



P O Box 1108
BOROKO
National Capital District
Papua New Guinea

Telephone: (675) 324 1114
Facsimile: (675) 324 1192
Website: www.works.gov.pg

Date: 01st August 2025
File: Lealea footbridge

MEDIA STATEMENT

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MISLEADING REPORT ON LEALEA FOOTBRIDGE PROJECT COST AND SCOPE

The Department of Works & Highways (DoWH) issues this official statement in response to recent media coverage dated **31 July 2025**, titled *"K15 Million for a Footbridge? Public Shocked by Bloated Price Tag"*, which has since circulated widely across both formal and social platforms.

The article contains numerous gross inaccuracies, technical misunderstandings, and baseless allegations directed at the Honourable Minister for Works, Mr. Solan Mirisim, and myself, Mr. Gibson Holemba, Secretary of the Department. It is vital these claims be corrected in full—based on verified engineering facts and the true scope of the project.

1. FALSE CLAIM: "22-Metre Footbridge"

The Lealea Footbridge is not 22 metres in length as inaccurately reported. The actual structure spans 220 metres across tidal waters, from CH27+000 (Napanapa Highway Cul-de-sac) to CH27+220 (Lealea 2nd Village Onshore), Central Province.

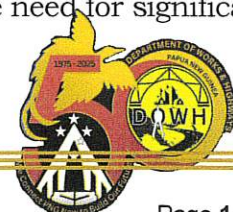
It comprises ten spans of approximately 10 metres each, supported by marine-driven Fibre Reinforced Polymer (FRP) piles at each pier. This bridge is the longest pedestrian marine footbridge constructed in PNG using composite fibre technology and offshore piling construction methodology.

2. TECHNICAL AND COST JUSTIFICATION – K15.41 MILLION

The project represents a state-of-the-art infrastructure investment using FRP structural technology. These are chemically bonded, corrosion-free materials engineered to perform for 50–70 years in saltwater environments with minimal maintenance, resulting in lower costs over the infrastructure's lifetime when compared to structures used elsewhere.

This footbridge embodies the aims of the PNG LNG Infrastructure Tax Credit (ITC) Program to not only deliver value in public infrastructure, but to build to quality and high standards that serve the public for many decades without the need for significant maintenance or replacement.

"We Connect PNG Now to Build Our Future"



The total project cost of K15.41 million (exclusive of GST) covered:

- Full topographic and bathymetric surveys
- Geotechnical investigations (3 boreholes at 20m depth)
- Hydrological and flood risk assessments
- Complete structural design of piles, headstocks, and superstructure
- Fabrication of:
 - 301mm diameter FRP concrete piles
 - FRP headstocks and crossbeams
 - Prefabricated bridge beams with diaphragms
 - FRP micromesh decking system and handrails
 - 316-grade stainless steel bolts, rivets, and brackets
- Freight and shipping from Toowoomba, Australia, impacted by foreign exchange (forex) rates
- Marine barge mobilisation, offshore pile-driving, and crane operations
- Approach ramp construction using reinforced concrete
- Abutment and scour protection works

This was not a conventional steel or concrete bridge, but a precision-engineered, marine-grade composite footbridge tailored to PNG's tidal and environmental conditions. It is technically and structurally wrong to compare with composite steel girder bridges like the Yalu Bridge or other bridges used for freshwater crossings.

3. PROCUREMENT INTEGRITY AND OVERSIGHT

The LeaLea Footbridge Community Infrastructure project funded under the PNG LNG Project-funded Infrastructure Tax Credit (ITC) Program, and delivered through rigorous, multi-layered oversight by Department of Works & Highways (DoWH), independent Technical Advisors, Independent Engineering Certifiers, and Environmental and Social Risk Auditors

All procurement was milestone-driven, performance-based, fully subjected to quality assurance protocols and independent audits, and free from political or commercial interference.

Every component from FRP manufacturing to marine construction logistics that was priced against verifiable market rates and vetted by third-party reviewers.

4. LOCAL CONTENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The project strongly upheld national content principles through:

- Direct hiring of 22 local labourers under Turra Holdings Ltd
- An additional 40+ personnel engaged via subcontractors
- Participation of 5+ local SMEs, including:
 - Deacon 4 Group (catering)
 - Fixx Electrical (electrical works)
 - Local dinghy operators, marine logistics crews, and consumable suppliers

"We Connect PNG Now to Build Our Future"



Over 70,000 man-hours were logged with zero Lost Time Injuries (LTIs), a standout achievement for a project executed in a marine and tidal environment.

5. COMMUNITY IMPACT AND BENEFITS

The Lealea Footbridge now provides:

- Safe, all-weather pedestrian access between Lealea 1st and 2nd Villages
- Improved school attendance, emergency response, and healthcare access
- Enhanced economic linkages for over 11,000 residents in Wards 15 and 16
- Reduced dependency on canoe crossings, mitigating risk and travel delays
- Strengthened cultural, family, and religious connectivity

This is critically a vital and sustainable community infrastructure.

6. RESPONSE TO FRAUD ALLEGATIONS

The Department strongly rejects any allegations of fraud, corruption, or misuse of funds. Most of the comments are speculative, unlearned and uninformed without any bases to sensationalise important technical and financial information.

All financial and technical records including, BOQs and contractor invoices, freight and customs clearance forms, inspection reports and material traceability certificates are tightly controlled.

7. CONCLUSION

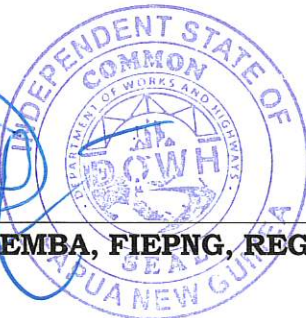
The Lealea Footbridge is a landmark achievement in sustainable, modern infrastructure delivery in PNG. It demonstrates the use of advanced construction materials, execution under international quality and safety standards, promotion of local industry participation and fulfilment of the government's community development obligations.

If you have worked on such projects you would know and appreciate the engineering involved. It is wrong to make irresponsible, mis-informed and foolish comments. This is a highly engineered footbridge meeting all NMSA navigational requirements as boats use the waterway.

We urge the media to ensure that future reporting on infrastructure projects is balanced, accurately informed, and responsible. Sensational headlines without a factual basis undermine national development efforts and tarnish the work of professionals dedicated to delivering on behalf of Papua New Guinea, and Papua New Guineans.

Thank You.

GIBSON HOLEMBA, FIEPNG, REG. ENG
Secretary



"We Connect PNG Now to Build Our Future"

