in pictures
The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
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Registered interest group scrutineer with her referendum handbook.
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Voter from Selau shows her inked finger
I am pleased to present to the governments and people of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, together with the international community, the story of the Bougainville referendum. In pictures, attempts to document what has been an enormous and extraordinary effort by a nation, two governments and their people. Everyone associated with the referendum can be proud: officials, observers, scrutineers, media, the supporting international community, and the thousands of Bougainvilleans living in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea and overseas who came out and cast their vote. I sincerely hope this publication does justice to your participation, and adequately captures the unique Melanesian spirit in which this historic, internationally-significant event was conducted.

I want to thank everyone involved and wish the leaders of both Papua New Guinea and Bougainville every success as you take forward the result. Our work was built upon your strong foundation of peace, goodwill and hard work; led respectively by Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Hon. Peter O’Neil, and subsequently Hon. James Marape, and the President of Bougainville Hon. Chief Dr John Momis. I thank these three leaders and their committed ministers for engaging in the process with great faith and integrity, and indeed the respective National and Bougainville Parliamentary Committees for their bipartisan political and community outreach. This signalled to the people a political commitment to the process which the Commission is grateful for.

I thank too the international community and the governments mentioned elsewhere in this report. They have stood shoulder to shoulder with both governments and the BRC to make the referendum a success.

To the people of Bougainville, I want to say that while the past has been a difficult one, the overwhelming voter turnout and result was a fantastic expression of hope for the future. It honoured those who you lost in the conflict. The breaking of arrows and laying down of weapons by former combatants, and the rebuilding of trust among Melanesian brothers and sisters in the lead up to the vote bodes well for the challenges ahead. The result will mean more work for all parties to the peace process. It may take years for the outcome and Bougainvilleans must be united to see this through. To both Papua New Guineans and Bougainvillians, I want to say that your best days are ahead of you.

As I said at the return of the writ to the Governor-General, I am reminded of my own country of Ireland and the conflict that engulfed it for 30 years. On the day I signed that Good Friday Agreement in 1998 with the then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, I said:

“Today is a day we should treasure, a day when agreement and accommodation have taken the place of difference and division. Today is the promise of a bright future, a day when we can hope a line can be drawn under the bloody conflict of the past.”

I sincerely hope this process continues to make a positive contribution to peace, and that this publication provides an appropriate archive for generations to come of the concept of ‘peace by peaceful means’ as enshrined in the Peace Agreement.

Hon. Bertie Ahern
Chair, Bougainville Referendum Commission
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
The Commission receives the writ for a referendum, Government House, 27 September 2019
WE THE BOUGAINVILLE REFERENDUM COMMISSION do hereby make the following statement regarding the conduct of the Bougainville referendum 2019.

We thank the two governments of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, and the people of Bougainville for their outstanding participation in this historic process – one part of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We recognise the referendum has been a national event, and so also acknowledge and thank the people of Papua New Guinea.

As an electoral process that aspired to meet international standards, it is for observers, scrutineers and the media, and indeed the people themselves, to determine whether the conduct of the referendum was inclusive, accessible, free and fair. We thank in particular scrutineers, and observers from here and overseas for bringing transparency and credibility to the process, and we look forward to their reports over the coming days and weeks.

However, as the mandated independent body appointed to conduct the Bougainville referendum, it is our conclusion from what we witnessed ourselves throughout the process - enrolment, polling and counting – was an orderly process. It followed the laws and regulations provided, and was peaceful. We witnessed voting that was informed, free of fear and accessible. Some of the numbers also tell an important story:

- The referendum roll had equal numbers of women and men voting
- The referendum roll had 25 per cent first time voters
- The voter turnout, of at least 85 per cent, was high

“We witnessed voting that was informed, free of fear and accessible.

when compared with international democratic electoral experience, and is the highest of any electoral process in Papua New Guinea

- The informal vote of 1,096 was low when compared with international democratic electoral experience and national elections.

We acknowledge the benefit of some new electoral practices for inclusive voting, including:

- Enrolment of Bougainvilleans in every province of Papua New Guinea
- Display of the preliminary referendum roll for public objections and scrutiny
- Postal voting for those travelling, sick or otherwise unable to access a polling place
- Provisional voting, for those not on the referendum roll at their place of polling
- Out of country voting (in Solomon Islands and Australia)
- Special polling at hospitals, and for people for with disabilities.

We are grateful for the resources, financial and human, provided to conduct the referendum to this inclusive standard. These have been provided by the two governments, the electoral commissions of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, and the international community. The latter has been provided from the United Nations and Australia, Germany, Ireland, Japan New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

We thank the Chief Referendum Officer and staff of the Secretariat for their tireless work. We also thank the Returning Officer, the 34 Assistant Returning Officers, and the thousands of temporary workers who carried out their role in a determined way, to deliver a credible process to the people of Bougainville.

Many other organisations also contributed to the good conduct of the referendum. The Bougainville Police Service, and their counterparts from the Regional Security Mission with police from New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, together with support from the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, provided for good law and order, and secure transport of polling materials. We also thank Papua New Guinea High Commissions in Australia and Solomon Islands, and acknowledge local service providers.

Finally, we thank the people of Bougainville living far and wide in Australia, Solomon Islands, outside Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, and of course here in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville – who have come out to have their say.

We wish the two governments all the best in taking forward the referendum result through a process of consultation, and on to the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea for final ratification as part of the ongoing peace process.
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019

Malasang: voting was a festive occasion across Bougainville
Thirty years ago, Bougainville lost 20,000 people in a brutal civil war that lasted almost a decade. Eighteen years later, the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) was signed. It guaranteed a referendum on independence along with weapons disposal and autonomy. In late 2019, people's patience commitment to peace was rewarded as polls opened and people exercised their democratic voice on the question of Bougainville’s future.

