



MINISTRY OF WORKS & HIGHWAYS

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

MEDIA RELEASE



Port Moresby, Wednesday 21st May, 2025

OFFICIAL REBUTTAL TO FALSE AND DEFAMATORY ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE MINISTER AND THE SECRETARY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF WORKS AND HIGHWAYS.

The Department of Works and Highways (DoWH) strongly refutes the latest defamatory post circulating online which contains misleading allegations against Minister Hon. Solan Mirisim, Secretary Mr. Gibson Holemba, and a list of small and medium contractors allegedly paid under the Connect PNG Program from August 2024 to December 2024.

1. MISLEADING AND SELECTIVE INFORMATION

The information being circulated is selective, unethical, and dangerous. It deliberately lists only a few SME contractors and falsely claims that they are at the center of a K600 million scandal. In reality:

- These payments do not amount to K600 million. The total mentioned in the list is significantly less than K100 million.
- More than 300 contractors, both major and minor, have been engaged under the Connect PNG Program during this period. Why are only a dozen small contractors being named and shamed?
- Payment was made based on verified scope of work and certified project milestones, not on personal or regional affiliations.

We do not regionalize or politicize the procurement and payment of contractors. Whether a company is based in Vanimo, Telefomin, Central, Tari, Mendi, Enga, or Port Moresby, payments are made according to work done, certification by engineers, and compliance with IFMS and PFMA processes.

2. DUE PROCESS AND COMPLIANCE OBSERVED

All contract procurement and payment activities under Connect PNG are:

- Subject to oversight by the Department of Finance, Treasury, and Auditor-General's Office.
- Processed through the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) and comply with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA).
- Supported by independent project verification and engineer certification.

Contrary to the false narrative, there has been no breach of public financial procedures. These claims are designed to manipulate public perception and destabilize the reform progress currently being made at the Department. In fact, in the last 9 months, we have rebuilt the broken systems and processes and tighten up corrupt processes that some scumbags have been benefiting from weak systems before.

3. TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC REPORTING

We wish to clarify that:

- The 2024 Annual Performance and Expenditure Report has already been submitted to Cabinet and is now tabled for Parliament next week and is available to oversight agencies.
- The Connect PNG Program maintains a publicly accessible implementation tracker and open audit records.
- Any citizen is free to verify claims through the proper accountability mechanisms—not through social media smear campaigns.

4. TARGETING LEADERS WHO ARE REFORMING THE SYSTEM

It is immoral and unjust to personally target Minister Mirisim and Secretary Holemba, two leaders who have in less than a year:

- Cleared legacy debts to contractors,
- Accelerated project delivery, and
- Improved governance controls within a department previously marred by chronic mismanagement.
- Reviewed Connect PNG Program and align funding with the program.
- Supported the current Connect PNG audit on foot by external auditors sanctioned by NEC.
- Developed Road Maintenance and Management Plan
- Developed the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework.
- Technical Audit Policy
- Revamped the website with updated Connect PNG Information to public.

The K600 million in question was not received nor managed by the current Secretary. It refers to an earlier disbursement made prior to his appointment in 2024, and its management is already subject to existing audit processes.

5. CONDEMNING MALICIOUS DEFAMATION

We denounce this attempt to vilify small PNG-owned companies, most of which are emerging local SMEs striving to deliver real services in remote areas. These are hardworking Papua New Guineans, not cronies.

We also warn those spreading false, defamatory content that the Department will not hesitate to seek legal recourse where necessary. Final Statement

We remain committed to delivering the Connect PNG mandate, lifting the standard of public infrastructure, and empowering both large and small contractors across every province of our country, **WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR.**

Let us focus on nation building, not character assassination.

Authorized by:



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GOVERNMENT OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA