

Public Statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 29 July 2017

Sir Mekere welcomes extension of deadline for return of writs



Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta today welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court to grant an extension to 2pm on Monday for the return of writs.

“The successful application by the Ombudsman Commission provides welcome relief from the election chaos, mismanagement and manipulation orchestrated by Mr Peter O’Neill and the Electoral Commission,” he said.

“The extension means many more seats can be declared and writs returned before Parliament sits.

“Only 80 writs out of a possible 111 had been returned at the time the Ombudsman Commission made its application for an extension.”

As of this morning, there have been a further 18 declarations and counting is continuing in 13 other electorates. PNC has procured 25 seats, far short of a majority of 56. Meanwhile other parties and independents have won 75, so far.

The Electoral Commission should redouble its efforts to ensure that **ALL** writs are returned and **ALL** citizens are represented in Parliament for the election of Prime Minister and the formation of Government.

Sir Mekere said the return of writs and invitation to PNC to form Government was a charade organised by Mr O’Neill and Electoral Commissioner Patilias Gamato.

“This pantomime was designed to give PNC and the former Prime Minister an advantage by potentially disenfranchising thousands of voters,” he said.

Doubt about the legitimacy of the invitation, made at Government House by the Governor-General and the Electoral Commissioner, has been reinforced by public comments from the Registrar of Political Parties, Mr Alphonse Gelu.

“Mr Gelu is quoted in the media as saying due process had been hijacked by PNC and the Electoral Commissioner,” Sir Mekere said. “His allegations, coming as they do from a Constitutional office-holder, must be taken seriously and into account.

Sir Mekere reminded Papua New Guineans that an invitation to form Government is a formality, and nothing more.

“The election of Speaker and Prime Minister and the formation of Government is decided on the floor of Parliament,” he said.

“Nominees for the Prime Ministership can be proposed by any political party and by any Member of Parliament.

“A vote is then taken and the numbers on the floor of Parliament will decide the outcome.”

Sir Mekere said Mr O’Neill may not be able to take his seat in Parliament and be a candidate for Prime Minister.

Polling in his seat of Ialibu-Pangia was conducted on a Sunday, when Mr O’Neill cast his vote. The Supreme Court is due to hear a constitutional reference on Monday to decide whether Sunday voting is illegal, as stated by the Constitution.

Sir Mekere said The Alliance is confident that it has the numbers to form Government.