In pictures attempts to document both the historic electoral process, and the referendum atmosphere which was marked by joy, celebration, determination and remembrance.

The Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) was established on 30 August 2017 with the issuing of the BRC Charter by the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea. It was to be an independent agency, tasked with delivering a referendum to a credible, international standard. As Bougainville prepared to vote and the rest of the nation watched on, leaders from both governments and the BRC called on all parties to engage in the process, respect the process and enjoy the process as another milestone in PNG-Bougainville’s long-term peace project. Voters responded in the hundreds of thousands and they were supported by their Papua New Guinean brothers and sisters across the country. This unique Melanesian spirit paved the way for a successful poll, and is something the BRC wishes to acknowledge.

The spirit of the referendum captured the world’s imagination - the colour, the raw emotion and the singular commitment to “peace by peaceful means” through a democratic process. The vote has been an expression of Bougainville’s journey from conflict to peace, and has provided the rest of the world with a model to resolving political questions in non-violent ways.

The referendum was a new electoral process for Papua New Guinea. The importance of the vote for both the nation and Bougainville brought with it high expectations for an inclusive vote, and the process was held to account at every step by international, national and local communities. Operations spanned from Bougainville to all 20 provinces and the National Capital District of Papua New Guinea. They also included two countries: Solomon Islands (Honiara and Gizo) and Australia (Brisbane and Cairns).

The BRC faced many of the same challenges of any electoral process in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville: poor roads, expensive transport connections, mobile phone black spots, remote island atolls, mountain ranges and tropical weather – things do not always go as planned. However, the aim of the BRC Board of Commission was always a straightforward one. A credible, efficient, transparent referendum; conducted within the laws, resources and time provided; and one that delivered an inclusive vote of the people of Bougainville on the question of greater autonomy or independence for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. The BRC did not support either government, and did not support either option. It remained steadfastly independent.

With the financial and human resources made available by the two governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, and support from the international community, the BRC is proud to have raised the ‘electoral’ bar in many ways. In pictures describes some of these innovations, but most importantly, it celebrates the people who made it happen. The diligent, committed and hardworking individuals and their communities who engaged in making the process a success: officials, scrutineers, observers, the media, and the Bougainvillean voters who came out to have their voice counted. It also acknowledges the countless women and men who laid the ground work in the preceeding years for a peaceful vote.

For the six Commissioners and Chair, serving the Commission has been a tremendous honour. It has been their privilage to be a part of this unique moment in history and serve the governments and people of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea. This pictorial report stands as a tribute and their ‘thank you’ to you all. God bless.
BRC Commissioner Ruby Mirinka, signatory to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, holds the referendum writ at the Independence Park ‘Issue of Writ’ public ceremony, Arawa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRC Charter establishes the BRC</td>
<td>30 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting rights of non-resident Bougainvilleans</td>
<td>JSB decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Referendum Officer commences</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writ issued</td>
<td>27 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll closes to new enrolments and transfers</td>
<td>23 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition period finishes</td>
<td>13 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendum process continues</td>
<td>31 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final referendum date set</td>
<td>11 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange of letters between Prime Minister Marape and A/President Masono, 11 July, formalised at JSB</td>
<td>12 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation of observers and accreditation of scrutineers/registration of interest groups</td>
<td>Early November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results declared</td>
<td>11 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition period finishes</td>
<td>20 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. National Government and ABG consult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National Parliament will make the final decision</td>
<td></td>
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Voters pose for a photo, Buka
quick facts

THE RESULT

Independence: 176,928 votes (97.71%)
Greater autonomy: 3,043 votes (1.6%)
Informal: 1,096 votes (0.6%)

THE VOTE

• 249 polling teams attended 829 polling locations: every ward in Bougainville, all provinces of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands (Honiara and Gizo) and Australia (Brisbane and Cairns)
• 181,067 votes were cast (87.4% voter turnout)
• 207,213 voters appeared on the Referendum Roll. This reflected an increase of about 20% on the 2015 ABG roll. The roll had approximately equal men and women and 25% were first-time voters.

ENROLMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>* Not specified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Resident Bougainvilleans</td>
<td>98,817</td>
<td>95,598</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>194,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident Bougainvilleans</td>
<td>6,846</td>
<td>5,844</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>105,663</td>
<td>101,442</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>207,213</td>
</tr>
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Three phases of voter enrolment, conducted in Bougainville, all PNG provinces and overseas:
1. Verification of base roll (2015 ABG roll) by Ward
2. House to house enrolment of new voters in Bougainville, and at all 20 PNG Electoral Commission provincial offices and the National Capital District, and four special work sites: Ok Tedi Mine, Lihir Mine, Porgera Mine and Ramu Plantation, and Australia (Brisbane and Cairns) and Solomon Islands (Honiara and Gizo)
3. Public display of preliminary roll for corrections, additions and objections.

OBSERVERS/SCRUTINEERS/MEDIA

• 20 observer groups (8 international and 12 national/Bougainville) provided over 250 observers covering Bougainville, PNG, Solomon Islands and Australia
• Over 750 scrutineers were provided in accordance with referendum laws by 10 Registered Interest Groups and officials from the two governments
• Over 70 accredited media officials representing more than 20 local, national and international outlets covered the event, achieving far reaching global coverage.

THE BUDGET

• The total BRC budget was PGK27.8 million. PGK21 million was provided by the two governments with gap funding and additional support provided by the international community: Australia, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the US and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

* Gender of the voter was not specified
The whole community was involved in the referendum ‘celebrations’
why referendum: a brief history

A referendum on Bougainville’s political future is guaranteed by the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA), signed by the Government of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville leaders. A referendum is a commonly used democratic process to decide on a question or issue. It’s like an election, but instead of candidates there is a question. This question was set by the two governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville:

Do you agree for Bougainville to have:
Greater Autonomy; or Independence?

