



**JUBILEE AUSTRALIA**  
Digging to the roots of poverty

NCCA Offices  
Level 7, 379 Kent Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

T (02) 8259 0817  
F (02) 9262 4514  
inquiry@jubileeaustralia.org

[www.jubileeaustralia.org](http://www.jubileeaustralia.org)

October 26, 2014

Dear President Chief Dr Momis

We are writing in response to your letter to the Jubilee Australia Board dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014, which raised a number of concerns about our recent report *Voices of Bougainville: Nikana Kangsi, Nikana Dong Damana (Our Land, Our Future)*.

Since receiving your letter, the Jubilee Australia Board has carried out a detailed review to address each of the specific concerns raised regarding the report. Two kinds of criticisms are raised by your letter: first, concerning the purpose and scope of the report, and second, the report's methodology. Our investigation has found both these criticisms to be without basis. Below we clarify Jubilee Australia's purpose and role as an organisation, and comment on specific concerns raised in your letter.

### **Background to Jubilee's production of the report**

Jubilee Australia is an NGO whose central mission is to protect and promote the human rights of those whose lives are affected by the activities of Australian companies, financial institutions and government. Its research plays a special role in supporting this work.

Jubilee Australia's work concerning the Panguna mine in Bougainville has been informed by a number of considerations. Australia has a strong history of involvement in the Panguna mine through its government and its corporations, making this an issue of significant concern for Australians who wish to ensure that their government and companies act responsibly, that past harms are acknowledged and mistakes not repeated. Jubilee Australia is also linked with Bougainville through civil society networks. Through both of these channels, Jubilee Australia became aware that significant currents of opinion in mine-affected communities may reflect perspectives differing from those often reported in mainstream media coverage of this issue. Jubilee Australia's research was designed to seek a clearer understanding of perspectives within mine-affected communities.

Jubilee Australia recognises that operating as an Australian NGO in relation to issues profoundly affecting other countries is complex. The Board stands by its original judgement regarding the importance of public discussion on this issue.

### **The purpose and scope of the report**

The central purpose of the report was to understand the views of people in the Panguna region on the potential reopening of the mine in the context of past experiences, which clearly continue to have enormous impact on the lived experiences of many. Powerful stories were expressed, centring on enduring trauma, decades of mistrust, a desire for a deeper and more meaningful reconciliation, and an interest in having a greater say in the development of their country. The report conveys a much broader and more nuanced picture than simply whether people are for or against the mine's reopening: respondents' views about the conflict, about peace, justice and reconciliation, and hopes for the future of Bougainville were all canvassed and expressed.

Second, the purpose of the report was to document subjective *experiences and perceptions* of a wide cross-section of individuals and groups affected by the mine, to help inform the wider public debate. Jubilee Australia's research was never designed to empirically appraise the current consultation process, or performance of the ABG. Either of these tasks would have involved a research project on a much larger scale, and with a very different methodology, to that employed for this study. Although views were canvassed as to the consultation process, reconciliation and sustainable development in Bougainville, this was not to establish an overall objective or definitive assessment of such matters; it was merely to gain a sense of what people in the Panguna region thought about them. The findings were presented in this way.

The report's introduction refers briefly to publicly available documentation by way of background to the interview material that is subsequently presented. It mentions consultation and reconciliation that have occurred to date. Your letter suggested that the report should have presented more details of the consultation processes. Given the focus of Jubilee Australia's report on the perceptions and experiences of communities regarding these events and processes, rather than the events and processes themselves, Jubilee Australia did not provide extensive treatment of these issues.

### **The report's methodology**

Your letter raises concerns about the report's methodology. You suggest that Jubilee Australia claimed that the research published in the report consisted of a **representative** survey, and that the report's findings can be generalised. In your letter (p.3), you suggest that 'The Report is ... dishonest in claiming that interviews with 65 individuals selected by its authors allows it to represent the voices of 300,000 Bougainvilleans'. The report clearly states a number of times that it does not claim to represent all the people of Bougainville. Perhaps the most explicit statement of this appears in the conclusion (p.46):

*Bougainville is a large and diverse island – this report did not attempt to survey the entire population. Doubtless, some communities in other parts of Bougainville may have differing views both about what happened in the past, and what should happen in the future.*

Your letter also suggests that the report claims to represent the views of all of the approximately 10,000 people in the Panguna region. In fact the report states a number of times that it reflects the views only of the people in the Panguna area who were consulted in this study. Jubilee Australia is strongly of the view that its report complies with normal standards of qualitative research of this kind.

