

Policy for Promoting Public Involvement

1. The Bougainville Referendum Commission is mandated¹ to promote informed debate on each side of the question to be put at the Referendum, and to encourage wider public interest and involvement in ensuring that the Referendum is conducted in a free and fair manner. This policy sets out the BRC's approach to promoting public involvement in the referendum, the criteria for the recognition of interest groups for the purposes of the referendum, and the code of conduct to be observed by recognised interest groups (RIG).

Promotion of public involvement in the referendum

2. The BRC will promote public involvement in the referendum by its own actions, including:
- a) By the provision, through appropriate channels, of information on the work of the BRC, the enrolment of voters, and the conduct of the polling and scrutiny processes;
 - b) By the reproduction and dissemination of formally approved by the two Governments on the options presented in the referendum;
 - c) By the provision of materials produced under (a) and (b) for wide public dissemination;
 - d) By the convening of public meetings and discussions for the involvement of voters and sharing of information;
 - e) By the participation of the BRC in public meetings and discussions organised by other organisations and bodies for the involvement of voters and sharing of information, provided such events prohibit active campaigning for a referendum option by other speakers or participants; and
 - f) By utilising media and social media to inform voters of the information produced under (a) and (b) and to respond to public questions and concerns.
3. The BRC calls on other organisations and bodies to disseminate BRC materials, to organise meetings and discussions to generate public interest and informed debate and take other relevant steps to encourage public involvement.

Ensuring that the referendum is conducted in a free and fair manner

4. The legal framework for the conduct of the referendum makes clear that the responsibility for ensuring that the referendum is conducted in a free and fair manner is a shared one. The BRC is committed to the delivery of a free and fair referendum, and further assurance will be provided by:
- a) The appointment of scrutineers by the two Governments and by Recognised Interest Groups;
 - b) The accreditation of impartial national and international referendum observers; and
 - c) The accreditation of national and international media organisations to provide information on the referendum process.

¹ Schedule 1.9 of Organic Law on Peacebuilding in Bougainville, Autonomous Bougainville Government and Bougainville Referendum 2002

5. Applications for accreditation as an observer organization will be received during a period to be specified by the BRC. Guidance and forms will be available on the BRC website, www.bougainville-referendum.org.

Recognised Interest Groups

6. In addition to the two Governments, Recognised Interest Groups (RIGs) are the only organisations permitted to appoint scrutineers to be present at polling centres, during the transport of votes to the counting centre(s), and the during the scrutiny of votes.

7. In addition to the criteria specified in law², the BRC will apply the following criteria in deciding whether to declare a group to be a Recognised Interest Group for the purposes of promoting a common interest in the referendum:

- a) Groups do not need to be formally registered as civil-society organisations or non-governmental organisations, but should explain how they are structured and the source of their funds;
- b) Groups must be based in Papua New Guinea, but can be based anywhere in Papua New Guinea;
- c) Group officers and those individuals proposed to be appointed as scrutineers must be eligible to vote in PNG national elections;
- d) Groups must specify which of the two options in the referendum their group is in support of;
- e) Groups must specify the particular geographic space they wish to be recognised for;
- f) Groups must specify if they wish to be recognised for the poll, the scrutiny or both processes;
- g) Groups must indicate their proposed total number of scrutineers³, and their general geographic locations; and
- h) Groups can be 'umbrella' groups of several sub-groups, but a sub-group can only form part of one Group; and
- i) Groups must use the BRC's forms and complete relevant undertakings in applying for Recognition.
- j) The BRC may withdraw recognition of a Recognized Interest Group if the Recognized Interest Group commits a referendum offence⁴ or fails to adhere to the provisions of this policy and code of conduct.

8. Applications to be a Recognised Interest Group will be received during a period to be specified by the BRC. Guidance and forms will be available on the BRC website, www.bougainville-referendum.org.

² Schedule 1.10 of Organic Law on Peacebuilding in Bougainville, Autonomous Bougainville Government and Bougainville Referendum 2002

³ The BRC reserves the right to limit the number of scrutineers and observers in each polling station and counting centre for the purposes of ensuring smooth and secure polling and scrutiny processes.

⁴ Part XVI - Offences of Organic Law on Peacebuilding in Bougainville, Autonomous Bougainville Government and Bougainville Referendum 2002