Like elections, the referendum had a ballot paper, ballot boxes, polling places, polling officials, scrutineers and observers.

There are many types of referendum processes. The BPA defines the Bougainville referendum as ‘non-binding’, subject to ratification (final decision-making) by the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea. This means that the option receiving the most votes is not necessarily the final decision.

The following was the agreed text included on the referendum ballot paper by the two governments:

1. Eligible people of Bougainville will vote in the referendum
2. National Government and the ABG will consult
3. National Parliament will make the final decision.

The two governments also provided a ballot paper preamble:

“The outcome of the referendum on the future political status of Bougainville, will be discussed by both governments (the Government of Papua New Guinea and ABG), and will be presented to the National Parliament for final decision making in accordance with the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the National Constitution.”

Greater autonomy or independence?

The two governments provided voters with the following definitions for each choice:

Greater autonomy: A negotiated political settlement that provides for a form of autonomy with greater powers than those currently available under constitutional arrangements.

Independence: An independent nation state with sovereign powers and laws, recognised under international law and by other sovereign states to be an independent state, separate from the State of Papua New Guinea.

Further descriptive information was subsequently provided to the BRC by the two governments on 29 October 2019:

Greater autonomy

A negotiated political settlement that provides for a form of autonomy with greater powers than those currently available under constitutional arrangements. Under the Bougainville Peace Agreement, Bougainville has a high level of autonomy powers for home grown decision-making. When the ABG began in June 2005, all provincial government powers and functions were automatically assumed. Since then, the Autonomous Bougainville Government has assumed additional powers, such as mining. Bougainville has its own constitution, its own political system and its own public service. Under ‘greater autonomy’, the National Government will continue to support the implementation of the existing autonomy arrangements and provide additional powers and functions to the Bougainville government.

(continued next page)
Greater autonomy or independence?
(continued from previous page)

Examples of powers that could be available to Bougainville under ‘greater autonomy’ include: industrial relations, foreign aid and investment, international trade and civil aviation, migratory and straddling fish stocks, additional taxation and other revenue-raising powers.

Independence

An independent nation state with sovereign powers and laws, recognized under international law and by other international states to be an independent state, separate to the state of Papua New Guinea. Independence for Bougainville as a nation State with full sovereignty will entail: a defined territory, inclusive of maritime boundaries and associated Exclusive Economic Zone, a form of government chosen by decisions of the people from time to time, capacity to enter into and manage relations with other states as well as international organisations, a right to apply for UN membership, capacity to deal with international finance institutions. An independent Bougainville would have the full range of powers and functions exercised by independent states, and in particular the powers necessary to generate its own revenues inclusive of control of natural resources, control of all categories of taxation and ability to raise loans.

Representative kinds of powers of an independent state include: security (including border security), judiciary, including final court of appeal, police service, foreign affairs, telecommunications and postal services, citizenship, quarantine, central bank.

Bougainville Peace Agreement: a joint creation and commitment

The following is an edited extract from the Joint Key Referendum Messages, published by the two governments1.

The Bougainville conflict (approximately 1988 to 1998) was the bloodiest and most destructive crisis to have occurred since the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975. It was the longest armed conflict in the Pacific Region after the Second World War.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement is a lasting peace strategy built on three pillars: autonomy, weapons disposal and referendum. It was signed on 30 August 2001 by the Government of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville leaders. It has no end date. The BPA was built on compromise and agreement. For example, the National Government did not want to be bound by the referendum result. Also, different Bougainville groups had different views:

1. Early independence with referendum as soon as possible (three to five years), with a binding outcome — where the result was binding on the National Government
2. Autonomy and deferred referendum: immediate autonomy, with a referendum after enough time to conduct reconciliation and weapons disposal to avoid a return to conflict
3. Remain part of Papua New Guinea: but with a high level of autonomy.

1 http://www.abg.gov.pg/images/misc/Final_Joint_Key_Messages_on_BPA_and_referendum_compressed.pdf

Signing of the BPA ceremony, Arawa
“Bougainville leaders and the Government of Papua New Guinea agreed to the ‘middle road’ between the two extreme options: autonomy with a referendum on independence to be held 10-15 years after the formation of the first house of the Bougainville House of Representatives.

### Understanding the Peace Agreement

The BPA was signed after ten years of negotiation between Bougainvilleans and the Government of Papua New Guinea. It was assisted and witnessed by the representatives from the international community including New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Solomon Islands and the United Nations. It can be summarised as an agreement to resolve and decide that the best future political arrangement for Bougainville should be based on:

- A guaranteed but deferred referendum for Bougainville independence. The vote will be subject to final decision (ratification) by the parliament of Papua New Guinea
- A high autonomy for Bougainville before (or leading to) referendum
- A demilitarization plan including weapons disposal, reintegration and reconciliation.

The BPA is an evolving undertaking made by Bougainvilleans among themselves, and with the Government of Papua New Guinea. The Bougainville autonomy arrangement grants Bougainvilleans the authority to govern their own affairs and through the referendum, determine Bougainville’s future political status, and through peacebuilding and weapons disposal create a conducive environment for autonomy to grow, and create an enabling environment for a free and fair referendum.
pre-referendum preparations

The success of the referendum was built on the collective work of many: from leadership down to brothers and sisters coming together across Bougainville and Papua New Guinea. This included:

- Bilateral engagement between the leaders and governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, principally through the Joint Supervisory Body which was co-chaired respectively by PNG Prime Minister Hon. Peter O’Neil, and subsequently Prime Minister Hon. James Marape, and the President of Bougainville Hon. Chief Dr John Momis.

- Joint Parliamentary Committee meetings and community engagement ‘roadshows’ supported by the Papua New Guinea National Research Institute

- Engagement by the United Nations and the international community to support the two governments, and peace and development efforts

- Numerous large and small reconciliations, peace-building and weapons-disposal activities.

