



**AUTONOMOUS BOUGAINVILLE GOVERNMENT  
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**Members of the Board  
Jubilee Australia  
NCCA Offices  
Level 7, 379 Kent St  
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Australia**

2 November 2014

Dear Board Member,

I refer to the letter addressed to me dated 26<sup>th</sup> October, from Luke Fletcher, as Chair of the Jubilee Australia Board, and on behalf of the other four Board members, dealing with issues concerning the recent Jubilee report *Voices of Bougainville*.

I note that this is the first communication of any kind from Jubilee in relation to the research in question, with me as President of Bougainville or with the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG). I note further that there has never been any communication with us from what you describe as Jubilee's 'partners' in developing the report.

Your assertion that the criticisms of the report made in my letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> September were 'without basis' is a matter of the gravest concern to me and to my Government.

Yet your response is not unexpected, given the manner in which you and your partners have conducted the research and chosen not to communicate with the Bougainville Government. Your letter appears to confirm the fact that Jubilee is not open to criticism. That fact was evident when, some weeks ago, despite announcing that you would examine the criticism seriously, you also stated it was 'very unlikely' the report would be withdrawn. Jubilee had pre-judged the issues.

The ABG's initial reaction is to see your response as reflecting a pre-determined position. Your response suggests at the very least a determination to engage in advocacy rather than 'scientific research' directed at establishing facts about the complex situation being examined. Advocacy organizations can have many valid roles. But they should not hold themselves out as undertaking 'scientific research'.

I note that you claim that 'no disrespect' to the ABG and landowner organisations was intended by the way Jubilee conducted the report'. It is my considered view, however, that Jubilee has in fact exhibited grave disrespect. The reasons you advance for a deliberate

choice against any form of communication with us is remarkably weak. Had there been a real need for Jubilee not being seen to be linked to the ABG etc., that in no way should have stopped you from being in communication with us – at the very least, by seeking our views on the draft report. In those circumstances, there seems to me little room for doubt that your choice of non-communication reflects misinformed assumptions that you have made about the ABG and the Landowner Associations, (perhaps on the basis of our supposed exclusion of the voices of opponents of mining). Your initial disrespect is compounded by the position you have taken that our criticisms are ‘without basis’.

On the other hand, it appears that your letter of 26<sup>th</sup> October was sent without Jubilee having any opportunity to consider the additional criticisms of the report made in my letter of 24<sup>th</sup>. Accordingly, I request that you reconsider your response in the light of both the issues raised in my letter of 24 October, and the response I make (below) to your letter of 26 October.

### **Inaccuracies in the Report: An Issue Not Addressed in Your Letter**

Quite apart from the need for you to respond to the issues raised in my letter of 24 October, I am concerned that significant issues raised in my earlier letter (22 September) were ignored in your response, in particular those about ‘Factual Errors and Misrepresentations’. They included those concerning:

- Allegations of an ABG campaign to re-open the Panguna mine;
- The role of UPMALA;
- Allegations about roles of advisers to the ABG;
- The availability of material on the consultation process;
- Implications that original impacts of mining will be repeated;
- Information on the consultation process (about which there were major factual errors and misrepresentations in the report).

Many of the errors reflect a view that resonates strongly with the particular view of Bougainville’s recent history held by Lasslett and those involved in the Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG). Increasingly we can only assume that this is further evidence of the bias of at least some of those involved in this project.

### **Your Letter Re: Background to Jubilee’s production of the report**

Your assertions that there are significant currents of opinions in Pangua ‘differing from those often reported in mainstream media coverage of this issue’ are not correct. That is simply not true of the media in Bougainville. Your assertions demonstrate profound lack of knowledge of our situation.

More importantly, despite Jubilee’s apparent belief to the contrary, opposition to mining is not a new topic, one discovered solely by Jubilee. I emphasise again that such views are well known and respected in Bougainville, and are listened to and taken seriously by the ABG and the landowner organisations.

### **Your Letter Re: The Purpose and Scope of the Report**

1. You say the purpose of the report is ‘to understand the views of people in the Pangua region on the potential reopening of the mine in the context of past experiences’. I will focus on just two of the many major problems involved in this part of your letter.

First, despite saying elsewhere in your letter that the report ‘reflects the views only of the people in the Pangua area who were consulted in the study’, here you state again

(as the report does at many points) that the aim was to understand views of the people of the Panguna region, not merely those consulted. Jubilee seems confused as to the goals of its own report.

