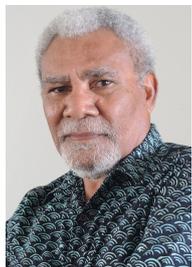


Public Statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 09 June 2017

PM's budget cuts destroying universities



Papua New Guinea's premier educational institutions – our universities - are dying a death of a thousand cuts under the O'Neill regime, former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today.

Funding for UPNG, Unitech and the University of Goroka has been cut by almost 27 percent in real terms this year, according to the 2017 Budget papers.

“Not content with his free education fraud and savage cuts to the general education budget, Prime Minister Peter O'Neill is also attacking the three leading universities – UPNG, Unitech and the University of Goroka,” Sir Mekere said.

“School leavers were already finding it hard to get into tertiary education before Mr O'Neill came along, with applications far exceeding available places. Now even more of our young people seeking to improve themselves will miss out on further education.

“They are being denied university places simply because the Prime Minister is destroying government finances through mismanagement of revenue and reckless, wasteful spending.

“Mr O'Neill's corruption, waste and mismanagement are taking away our childrens' future. If he is allowed to continue down his road to ruin, there will soon be nothing left at all.”

In real terms, funding for the three universities has been reduced by K46 million in the 2017 Budget, a cut of 27 percent.

UPNG's funding has fallen by 22 percent in real terms from K77 million to K65 million, Unitech's by 28 percent from K65 million to K50 million, and the University of Goroka's by 38 percent from K29 million to K20 million.

The university cuts are part of Mr O'Neill's attacks on essential service spending on health, education and transport, despite promising not to cut these areas.

Education spending in the Budget (excluding teachers' salaries) has fallen by 40 percent in real terms, from K1.7 billion in 2015 to K1.2 billion in 2017. The 2017 Budget also details the O'Neill Government plans for further education cuts of 30 percent by 2021.

“Can Peter O'Neill tell us why he is building a new university in Ialibu, when his Government is not funding the existing universities properly? It makes no sense whatsoever,” Sir Mekere said.