While beyond the direct mandate of the Commission, the following acknowledges this commitment to peace. Without the passion and work of many women and men whose names do not appear in this publication, a referendum without intimidation or fear would not have been possible.

The breaking of arrows and laying down of weapons, the giving and receiving of forgiveness, and the rebuilding of trust among Melanesian brothers and sisters bodes well for the challenges ahead beyond the referendum vote.
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
Sir Robert Dadae, Governor-General of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, issues the referendum writ to the BRC.
The rules for the referendum and the Bougainville Referendum Commission are set out in a number of documents, laws and decisions of the two governments.

- Bougainville Peace Agreement
- Constitution of Papua New Guinea
- Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville
- Bougainville Referendum Regulation 2019
- Bougainville Referendum Commission Charter.

In 2002, an amendment to the National Constitution of Papua New Guinea added a new Part XIV: Bougainville Government and Bougainville referendum and the consequential enactment of the Referendum Organic Law. This provided the constitutional and legislative structure for the referendum. Schedule 1 of the Referendum Organic Law establishes the rules for the conduct of the referendum.

In March 2016, the two governments agreed to proceed towards a referendum, after which:

- the BRC Charter, issued by the Governor-General on 30 August 2017 under section 58 of the Referendum Organic Law, established the governance arrangements for the BRC to conduct the referendum; and

- a Transitional Committee was established by the BRC Charter, with membership comprising the respective Electoral Commissioners and Chief Secretaries for Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. The Transitional Committee was tasked to begin planning until the establishment of the full Commission, as well as any activities that may remain after the expiry of the Commission.

Joint Supervisory Body
The Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) is established under section 332 of the Papua New Guinea National Constitution. It provides a forum for the two governments, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and President of Bougainville, to consult and agree on issues related to the implementation of the BPA including the referendum. This includes the following joint decisions: the establishment of the BRC; selection of Bertie Ahern as the BRC Chair; enrolment criteria for Bougainvilleans living outside Bougainville (non-resident Bougainvilleans); referendum date; referendum question; ballot paper text; and the descriptions of the two choices.
The Bougainville Referendum Commission

A Transitional Committee undertook initial preparatory work until the appointment of the Chair and members of the Commission by the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government. The Commission commenced its work on 11 October 2018 after the appointments of an independent and internationally renowned Chair, Hon. Bertie Ahern, former Prime Minister of Ireland, and six Commissioners drawn equally from Papua New Guinea and Bougainville respectively completed the Board of Commissioners. The full Board of Commission consisted of:

• Hon. Bertie Ahern, Chair
• Mr Patilias Gamato, Papua New Guinea Electoral Commissioner
• Mr George Manu, Bougainville Electoral Commissioner
• Mr Robert Igara, a former national public servant and Chief Secretary to the Government of Papua New Guinea
• Dr Thomas Webster, former Director of the National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea
• Ms Ruby Mirinka, signatory to the BPA
• Mr Patrick Nisira, former Vice President of Bougainville.

The Commission met regularly to provide direction, review Secretariat reports and progress, make key decisions and support stakeholder and community engagement. The Commission gazetted five determinations under Section 62 of the Referendum Organic Law between 29 August and 24 October 2019.
“The BRC Charter established the Commission as “the agency” to conduct the referendum described in the Referendum Organic Law.

Committees

The Commission established three standing sub-committees to support its work and that of the Secretariat:

- Referendum Management Committee
- Committee on Public Involvement
- Committee on Referendum Security

Each committee consisted of a Commissioner from Papua New Guinea and a Commissioner from Bougainville, along with the Chief Referendum Officer and other members as required.

Commission Secretariat

The Commission was supported by a Secretariat headed by Chief Referendum Officer Mauricio Claudio. Supporting facilities were provided by both the Papua New Guinea Electoral and Bougainville Electoral Commissions. The Secretariat was staffed by seconded officers from the two governments and locally engaged personnel.

Three electoral assistance projects were established to work with the BRC: the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the New Zealand Electoral Commission. In addition BRC staff were supported by advisors from the Bougainville Partnership (Australia and New Zealand funded governance facility) and Australia Assists. The Secretariat also had offices in each regional centre of Bougainville (Buka, Arawa and Buin).

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission made its provincial staff available to assist with enrolment and voting throughout all provinces of Papua New Guinea. This included four special work sites that had significant populations of Bougainvillean workers (Ok Tedi, Lihir and Porgera mines, and Ramu Sugar Plantation).

BRC worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Papua New Guinea High Commissions to undertake enrolment and polling in Australia and Solomon Islands.

The Returning Officer, Mr John Sisiesi, was responsible for the conduct of the referendum upon the issue of the referendum writ (polling and counting) and for providing the result to the Commission via the Chief Referendum Officer. Thirty-four Assistant Returning Officers supported field operations.

In total, more than 2,500 personnel were engaged during the operation of the Commission.
Finance

The total BRC budget was PGK27.8 million. PGK21 million was provided by the two governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. The gap between the two was supported by the international community: Australia, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Additional support to the referendum process was provided by the US.

Combined, these resourced all BRC operations and procurement including a range of innovations and initiatives:

- The most comprehensive enrolment program ever undertaken for Bougainville
- A sustained program of communications and awareness initiatives unparalleled in Papua New Guinea electoral history
- Extended voter services for locations not covered in previous Bougainville electoral events
- Special services including postal, provisional, and overseas voting
- The establishment of the Commission, with costs as diverse as leasing of premises, vehicle acquisition and operation, remuneration, and travel expenses.

