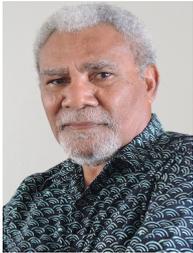


**Public Statement by
Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 9 August 2016**

Sir Mekere condemns National and Post-Courier reporting and lack of transparency and accountability



Today I wish to express my concern about reporting by the National and Post-Courier of events and issues involving me as a private citizen, and the lack of transparency and accountability of both organisations.

I recently wrote to the editors of both newspapers asking for an explanation of their reporting, which I regard as unethical, malicious, defamatory and knowingly untruthful.

I also asked both editors to print my letter to them. Neither has done so.

The editor of the Post-Courier, Mr Todagia Kelola, has offered some explanation of what occurred – he ordered that the story written by Gorethy Kenneth on 20 July not be run because, as he says, it was biased. But it was somehow, mysteriously, included in the next day's newspaper.

Mr Pama Anio, the editor of the National, which carried a similar story on the same day, has not bothered to reply at all.

In the public interest I am making available a copy of each letter and a copy of each article (please click on the links above).

My initial public statement which led to the eventual publication of the articles was not reported by either newspaper. When the articles were printed, there were no comments by me, nor was any attempt made by either newspaper to contact me for comment.

The resultant articles were utterly one-sided, and in breach of universally accepted media ethics.

I have always supported freedom of the media and freedom of expression generally. Most recently I have condemned physical assaults on journalists and associated threats, government intimidation and proposals to clamp down on the freedom of the media through legislation.

A free media, as I have said, is a cornerstone of a free society.

But with freedom comes responsibility, which is enshrined in the ethics that journalists themselves developed and choose to abide by.

Those responsibilities include reporting truthfully, fairly and objectively. Neither of the National or Post-Courier reports meets those criteria.

I am, as a matter of principle, generally opposed to defamation action when the subject matter is politics or the people involved are politicians. I am, like any other citizen, entitled to engage in discourse on matters of public interest or national importance, and inevitably some of the subject matter will be political. If a person engages in political debate then he/she must expect a robust response.

But I have a right, like any other citizen, to truthful, objective and balanced reporting.

In a broader sense, society has such a right as well. If media reporting of national affairs is not truthful, objective and balanced, then the consequences may ultimately prove to be self-destructive of the media and its standing in the community.

We live in troubled times, when corruption has reached levels never thought possible, when economic and financial mismanagement has brought the nation to its knees, and the institutions of state have been perverted and bypassed.

These are times when scrutiny of and pressures on the media are intense, perceptions of its role and responsibilities are changing, and expectations of exemplary performance are high.

The example set by the reporting referred to does the media itself and the nation a disservice when we can least afford it.