



OPEN LETTER to:

The Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape MP
The Hon. Sam Basil MP, Deputy Prime Minister
The Hon. Johnson Ibo Tuke MP, Mining Minister
The Hon. Wera Mori MP, Minister for Environment, Conservation and Climate Change
Mr Jerry Garry, Managing Director, Mineral Resources Authority

1 April 2022

Dear Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tuke, Mr Mori and Mr Garry,

Communities have not yet consented to Wafi Golpu dumping proposal

We, the undersigned organisations, are releasing this open letter as we are deeply concerned regarding the Wafi Golpu copper and gold mine, and its proposal to dump waste into the waters of the Huon Gulf.

As media continues to report that the Wafi Golpu proposal may soon be granted a mining lease, we remain concerned that the voices of coastal communities are not being heard.

The Wafi Golpu mine is proposed to be operated as a joint venture between Newcrest PNG2 Limited and Wafi Mining Limited, both subsidiaries of Australian companies, which are ultimately owned by Australian company Newcrest Mining and South African company Harmony Gold.

The Wafi-Golpu project is anticipated to take approximately 5 years to construct, and will last at least 28 years. Over its life, the mine will produce 360 million tonnes of tailings waste (360 billion kilograms), the majority of which, if not all, will be dumped directly into the waters of the Huon Gulf.

About 400,000 people living along the Huon Gulf will be affected if the companies are allowed to dump their waste into the sea.

Dumping mining waste into the ocean, and over 28 years, as this proposal suggests, would never be permitted in Australia. In fact, it would not be permitted for one day.

We are concerned that the project does not currently have a social licence to operate, as free, prior and informed consent has not been given by communities living along the Huon Gulf and along the pipeline.

Communities across the Huon Gulf coastline remain worried that marine ecosystems will be destroyed forever, and with this, their livelihoods and main source of food. Communities fish and gather seafood from the sea, depending on it for their meals every day.

Communities along the Huon Gulf coastline are strongly opposed to the proposal to dump mining waste into the waters of the Huon Gulf. We the undersigned

organisations, stand with communities, and believe that their concerns must be heard and addressed.

Communities are concerned about:

- potential short and long term environmental impacts on the marine ecosystem;
- potential impacts on fish stocks, which could impact the thousands of families who depend on the Huon Gulf for access to fish;
- potential impacts on their livelihoods, including ability to earn an income to support their families and also to support the work of the church;
- the potential for pipelines, which stretch more than 130km, to burst or spill, damaging watercourses, agricultural land, villages or forests;
- being deprived of agricultural land to produce food as a result of the pipeline;
- being unable to swim at Wagang Beach due to concerns regarding pollution;
- the impact of climate change on the proposal to dump mining waste into the ocean – including whether storm surges, flooding or tsunamis could sweep waste inland.

We believe that these concerns are significant and merit further attention on a national scale.

Scientists have already found environmental impacts at Lihir, which is also run by Australian company Newcrest, and which has dumped waste into the ocean since 1996.ⁱ

We believe that the approvals process is moving too fast and that consent for affected seaside communities has not been properly obtained.

We believe that it would be appropriate for all approval processes to be paused until there has been an open and transparent process in which coastal communities may raise their concerns regarding the current proposal, and until coastal communities provide their free, prior and informed consent.

We have written to the companies, articulating our concerns and requesting a meeting.

Yours faithfully,

Reverend Dr. Jack Urame
The Head Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea

Peter Bosip
Executive Director
Center for Environmental Law and Community Rights (CELCOR) Inc

Dr Charles Roche
Executive Director
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Executive Director
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For more information, please contact in PNG: Mr Peter Bosip, Executive Director, CELCOR, on (675) 3234509 or pbosip@gmail.com or in Australia: Dr Luke Fletcher, Executive Director, Jubilee Australia Research Centre on 0435 901 086 or luke@jubileeaustralia.org.

ⁱ David J. Hughes, Tracy M. Shimmield, Kenneth D. Black, John A. Howe, 'Ecological impacts of large-scale disposal of mining waste in the deep sea,' (2015) 5(9985) *Scientific Reports* available at <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep09985> (accessed 10 March 2022).