The full cost of the referendum was spread over many agencies. The Governments of PNG and Bougainville paid staff salaries for staff seconded or assigned to BRC for most of 2019; international development partners and their assistance agencies paid for the cadre of advisors, and some goods and services were donated or procured directly by the assistance agencies on behalf of BRC.
Communications & community engagement

The Commission adopted a multi-channel communications and community engagement strategy to conduct four interwoven campaigns. Each had a unique audience: Bougainvilleans in Bougainville; those living outside Bougainville in PNG; and those in Solomon Islands and Australia. Both English and Tok Pisin materials were required for these diverse audiences with varying levels of literacy, access to information, and understanding the referendum laws and process. The personal involvement of Commissioners in many of the face-to-face engagements was vital for quickly establishing the BRC as credible and authoritative.

These tailored approaches were used to ensure voters and stakeholder groups understood, were engaged, and had confidence in the referendum throughout enrolment, polling and counting phases:

• In-person meetings, briefings, discussions and BRC Commissioner-led community roadshows
• Ward-based and regional awareness officers
• Frequent media briefings, releases and radio shows
• Proactive monitoring and responses to social media discussions and information releases
• A range of bilingual printed and video voter information materials
• SMS messages
• Civil society and other stakeholder engagements
• Leveraging existing trusted ABG media channels such as the Bougainville Bulletin and ABG website and Facebook.

The power of social media as a tool both for positive and negative commentary on the referendum was evident throughout the life of the Commission. The BRC quickly countered a range of assertions and sometimes deliberate misinformation with swift, neutral and factually consistent responses. This ensured that community debate was supported by an informed and authoritative position from the Commission.

For example, the BRC needed to counter community anxiety about the legitimacy of non-Bougainvillean participation and the process of ratification. Through a combination of mainstream and social media engagement, and public forums led by Commissioners, the BRC promoted a better understanding of referendum condition entitlements and processes laid out in the BPA. In addition, direct engagement was established with the Bougainville leaders such as regular briefings to the Bougainville House of Representatives.

The BRC’s Facebook and Twitter presence was particularly effective for engaging Bougainvilleans living outside Bougainville who generally had greater online access, but less access to Bougainville-based voter awareness activities. This included diaspora in Australia and Solomon Islands, and the four special work sites.

Intensive community-level programs were delivered by the recruitment of awareness officers in every ward. For polling, this included a man and woman for every ward to undertake face to face voter awareness and materials distribution. The Chair and Commissioners also led roadshows in key centres in Bougainville and Papua New Guinea provinces, as did the two governments.
“It’s very important to allow the BRC to conduct the referendum process. Everyone should vote freely and fairly. If the national government and observers hear there is anything occurring outside this, the creditability of the referendum will be questioned.”

Minister Punghau
ABG Minister for Peace Agreement Implementation
For the first time ever Bougainvilleans living overseas (who were also citizens of Papua New Guinea) were offered enrolment and voting services.
The BRC developed a comprehensive three phase voter enrolment process for the referendum. This was in response to widespread community concerns regarding the low quality of voter rolls typically used in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville elections. There was also a strong desire, voiced during community consultations, for the BRC to work through Community Governments – the second tier of government in Bougainville – to develop the roll and ensure quality and inclusion.

- **Phase one**: verification of base roll (2015 ABG roll) by Ward Recorders against each Ward Register
- **Phase two**: house to house enrolment of new voters in Bougainville wards, 20 Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission provincial offices and the National Capital District, special work sites Ok Tedi Mine (WP), Lihir Mine (NIP), Porgera Mine (Enga) Ramu Sugar Plantation (Madang), and Australia (Brisbane and Cairns) and Solomon Islands (Honiara and Gizo)
- **Phase three**: public display of preliminary roll for scrutiny and revision across all locations.

A number of firsts were achieved during enrolment:

- Enrolment of Bougainvilleans in every province of Papua New Guinea
- Enrolment of Bougainvilleans, who are also Papua New Guinea citizens, living overseas
- Public display of preliminary roll for corrections, additions and objections allowed community elders and community members to validate the list for their respective areas
- Use of SMS ‘Roll lookup’. BRC provided an SMS number during phase three for people to text whether they were correctly enrolled. 1,461 people used this service, with three-quarters of these found on the roll.

The comprehensive, multi-phase approach saw an increase of 20% over the previous largest roll used in Bougainville. Approximately 25% were enrolled for their first time, with approximately equal men and women. The newly enrolled included those who had turned 18 since the previous electoral event and those who had never previously enrolled. The selection of locations in the Solomon Islands and in Australia reflected a balance between the commitment to inclusiveness and the cost-effectiveness of extending enrolment and voting services outside Papua New Guinea. The initiative was a first of its type for any electoral event in Papua New Guinea.

**Gender and resident/non-resident breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Not specified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resident Bougainvilleans</strong></td>
<td>98,817</td>
<td>95,598</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>194,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-resident Bougainvilleans</strong></td>
<td>6,846</td>
<td>5,844</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>105,663</td>
<td>101,442</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>207,213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
Phase 3 of enrolment, the public display of the Preliminary Roll, is your chance to check that: your name and details are correct; enrol if not already enrolled; and, tell us if you see someone who has died, moved away or is not eligible to vote.

1. Roll Displayed
Ward Recorder displays Preliminary Roll during 1st week of September until 26 September.

2. Check roll
Check Preliminary Roll displayed in your ward in central location or see your Ward Recorder.

3. Are you enrolled?
Check your name and details are correct.
> If not, see your Ward Recorder to enrol or update your details.

4. Objection
If you see a name that shouldn’t be there.
> See Ward Recorder to complete an Objection Form.

ENROL TO VOTE!
Voting was conducted in a calm and orderly way across 829 locations over a two week period.
The referendum writ issued by the Governor-General set the polling period to commence on 23 November 2019, with polling to continue to 7 December where required.

