

Public Statement on 2017 election issues
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, March 21 2017

EC action on election transparency welcome



Former Prime Minister Mekere Morauta said today he was pleased to see the Electoral Commission taking extra steps to ensure Port Moresby voters are on the electoral roll and correctly enrolled.

“Because the National Government failed to provide sufficient funds for the NCD roll update, many voters may not be enrolled or may be incorrectly enrolled,” he said.

“To allow these voters to enrol or enrol correctly, the Electoral Commission is opening its 4-Mile office (opposite Brian Bell and between the court house and fire station), from **22 March to 31 March**. After then, it will be too late to correct any mistakes or omissions.”

Sir Mekere urged voters to check their enrolment immediately by using the Electoral Commission’s roll check on its website, <http://pngec.gov.pg/irc/roll-lookup/RollLookUp>. If you are eligible to vote and your name is not there, or is incorrectly listed, go to the Electoral Commission office at Boroko as soon as possible.

Sir Mekere said he remained hopeful that the Electoral Commission will also take another step towards fully transparent elections by reinstating the Election Advisory Committee.

The EAC is provided for under the Constitution (Section 69 of the organic Law on National and Local Level Government elections). But it has not been active.

“It would be an easy, inexpensive and very effective way to increase public scrutiny of the elections,” Sir Mekere said.

“Transparency and accountability are the cornerstone of free and fair elections.

“I have every confidence that this is what the Chief Electoral Commissioner and his staff are striving to achieve. I urge candidates and the public to give full support to the Electoral Commission to make its job easier.

“The knowledge of public support and public scrutiny will give the Chief Electoral Commissioner the freedom to play his independent constitutional role and duty.”

According to the Organic Law, the EAC is to provide recommendations and advice to the Electoral Commission on a wide range of matters covered by the Organic Law and on other matters referred to it by the Electoral Commission.

The members of the Election Advisory Committee are to be the Chief Ombudsman (or his nominee) and two other people. One of these two should be nominated by Transparency International and the other should be a retired judge or lawyer qualified to be appointed a judge.

The Election Advisory Committee may make recommendations or advice to the Electoral Commission only, and should meet as often as required and should adopt its own procedures to regulate its proceedings.

Sir Mekere said: “I urge the Chief Electoral Commissioner to activate the EAC and have regular meetings with it in the critical period leading up to the election. I am sure they can also help him to discharge his duties independently and effectively.”

Sir Mekere also said it was encouraging that the Electoral Commission has invited a number of different organisations and groups to observe and monitor the conduct of the election.

Monitoring missions that have indicated an interest include the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum, the European Union, Australia and New Zealand, along with a number of domestic and international NGOs.

The Electoral Commission’s commitment to accept international and domestic scrutiny is good news, especially after the Commonwealth Observer Group’s scathing report on the 2012 election, which in essence found it to have been corrupted.

“Again the lack of funding from the National Government to implement the many sensible recommendations of the Commonwealth Observer Group threatens the prospect of free and fair elections,” Sir Mekere said.

“It is therefore imperative that people and organisations support the Electoral Commission in its attempts to protect the election and protect our parliamentary democracy.”