instance, in the case of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

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3. Loney, Peter, Prof, Stapenhurst, Rick, and Cameron, Wayne – Lectures and Power Point Presentations – 3rd Summer School on Public Accounts Committee, LaTrobe University, 5Feb2008.
I have always iterated that in the absence of ‘anti-corrupt mechanisms’ in the A.R.o.B, I would not hesitate to extend this function to the work of my Public Accounts Committee.

The following definition of what corruption is, and its levels are quite chilling to say the least.

- Corruption occurs when organizations or individuals profit improperly through their position in an activity
- Corruption can be found in all countries but is particularly widespread in states where the legal system, mass media and the public administration are weak and undeveloped.

Three levels of corruption are usually referred to: petty corruption (bureaucratic corruption), grand corruption (political corruption) and state capture (corruption which affects the entire state apparatus)

- **Petty corruption** is when a public servant, for example a customs officer, doctor or policeman, extracts illegal fees from the general public.
- **Grand corruption** is characterized by the involvement of high politicians and senior civil servants who take advantage of their positions to enrich themselves in order to stay in power.
- This often involves large international bribes and secret bank accounts in foreign banks. It is often promoted by businessmen from the rich countries who do not regard giving bribes to civil servants in developing countries as a crime but rather as accepted behavior
- **State capture**, arises when weak states allow businessmen and other powerful people in the country to exert an influence on legislation, regulations etc, with the effect that competition in the private sector is distorted
- Corruption always means that money is paid upwards, i.e. to those who already have a position, power and money. It is the poorest groups that are most severely affected by corruption. For example, it can be difficult enough for poor people to afford to go to a doctor when they have to. If the doctor must also be given a bribe to do his job, poor people might just not have enough money.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE & AUTONOMOUS REGION OF BOUGAINVILLE:

Under our Standing Orders: Chapter 6: Financial Procedures, Sections 196 – 202, our PAC is created and empowered. Our PAC is created under its own legislation, the _Public Accounts Act 2005_. Section 198, Budget Policy statement, Subsection (1), if one exists must be referred to the Public accounts Committee.

Subsection (2), the Public Accounts Committee must report on a budget policy statement within 90 working days of the presentation of that statement to the House in June. Section 198, Subsection (4), “the budget policy statement and the committee’s report will be debated in the House in the September Sitting after the report from the

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4 Draman, Rasheed, Dr, PACs and Corruption, Power Point Presentation, 3rd Summer Parliamentary School on Public Accounts Committee, LaTrobe University, Melbourne, VIC Australia, 5Feb, 2008.
committee has been tabled. The Chairman of the Public accounts Committee (or in the absence of the Chairman, another member of the committee) may move a motion relevant to the Budget policy statement and the committee’s report and may speak first”.

BENCHMARKING:

AUTONOMOUS BOUGAINVILLE GOVERNMENT.

1. Good working relations with the office of the Auditor-General at national and Regional Level.
2. Composition of the PAC Members be based on committed and competency of members and fully supported by equally qualified secretariat Staff.
3. Frequency of Meetings based on Work Plans covering wide range financial and government issues.

| Public Accounts Committees – Practices, Procedures and Relationships – 3rd Summer Course: |
| Beechworth Campus of LaTrobe University – 03-14\(^{th}\) February 2008. |

Autonomous Region of Bougainville (A.R.o.B)

ACTION PLAN:

The Autonomous Bougainville Government House of Representative Public Account Committee is comprised of 5 Members of the House of Representatives. According to our Standing Orders (SO.196), our Public Accounts Committee is provided for under the Public Accounts Act 2005. All functions, duties and appointments of the PAC are provided for in the PAC Act.

The Chair of PAC is from the Minority Party and Members from the Majority Party.

In order of the Committee to fulfil its Obligations and Mandate it will have to have its own Operational Budget.

Stage One:

- Establishment of the PAC Office and Secretariat.
- First Inquiry to be instigated and completed with a Report tabled in Parliament. This Inquiry to serve as a catalyst for the other Parliament Select Committees, to undertake their own Programs.
- Report to be tabled in Parliament with a response from the government on the Report submitted,
• If appropriate follow-up action by the committee on the implementation of the committees’ recommendations, i.e., follow-up inquiry.

• Establish a Special Relationship with the Office of the Auditor-General in Port Moresby; with the view of establishing an Auditor-General Office for the Autonomous Bougainville Government, as stipulated in the ‘Bougainville Peace Agreement’ and the Bougainville Constitution.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS:

❖ Auditor-General Regional Office – A.R.o.B

- After a meeting with the Auditor General in Port Moresby for the establishment of a regional Office here in Bougainville, they have agreed to the decision and for the request. So under PAC, due to forthcoming arrangements, staff will be also undertaking continuous training with the PAC Secretariat in Port Moresby.

❖ Centre for Democratic Institute (CDI) has also agreed for an Officer to be seconded to set up the Secretariat for our PAC to effectively carry out its functions.

❖ Whilst in Canberra we had an appointment with the Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Affairs, Hon Duncan Kerr MP, to congratulate him and Prime Minister Hon Kevin Rudd and the Australian House of Representative. For the trust and confidence their people have had in them after their recent general elections to form the new government (Labour).