Polling was conducted at 829 locations by 249 polling teams. If already enrolled, other overseas voters were able to utilise the postal voting service. The BRC provided an SMS polling location check service, where intending voters could send a message of their location and be advised of their nearest polling location and polling schedule dates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polling location</th>
<th>Polling sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous Region of Bougainville</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea provinces and National Capital District¹, and four work sites:</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ok Tedi Mine, Lihir Mine, Porgera Mine and Ramu Sugar Plantation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas: Australia (Cairns and Brisbane), Solomon Islands (Honiara and Gizo)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>829</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each polling team was recruited locally and included five to seven personnel depending on location. Bougainville Police Service and/or Community Auxiliary Police were assigned to each team, providing community confidence during polling.

Comprehensive awareness programs built a good understanding of how to complete the ballot paper, and the availability of instructions and voter information in both Tok Pisin and English assisted this process.

A number of additional polling procedures consistent with the Referendum Organic Law were implemented to maximise voter participation, these included:

1. Provisional and declaration voting

Where a voter’s name was is not found on the referendum roll at the polling place, or they believe their name has been omitted in error from the roll, voters could apply for a **provisional vote**. This was a first for a Papua New Guinea electoral event. The intention was to ensure that no eligible voter was prevented from voting because of a BRC error, or as a consequence of being outside their enrolled constituency when seeking to vote. All provisional votes were checked against the referendum voter roll during the scrutiny process before being admitted to the count.

Where a voter’s name had already been marked off the roll, or the voter had been issued a postal vote but not cast it, or the voter had a visual impairment, voting was permitted after the completion of a **declaration**. These declarations were scrutinised for completeness at the count centre.

The overall number of provisional and declaration votes issued (11,617) was consistent with the Commission’s estimates. Of these, 8,404 were admitted to the count.

2. Postal voting

Postal voting was supported for the first time in a Bougainville electoral event. This provided for voters who were sick, infirm, pregnant, living more than 16 kilometres from a polling place, or travelling during the voting period. Postal votes could be downloaded from the BRC website, or collected from designated locations by a voter or their agent, and returned in the same manner up to the close of polling. BRC issued 435 postal votes, with 303 admitted to the count.

---

¹ Polling was not offered in Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea due to no enrolled voters
HOW TO VOTE

Mark 'X' in the box of your choice

www.bougainville-referendum.org
A fair vote for your future!

neutral • impartial • transparent • professional • inclusivity

authored by the Chief Referendum Officer
post box 350, hutjena, buka, autonomous Region of Bougainville, 25 October 2019

Before 23 November check polling schedule for date and location near you.

Presiding Officer signs or initials ballot paper

Fold ballot paper and put in ballot box

Ballot paper is given to you - if you are illiterate or need assistance you can have someone to help you

Like elections, the Referendum will have polling places in every Ward, a ballot paper, ballot boxes, polling officials, scrutineers and observers. Special voting ink will make sure everyone votes one time only.
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
Special male-only voting was provided for young men undertaking Upe initiations. Teams also visited Buka and Arawa hospitals, and the Buka police lock-up, ensuring everyone had a chance to vote.
SCRUTINY AND COUNTING

The scrutiny and counting of 181,067 votes was conducted at a single count centre in Buka. After an intensive checking and verification process, ballot papers from inside and outside Bougainville were mixed, making voting patterns between regions anonymous and minimising the risk of inter-regional disharmony in the event of a disputed outcome.

The percentage voter turnout was a Bougainville record of 87.4%. Only 0.6% of counted votes were deemed informal. The result was declared by the BRC Chair on 11 December in Buka at the count centre, with the writ returned to the Governor-General on 13 December 2019. No petitions were lodged in the following 40-day period (ending on 20 January 2020), formally ending the electoral process.
A single count centre at Hutjena High School operated 24/7 and ensured the scrutiny and counting of ballots papers was orderly, accurate and transparent, and observed by scrutineers, observers and the media.
After thorough verification and scrutiny, all ballots were mixed to ensure regional voter secrecy.
Count centre Manager, Mathew Kusa, secures the ballot box for verified provisional ballot papers.
Photos (Top to bottom): Count centre officials check declaration, provisional and postal ballots against the referendum roll before admitting to the count; around 100 scrutineers, observers and media attended the counting process.
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019
BRC Chair and Commissioners sign the return of writ, Buka count centre, 11 December 2019
Bougainville President Chief Dr John Momis, BRC Chair Bertie Ahern and the National Minister for Bougainville Affairs Sir Puka Temu with the return of writ. The announcement was streamed live and reported widely by international media.
Observers watch the counting process
Observers, scrutineers and the media played a critical role in providing transparency and credibility to the process.

More than 250 observers from a range of domestic and international groups were present at polling and the count centre. All observers were briefed and accredited, and received a Referendum Handbook, photo identification and were required to sign a BRC Code of Conduct. All observers wore jackets to identify themselves as observers at all locations so as to avoid confusion with scrutineers.

In contrast to scrutineers, observers did not have powers to question voters or challenge BRC officials.

Under the Referendum Organic Law, the National Government was responsible for inviting international governments and agencies as observers. Invitations were issued to those who played an historical role in the peace process and/or more recently, in the referendum process.

The BRC also invited domestic groups to apply, and accredited the following 12 groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Entity</th>
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<th>Male</th>
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<tr>
<td>B'ville</td>
<td>Bougainville Women’s Federation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bougainville Disabled Persons Organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buin District Women’s Federation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lenoke Christian Group Youth</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonolei Christian Group Women’s Federation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hako Women’s Collective</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Transparency International</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>domestic</td>
<td>Integrity of Political Parties &amp; Candidates Commission</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Youth Development Authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divine Word University</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papua Native Landowners Association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian National University / University of Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
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<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Diplomatic missions</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British High Commission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embassy of Japan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian High Commission</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand High Commission</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Organisation</td>
<td>Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Islands Forum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observers note the arrival of ‘non-resident’ ballot boxes from outside Bougainville, Buka airport
Australia

“Australia congratulates the Papua New Guinea and Autonomous Bougainville governments, and the people of Bougainville, on the successful conduct of the referendum on the future political status of Bougainville. The work of the independent Bougainville Referendum Commission, ably chaired by former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, was integral to the credibility of the polling process. We welcome in particular the effort to achieve an inclusive vote, including ensuring women and people with a disability were able to cast their vote unhindered.”

