

CONCLUSION

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Governments need revenue and how governments secure this revenue is an important policy consideration. It would be a particularly pressing challenge for a future independent Bougainville Government.

What happens in Bougainville in the future is up to the people of Bougainville to determine. Nevertheless, their ability to make wise choices will be dependent on their capacity make informed decisions about their economic and political future. It will also be influenced by the attitude taken by policy-makers outside the country, especially by major aid donors such Australia.

It is therefore unfortunate that the political consensus that large-scale mining offers the only feasible developmental path for Bougainville has led to a scenario in which there appears to have been insufficient in-depth analysis of potential alternative economic strategies.

The aim of this project has been to redress this imbalance. In doing so, we hope that it will inform debate in Bougainville and among policy makers in Bougainville and elsewhere, including in Australia.

It is not our intention to present detailed policy recommendations in this conclusion.

However, it is possible to draw out the major themes and conclusions from the papers in this report:

- **Bougainvilleans have their own history, knowledge, social institutions, cultural assets, traditional economy and systems of customary land tenure which provides a vital foundation on which Bougainville's future can be built.**
- **Land is of central importance to Bougainvilleans. Land connects people, regulates relationships, binds the present day to the past and the future. It is the source of social security, and the base for identity, memory, culture, and spirituality.**
- **Land also supports a way of life that most rural Bougainvilleans are already living. Land allows people to operate within a mixed economy that blends the non-cash contributions of the traditional economy supplemented with cash earned from small-scale income generating activities, such as the sale of cocoa for example.**
- **As the case study on Papua New Guinea (PNG) clearly shows, converting mineral wealth into positive outcomes for the bulk of the population is a serious challenge. The extractive industries have contributed**



Photo credit: Christina Hill

less to PNG Government revenues and employment than expected, particularly in recent years. In fact the sector has distorted PNG's economy and its currency, making it harder for non-resource sector exports – particularly in agriculture – to bring in revenues.

- The Panguna mine is unlikely to be a significant source of Government revenues, at least in the short to medium term. The argument that self-sufficiency is only possible through mining is, at the very least, questionable. Equally open to question is whether the reintroduction of mining in Bougainville would avoid past mistakes, especially when it comes to environmental consequences and social impacts.
- Much of Bougainville is a matrilineal society and the connection between women and land is inseparable. However, this connection has suffered, and women's position in society has been weakened and marginal-

ised since the period of colonisation.

- Women have been acknowledged as the driving force behind the ceasefire, the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001 and post-conflict attempts at reconciliation and transformation. Yet despite the central role women have played in the peace process and their role as custodians of land, they have largely been excluded from decision-making over Bougainville's economic future and social policy.
- It is widely recognised that in the immediate future agriculture is, and will continue to be, the single most important source of livelihoods for Pacific islanders. Thus, the focus of policy for employment of the bulk of the population, and for economic growth and government revenues, should be on promoting improved productivity in agriculture.
- Agriculture is an area where Bougainville

enjoys an advantage as there is already a high level of participation in this sector. An economy based on agriculture has the potential to benefit all Bougainvilleans, not just a small minority.

- The challenge for the Government of Bougainville may be to find ways to commercialise traditional systems of farming and improve cash-generating opportunities, without sacrificing community cohesion, local food security and customary land tenure systems.
- Through the current global ‘development’ paradigm in Melanesia, there is a push by outside actors to replace customary systems with western models of land tenure. The result is that indigenous peoples are losing control over their land and rates of community conflict, rural indebtedness, inequality, and landlessness are increasing. Such a push is inconsistent with Melanesian efforts to keep land under customary tenure.
- Sustainable fisheries also offer the potential for the creation of jobs for Bougainvilleans. An innovative oceans management framework may also build on Bougainville’s cultural links with the Solomon Islands and PNG.
- Gender equality must be at the heart of a just and sustainable economic model for Bougainville. This economic model must be one in which women retain their relationships to their customary lands, are able to cultivate it and make collective development decisions that benefit future generations as well as the current generation. Increasing women’s economic power must be part of this model.
- To achieve a just and sustainable economic model for Bougainville, and to achieve sustainable development, stronger democratic participation of women in decision-making processes is also needed.
- Finally, some of the papers ask if there is a

need to transform the ‘culture of Governance’ in Bougainville so that government policies serve the needs of Bougainvilleans, rather than particular corporate and economic interests, and so that systems of governance sit more sympathetically alongside local cultures, social systems, and value frameworks.

In summary, the collective wisdom of the papers presented here demonstrate that alternatives to large-scale mining do exist. Many Bougainvilleans are already participating in and developing these alternatives. Bougainvilleans enjoy the benefits the traditional economy and customary land tenure provides through food, housing, employment, and other forms of social security.

Properly supported, innovative approaches that build on what is already done have the potential to support inclusive economic growth and with it increase government revenues. That this growth is likely to be gradual rather than instantaneous is not necessarily a drawback given the doubts about the revenues that would be generated by a reintroduction of industrial scale mining.

Perhaps more importantly, how much revenue a future Bougainville Government might need, and for what, depends on what sort of government Bougainvilleans want, and what sort of a country they would like to become.