I congratulated him on behalf of our President, Speaker, BEC Members and this House of Representatives - and the People of Bougainville.

DISCUSSIONS ENTERED INTO:

➢ Part of our discussion was based around the Australian Government assisting with the building of the New Office Complex in which our new Chamber will be housed.

➢ I briefed him also of the establishment of the Bougainville Restoration Authority. I mentioned to him that we now have an authority or mechanisms
whereby all aids and other financial assistance could now be channelled directly to, BRADA, rather than coming through Waigani. I highlighted to him that funding earmarked for Bougainville and coming through Waigani, either reaches Bougainville in “dribs and drabs” and none at all. He understood our concerns and promised us that he would bring further up the hierarchy in Canberra. I also extended on behalf of President Kabui for Hon Duncan Kerr to visit the A.R.o.B, during our Fourth Anniversary Celebrations of ABG in June this year.

➢ Bougainville’s HIDDEN TREASURES (our Ancestral heritage), at the Australian Museum, Sydney. We were most privileged to be taken to the Australian Museum by one of the Technical Officers to be shown more than 5,000 items of our ancestral heritage, brought by collectors, missionaries, kiaps and others starting from the early 1800s onwards. Hon Karaston and I were shocked to see such a huge volume of our ancestral heritage covering this entire Region from North to South. We in no uncertain terms recommend with seriousness that, (a), communication be established with the Australian Museum for the retrieval of these objects, and, (b), that ABG consider the planning of a National Museum for the A.R.o.B, where these objects could be displayed after retrieval from Australia.

CONCLUSION:

Mr. Speaker, once again I can not emphasise enough the important role of the Public Accounts Committee in keeping the Executive accountable – and the government honest. Its power to carry out inquiries, reviewing of the budget estimates and role in the appointment of the Auditor-General. The PAC also has the power to make sure that the government of the day is accountable in the spending of ‘tax payers’ money and how it looks after public assets. The PAC will also make sure that the Administration of the day carries out policies as stipulated. In inquiries, the PAC also has the power to call ‘independent witnesses, and power to review all past, current and committed expenditures of the government, organisations receiving from the government and from other sources. The PAC also has the power to summon Ministers of the State to appear before it.

Corruption is a bad word in anyone’s language or vocabulary, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, do we have corruption in our Administration or in The Region for that matter? I have no conclusive evidence at this stage, but this is one of the tasks that I have already set my mind to probe into with my PAC. From the definition of the World Bank and Transparency International (1997), “corruption is abuse of public power for private benefits”. I think anyone in a position of power, whether it be myself, a senior government official or a government minister, can easily “shift himself/herself into this gear”, if the opportunity presented itself, Mr. Speaker.

One major task of the PAC is to monitor or check on how the Government is expanding on its budgets prior to plan projects within the Region, and also to assess on how it is being reflected through services delivery. Most often the Government comes up with a well drawn-up budget, but sometimes these budgets and there appropriations do not always bear the fruits of what the ordinary people would want to see, feel and take ownership of. Many of projects are experiencing budget shortfalls and therefore are incomplete. And two main examples of these are, drug shortages in Hospitals and rundown Infrastructure. Why is this happening, is a serious question because it suppressing the peoples’ lives when clearly the Government had budgetted these items under the Parliamentary Appropriation Bill that has been passed as a law on the floor of Parliament.

As I have said earlier, it is the Pac’s responsibility to ensure that accountability prevails in Budget expansions in order for the people to benefit from these assets.

The PAC will be functioning closely with the Auditor Generals Office, and to set a working relationship to ensure that necessary audits are done on relevant Government Statutory bodies of concern, where the audit reports and recommendations are done and brought to the PAC for further elaboration and to the Parliament for debate and recommendation. Once Parliament makes a recommendation, then the PAC will proceed with its public hearings on issues of concern. In public hearings, these are the people who will be present:-

- Departmental witnesses,
- The general public will also be invited,
- Media Personnel (Radio Bougainville, National, Post Courier, Em TV and relevant web sites that will be needed for publicity.

Public hearings recommendations will be referred to appropriate authorities such as the Police or State Solicitors Office in case of misappropriation and Ombudsman Commission to make decisions on cases involving leaders.
Speaker Sir, I thank you again for this road well travelled; to gain more insights into how we can improve our tasks and our performances; learning from other Jurisdictions as in other Commonwealth Jurisdictions (Australia and New Zealand, etc.). I can assure you that we have received ‘the best from the best of the best’; and continue to receive this support and assistance. I am now again pleading for your continued support for our Public Accounts Committee to be resourced/funded, so that I can begin to do the work/task that is before us.

WHAT IS OUR PERCIEVED OUTCOME? To borrow from Australian Capital Territory Legislature;

“TO HAVE AN ACCOUNTABLE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF BOUGAINVILLE PUBLIC SECTOR”.

NOTES and REFERENCES:
2. Power Point Presentations: - Loney. Peter Prof, Stepenhurst, Rick, Dr, Pelizzo, Ricardo, Dr, Imlach, Andrew – 3rd Summer Course on PAC, Practices, Procedures & Relationships, 3-14th Feb, 2008,
4. Draman, Rasheed, Dr - PACs and Corruption, Summer Course, etc, 3-14th February, 2008,