Commonwealth Observer Group

“The Commonwealth Observer Group...concludes that the referendum process was credible, transparent and inclusive. There were several encouraging features of the referendum. The referendum roll showed that equal numbers of women and men voted; 25 percent were first time voters; the turnout was 85 per cent. New innovations introduced for the referendum included enrolment of Bougainvilleans in every Province of Papua New Guinea; display of the preliminary referendum roll for public scrutiny and objections; postal voting for those travelling, sick or otherwise unable to access a polling place; provisional voting for those not on the referendum roll at their place of polling; out of country voting (in Australia and Solomon Islands); and special voting at hospitals and for people with disabilities.”

Hako Women’s Collective

“We congratulate the Bougainville Referendum Commission, all the polling teams, the police, CAPS and veteran scrutineers for a well-run referendum in Haku. Hako Women's Collective observers endorse the referendum voting as being credible, free and fair. This voting experience is the best standard Bougainville has ever experienced.”

New Zealand

“Foreign Minister Winston Peters has congratulated the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government for completing a well-conducted referendum on the future political status of Bougainville.”

Transparency International PNG

“Voter surveys were almost all entirely unanimous in their assessment that there were no undue or coercive behaviours, e.g. bribery, threats of violence, block voting, etc. Almost all respondents responded that they had not experienced or witnessed issues that have plagued elections in Papua New Guinea in the past. While there were minor procedural issues, if measured against the standard of previous elections in Papua New Guinea, the Bougainville referendum was free, fair and safe.”

European Union

“The Delegation of the European Union...welcomes the peaceful conduct of the referendum and the constructive approach taken by both the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government.”

Japan

“Japan welcomes that the holding of the referendum on November 23, in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, was held peacefully.”
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019

Count centre Manager Mathew Kusa briefs scrutineers on the four principles of the scrutiny and count: security, accuracy, transparency and anonymity.
The Referendum Organic Law defines only *Interested Parties* as able to appoint scrutineers to observe the conduct of the referendum:

- the Government of Papua New Guinea
- the Autonomous Bougainville Government, and
- Recognised Interest Groups. These groups were required to nominate which of the two choices they supported: greater autonomy or independence.

Unlike observers, scrutineers could ask specific questions to voters through the presiding officer during polling, and raise queries and challenges during the scrutiny and counting, and follow the transport of polling materials. The questions and the process for asking questions are set out in the Referendum Organic Law. These were explained by the BRC at special scrutineer accreditation briefing sessions.

In addition to the two governments, the BRC accredited ten Recognised Interest Groups. Combined, they provided more than 650 scrutineers. The National Government provided 30 scrutineers, and the ABG 61 scrutineers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aita Native Life Foundation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea Soccer Association</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bougainville People’s Congress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Mining Lease Osikayang Landowner Association</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Bougainville Veterans Association</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>North Bougainville Veterans Association</td>
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<td>303</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Bougainville Veterans Association</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Moresby Bougainville Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kieta District Youth Group</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Domaakung / Wida 7 Clan Organisation</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomous Bougainville Government</td>
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<td>61</td>
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<td>National Government</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>655</strong></td>
<td><strong>750</strong></td>
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</table>

“Scrutineers could ask specific questions to voters through the presiding officer during polling, and raise queries and challenges during the scrutiny and the count.”
President Momis talks with media after casting the first vote in the referendum.
Media provided a further component to the formal transparency of the referendum, and played a key role in voter awareness and communications. More than 70 representatives from over 20 media organisations covered the referendum. They represented outlets from Bougainville, Papua New Guinea and overseas, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand and United Kingdom, as well as news wires AAP, AP and Reuters. Many more covered the referendum remotely.

The BRC operated a media centre in Buka to support informed reporting of the referendum. A satellite link was available at the centre, providing a critical uplink for filing media stories and enabling the first ever TV ‘live cross’ from Bougainville.

Regular briefings were provided by the Chief Referendum Officer, Commissioners and officials to media, observers and civil society groups. All media conference recordings and media releases were distributed to a media WhatsApp group and media releases were regularly posted on the BRC website, Facebook and Twitter pages. Overall, local and international coverage of the referendum was positive and extensive, reaching outlets such as BBC, CNN, the Guardian, New York Times, and Washington Post, as well as regular coverage in Australian and New Zealand outlets. There was a strong domestic media presence, providing live coverage through mainstream and social media channels. The Chief Referendum Officer and Commissioners attended regular evening radio talk back shows on NBC and New Dawn FM.

*Photos (Top to bottom):* Commissioner Ruby Mirinka with EMTV’s Meriba Tulo; BRC press conference with Chief Referendum Officer Mauricio Claudio and Commissioners (L-R) Patilias Gamato, George Manu and Ruby Mirinka; ABG Member for Selau, Hon. Joseph Watawi speaks with NBC.
Police worked closely with the BRC to support a peaceful environment for voting across all polling places.
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019

contributing to the peace process

“The celebratory atmosphere that generally characterised the polling and counting process generated few issues of security concern.

Pre-referendum

The BPA has provided for a mainly stable and peaceful society in Bougainville. Reconciliation and weapons disposal programs, both large and small, have achieved a significant reduction in threats to peace in the community. However, leading into the referendum there was a potential for weapons to create instability and fear. Some groups and individuals remained unreconciled, and there were some isolated but notable opponents of the concept of a referendum.