Your letter questions the **sampling methods** in Jubilee Australia's research. It suggests that 'the choice of people to interview was not based on any scientific sampling technique' (p.6). The methodological discussion in the report itself (see p.48 of the report) makes clear that the research involved an exploratory case study based on purposive sampling. The report makes no claim to have employed random sampling methods. The interviews were semi-structured and based on open-ended questions which are summarised on page 50 of the report. Jubilee Australia believes that the choice of sampling method is valid and appropriate for this kind of research.

Your letter alleges bias by the researchers concerning the sampling process. It suggests that the researchers contacted people they knew were opposed to mining and that these contacts in turn suggested participants that they knew were also opposed to mining. Jubilee Australia found its partners in this research – including the individual researchers involved in the data collection, and the organisational collaborators, the NGO BRG and the UK-based International State Crime Initiative—to be highly professional and aware of the need for the research to be conducted in an as impartial, rigorous and systematic way as possible. There were significant challenges in gaining access to the particular communities involved in the research, many of which are not only in remote regions but protected by security checkpoints. Without Jubilee Australia's partnership with BRG and the local researchers, this research could not have been conducted.

The question of how local expertise might be accessed while guarding against concerns about potential partiality is not unfamiliar to social science researchers. It is a methodological challenge that requires careful management. In partnering with BRG and local researchers, Jubilee Australia took precautions detailed below to ensure that the data collection process was carried out to protect the integrity and validity of the research method.

With regard to the **conduct of the interviews** themselves, the researchers were trained with regard to both qualitative research methods in general, and interpretation and application of the semi-structured interview schedule in particular. Interviews were transcribed in full, so that the framing of questions was transparent, and responses could be analysed in detail, and in context.

With regard to **selecting individual interviewees**, your letter made particular reference to methodological decisions surrounding the identity of the community leaders (or 'gatekeepers') who helped to facilitate access to interviewees in each village. The report (p.48) explains in detail the process through which interviewees were selected. For reasons of cultural appropriateness, safety, and the practicalities of community access, it was essential to engage with intermediaries as articulated. Jubilee Australia accessed interviewees through a range of community leaders in each village. The precise mix varied between villages, but as the report indicated on page 48, the kinds of community leaders assisting with this process included those in responsible positions such as school teachers, church leaders, youth leaders, women leaders or traditional village chiefs. All community leaders and participants were assured of anonymity, thus to provide any personal details would be in clear breach of Jubilee Australia's ethical obligations and potentially compromise their safety.

In your letter you also raised the **lack of contact with the government and the official landowner association** during the conduct of the research. Although contact with particular government officials is sometimes involved, it is not Jubilee Australia's normal *modus operandi* to collaborate with governments in doing its own research and investigations, on the grounds that it would compromise its independence. This is particularly true when investigating issues that are politically sensitive. In this case, it was Jubilee Australia's judgement that gaining trust with communities could have been compromised should it have been linked, or even perceived to be linked, with government. This

would have defeated the purpose of the report, as the frankness of the responses given in the interviews would probably not have occurred.

No disrespect to the ABG or official landowner associations was intended as a result of Jubilee Australia's decision to proceed with the research in the way it did.

Jubilee Australia thanks you for taking the time to respond in such detail to its report. Jubilee Australia recognises that there are serious risks in engaging in public discussion on difficult issues like this one; however, it affirms the belief that there is an important public interest in informed debate on this issue in Australia as well as in PNG and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Jubilee Australia will continue to endeavour to contribute to this debate in a way that is appropriate, constructive, and supportive of both future development prospects of communities in Bougainville, and the integrity and accountability of Australian business and government actors who continue to be involved in shaping the past, present and future of Bougainville.

Yours sincerely,

Jubilee Australia Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Fletcher', written in a cursive style.

Luke Fletcher  
Chair, Jubilee Australia Board

And on behalf of:

Kate Gauld  
Anne Lanyon  
David Barnden  
Rob Hanna

***Jubilee Australia...Promoting accountability for the causes of poverty and injustice in the Asia Pacific. Elevating the voices of affected communities. Inspiring Australians to get involved.***