Second, if interviewees were asked questions linking past experiences to opinions on reopening the mine, that would influence the answers on reopening, which is a further question about methodology raised in my letter of 24 October.

2. You say another purpose was to document views of ‘a wide cross-section’ of the population. But it is very clear you did not do that, but rather, selected a narrow cross-section of views of a particular kind.

3. You say the report was not designed to empirically appraise the current consultation process. But on the basis of views of interviewees reported as critical of the consultation, the report proceeds to draw the conclusion that ‘any attempt to reopen the mine in the present environment would almost certainly be received by most within the landowning community as illegitimate’ (p.46). In the absence of an empirical appraisal of the consultation process, your report draws conclusions based on a few recorded opinions. There is clearly no basis for such conclusions.

4. Similarly, you assert that in relation to views obtained on the consultation process, reconciliation, and sustainable development, the aim was not to get a definitive assessment of such matters, but rather ‘to gain a sense of what people in the Panguna region thought about them’. But in presenting the views of a carefully selected 65 people and a ‘focus group’, how could you possibly get a sense of what the people of the Panguna region think? Again, Jubilee appears to be confused about what its report is intended to do.

### **Your Letter Re: The report’s methodology**

1. Perhaps the one substantive point in your letter on which I would agree is your refutation of the claim made in my letter of 22 September as to the report claiming to represent the voices of 300,000 Bougainvilleans. It is true that the report does not claim that. I apologise for the exaggeration.

But I ask you to be equally honest and to abandon your unfounded assertion that the report ‘reflects the views only of the people in the Panguna area who were consulted in the study’. In my letter of 24<sup>th</sup> October, I set out in detail the many points in the report where Jubilee states explicitly that the report reflects the views of the mine-affected communities. That is a deeply misleading claim. It would be quite deceptive of Jubilee to continue to advance it. It must be withdrawn. The only way it can be withdrawn is for the report itself to be withdrawn.

2. You reject criticisms of sampling. But the most serious issue raised by my letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> September is that there has clearly been a deliberate choice of voices against mining, coupled with a deliberate assertion, both in the report and in Ms. Goodwill’s statement about the report, that the carefully selected views do in fact represent those of the mine affected communities. A series of media (including social media) reports have published accounts of the report with headlines emphasising that it shows widespread opposition to mining (and similar). At no time has Jubilee refuted such reports.

Had your report stated, quite honestly, first, that only voices against mining were selected for interview, and second, that those voices were in no way held out to be representative of the mine-affected communities, the criticisms I'm advancing would not be valid.

The answer is to withdraw the current deceptive report and - if you wish to - publish an honest version of what you did and what it means.

3. You assert, once again, that you found your research partners 'highly professional' etc. Assertions of your experience mean nothing where your research partners have demonstrated track records of bias, a fact demonstrated in my letter of 24 October (see discussion under the following headings: Jubilee's Collaborators; A Skewed Historical Account; and Using the Historical Account to Substantiate Baseless 'Research Findings').

Bougainville involves a highly complex, post-conflict situation, where issues concerning past roles of and future choices about, mining are highly sensitive. Numerous outside interests are seeking to take economic and political advantage of the situation in Bougainville. Carpet-baggers are trying to get control of our resources, each of them in some form of partnership with Bougainville factions. Over the past two years, your partners have consistently sympathised with, and reported favourably on, the attacks on me, the ABG, and ABG advisers made by these interests. As I pointed out in my letter of 24 October, many of those attacks are false and misleading. Yet your partners have never at any stage communicated with me, the ABG, nor the advisers. At no time have they ever checked the facts in their false and misleading, and very often (in the case of the Blog run by BRG) anonymous attacks. They consistently mount an attack based on a particular view of mining and of the past and future roles of Rio Tinto and BCL. That same view permeates the Jubilee report.

The evidence of the clear bias of Lasslett, and of BRG, is readily available. It is a matter of general discussion amongst those Bougainvilleans that have access to social media. Your claim that you have experienced the professionalism of the persons and organisations involved is no answer to our concerns. The saying 'by your friends shall ye be known' comes to mind. Or can I hope that your comments in this regard were made without your having considered the evidence of bias that I provided in my letter?