The BRC focused on creating a stable security environment through the Committee on Referendum Security. The involvement of the Chief of the Bougainville Police Service (BPS), Deputy Commissioner, Francis Tokura as an external member ensured the closest cooperation with the BPS – the agency with primary responsibility for law and order in Bougainville.

The BPS assigned nearly 500 personnel to the referendum: regular officers, secondees from the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, Community Auxiliary Police and BPS Reservists. They were supported by the Regional Police Support Mission, a New Zealand-led group requested by the two governments of 23 regional police deployed for the polling and counting period. The BPS successfully managed normal law and order issues as well as providing a presence for each polling team and at the count centre.

The Committee on Referendum Security provided a mechanism for community engagement, making risk assessments and offering assurance about the Commission’s commitment to a free, fair and credible referendum. Direct community engagement by Commissioners was also instrumental in securing community ownership of the referendum and – critically – to provide an environment in which all voters felt free to participate. In particular, personal interventions by Commissioners defused potential tensions arising from a view that ex-combatants would or should take a visible role in referendum security.

The role played by the two governments and the personal involvement of their most senior figures from both Parliaments presented a public show of unity and commitment to the process. Their bipartisan roadshows and other joint public engagements were vital - together with the work of UN peace-building activities, church, women, youth and ex-combatant groups - to strengthening community confidence in the referendum.

The celebratory atmosphere that characterised polling generated few issues of security concern. Community calls for an alcohol ban were supported by the BRC, and passed on for the ABG to implement. This was embraced by young people and contributed to the peaceful nature of the referendum.

Post-referendum

Community reaction to the announcement of the result was joyful and peaceful. The overwhelming vote in favour of independence was consistent with the most openly expressed sentiment. This, coupled with the BRC’s rigorous compliance with the Referendum Organic Law and commitment to inclusiveness, resulted in no apparent grounds for disputing the outcome or the process. In addition to the absence of petitions against the conduct of the referendum, no offences under the Referendum Organic Law have been detected. Although the referendum was a unique event and unlike a candidate election, the absence of petitions was a notable signal of confidence in fidelity of the process and the authenticity of the outcome.
In Pictures - The Story of the Bougainville Referendum 2019

Hon. Bertie Ahern is a former Prime Minister (Taoiseach) of Ireland (1997-2008), and a Member of the lower house of the Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann) for 34 years (1977-2011). Mr Ahern played a major role in securing peace in Northern Ireland and the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. In 2007 he became the first Taoiseach to address a joint session of the UK Parliament.

Mr Patilias Gamato is the Electoral Commissioner of Papua New Guinea (since 2015). As Electoral Commissioner, he co-chaired the BRC Transitional Committee. Mr. Gamato holds a Diploma in Public Administration (PNGIPA), Diploma in Management (TAFE, NSW), Bachelor in Business and Administration (UPNG), and Master’s in Strategic Management (UPNG).

Mr Robert Igara CMG. Mr Igara served as the Chief Secretary to the Government of Papua New Guinea 1997 - 2002. He has held several senior positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including diplomatic postings in Fiji and Australia. Mr Igara was a signatory to the Burnham Truce Agreement.

Mr George Manu was appointed Bougainville Electoral Commissioner in 2014 and is responsible for the conduct of ABG general elections, by-elections and Community Government elections. As Bougainville Electoral Commissioner, he also co-chaired the BRC Transitional Committee. Mr Manu is currently leading preparations for the 2020 ABG elections.

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Mrs Ruby Mirinka is an experienced healthcare professional who provided humanitarian relief and community service during the crisis. Subsequently, she played a key role in peace negotiations between the governments of PNG and Bougainville, and was a signatory of the BPA representing the women of Bougainville. Mrs Mirinka holds a Master’s Degree in Management from Vudal University.

Dr Thomas Webster is a Professorial Research Fellow and Project Manager of Bougainville Research (and Team Leader of the Bougainville Referendum Research Project) at PNG National Research Institute (NRI). Dr Webster was formerly Director of NRI (2004-2015). He has a Doctor of Education degree from Bristol University, a Master in Education from Harvard University, and a Bachelor of Education from UPNG.

Mr Mauricio Claudio has two decades of experience in global democracy and governance programming in ten countries. He is a specialist in elections planning and implementation, violence monitoring, institution-building, training and project evaluation in post-conflict and transitional environments.

Mr Desmond Tsianai is an experienced senior electoral official with the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner. Appointed as Director of Operations in November 2018, he has also acted as the Chief Referendum Officer on several occasions. Mr. Tsianai has a diploma in Primary Education and is an accredited specialist in electoral training programs within PNG and the wider Pacific.

Mr John Sisiesi is an experienced public servant in Bougainville and was appointed as Returning Officer for the BRC in 2019.

Mr John Becks is an experienced accountant and corporate administrator. He was appointed Director of BRC Corporate Services in 2019.

The Referendum Organic Law requires all ballot papers (including used and unused papers), certified lists of voters, declarations, and applications used at or in connection with the referendum to be destroyed at the end of the petition period. The papers were destroyed, by burning, on 13 March 2020 in Buka.

The BRC Charter requires the Commission to wind up operations three months after the end of the petition period (20 April 2020). However, due to the unprecedented interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent national and Bougainville States of Emergencies, the Commission formalised an extension to 31 May 2020. This provided both the time and the occasion for a formal hand over of the Final Report to both governments, the last act of the Commission.
THE BALLOT PAPER

All ballot paper text was provided to the BRC by the two governments. The BRC undertook design and community consultation, followed by printing 300,000 ballot papers.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABG  Autonomous Bougainville Government
BPA  Bougainville Peace Agreement
BPS  Bougainville Police Service
BRC  Bougainville Referendum Commission
CAPS  Community Auxiliary Police Service
JSB  Joint Supervisory Body
PNG  Papua New Guinea
PGK  Papua New Guinea Kina