



Australia Papua New Guinea
Business Council



MEDIA RELEASE

BUSINESS COMMENDS AUSTRALIAN AND PNG GOVERNMENTS

The Business Council of Papua New Guinea and the Australia Papua New Guinea Business Council today endorsed the implementation of the Enhanced Co-operation Program (ECP) between Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Speaking in a joint presentation to the Australia Papua New Guinea Ministerial Forum in Lae, Papua New Guinea, the Presidents of the Business Councils, Mrs Winifred Kamit and Mr Alan Walter, said the policy initiatives which were now being implemented in the ECP addressed many of the concerns of business had expressed in submissions in previous years to previous Ministerial Fora.

“But, there is work to be done in fine tuning the ECP, including in ensuring business and the wider community are more fully engaged in monitoring the program and in the flow of information to business and the community”, Mrs Kamit and Mr Walter said.

The Councils applauded the government of Papua New Guinea, especially the Minister for Finance and Treasury, The Hon Bart Philemon MP, for its commitment to tight fiscal and economic policy and support for business, but noted that the improvement in economic indicators which has occurred especially over the last two years has been helped by high global commodity prices, and is not trickling down to the grass roots levels through employment growth, salary and wage increases, and improved delivery of government services.

The Councils urged both governments to work with each other and with business to ensure that projects such as the PNG gas project and pipeline to Australia are brought to fruition to aid Papua New Guinea’s economic growth and job creation.

They also urged both governments to work closely together for the rehabilitation and restructuring of the agriculture sector, including by ensuring that national infrastructure is developed and maintained to ensure agricultural production is able to reach markets.

Councils’ presentation also focussed on issues related to visas and work permits, taxation, investment, health, education and land access and usage.

The Presidents said “the work of the PNG National Working Group on Removing Impediments to Business has been central to the closer relationship between government and business which had developed over the last two years”.

Councils also endorsed the work undertaken by the Minister for Public Enterprises, The Hon Dr Puka Temu, towards rationalizing the involvement of the Papua New Guinea government in the business sector through various government business enterprises.

The Presidents committed the Councils to work with government on increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS issues in the workplace, and on developing strategies to assist with the management of HIV/AIDS issues.

The Councils also applauded the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs: “throughout his almost nine years in the portfolio Mr Downer has displayed in the Australian government a unique commitment to engagement with, and the development of Australia’s relations with, Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific islands region.”

LAE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA
15 December 2004

Media Enquiries to either Mrs Winifred Kamit, Business Council of Papua New Guinea (Tel (675) 321 1033) or Mr Alan Walter, Australia Papua New Guinea Business Council (Tel (61) (0) 419 262 087