4. You assert that those who conducted the interviews 'were trained'. For the methodology to be accepted as sound, far more would need to be known than that. What was their education, training and experience before they received the training for this work? Who did the training? What did the training consist of? What supervision, checking and quality control mechanisms were in place? In connection to all such issues, I draw your attention again to the comments on Jubilee's flawed methodology made by Dr. Don Mitchell, as discussed in my letter of 24 October.

5. You again reject our concerns on your failure to communicate with the ABG and landowner organisations on the basis that you did not wish to be linked or be perceived to be linked to the ABG. I reject these assertions as baseless, for the reasons advanced in my letter of 24 October.

#### **Summarising the 'Basis' for our Criticisms of the Report**

As you deny the existence of any 'basis' at all for the criticisms I've made of the report, I will summarise the main points that I request you examine when considering the report:

- Jubilee has assumed that voices of those in the mine-affected areas who opposed resumption of mining were voiceless – but that is not correct
- Jubilee has assumed that such opponents of mining were in some way fearful of the ABG and the landowner associations – the issues are far more complex than that.
- Concerning methodology:
  - Jubilee claims credibility for the report by public assurances that ‘highly qualified academics’ were involved. But as there is no indication who they were, other than Kristian Lasslett who has self-identified as the person who oversaw production of the report, it’s impossible to accept such assurances.
  - Jubilee claims credibility for the report by saying those who did the interviews were trained. That in no way answers the criticisms of the methodology.
  - It is clear that the 65 interviewees and the members of the ‘focus group’ were selected on the basis of their opposition to mining. But this is not made clear by the report.
  - It being well known that aspects of methodology such as the questions asked in interviews, the order in which they are asked, and how they are asked, can all have major influences on the answers given, it is critically important to have detailed information on those issues. The absence of that information in the report (and Jubilee’s continued failure to provide it) indicates flawed methodology.
  - The report, and spokespersons for Jubilee, claim that the report represents the views on mining-affected communities. In your letter, you deny that is the case. But the evidence is clear.
  - To make such claims that the views of selected opponents of mining represent those of the mine-affected communities is clearly wrong. But those invalid claims have since been echoed in much media discussion of the report, without comment from Jubilee. If the report is to have any credibility, the numerous claims to that effect in the report must be withdrawn, as must Ms. Goodwill’s claims about the report demonstrating ‘near unanimity among the Pangunans that they do not want mining in their region’.
  - The failure of Jubilee to at the very least request key stakeholders such as the ABG and landowner association executives to comment on the draft findings before release of the report is another serious flaw in methodology.
- While Jubilee may have found its partners in this research ‘highly professional’, they in fact have a track record of bias on issues concerning the history and the future of mining in Bougainville. In those circumstances, if there is material in the report suggesting lack of balance or bias, it is not unreasonable to assume the influence of those partners is at work, significantly reducing the credibility that can be attached to the report.
- The report demonstrates significant bias and lack of balance, through such things as:
  - The skewed historical account, that clearly resonates with the Kristian Lasslett and Bismarck Ramu Group view of Bougainville’s recent history;
  - That sly use of the skewed account to substantiate baseless ‘research findings’;
  - The numerous serious inaccuracies throughout the report, many of which resonate with the views espoused by Lasslett and BRG;
  - The presence of the inaccuracies in the views of interviewees reported in the ‘Research Findings’ that also resonate with the views espoused by Lasslett and BRG raise the grave concerns as to the motivation for the selection of such material for inclusion in the report.

- The choice by Jubilee to refuse communicate with the ABG in any way about its research before 26 October, and the baseless argument advanced in support of that choice.
- Irrespective of the bias issue, the report contains many grave inaccuracies (only some of which have been spelt out in my letters of 22<sup>nd</sup> September and 24<sup>th</sup> October) the presence of which detract gravely from the credibility of the report.

Mr. Fletcher, the ABG is a representative government, like any government, required to make decisions on behalf of its people. We are dealing with a complex and difficult situation where peace is fragile, where many groups remain uncertain about the peace process, where there are numerous continuing divisions, and where complex interests are seeking to influence decision-making in Bougainville to their own benefit. Through its report, Jubilee has inserted itself into this difficult situation by releasing a deeply flawed report that adds to pressures contributing to complexity and divisions.

In the process, you are damaging not only your own reputation as an NGO claiming to undertake 'scientific research', but also NGOs and researchers more generally. You might be surprised at just how upset many Bougainvilleans are about your report, and the divisiveness of such flawed work.

I ask that the members of the Jubilee Board consider your report further, and withdraw it in its current form.

Yours sincerely,



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