

First Field Investigation begins as part of the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment

13 April 2023: Field research and investigations will begin next week as part of Phase One of the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment (PMLIA). This work will be undertaken across impacted areas to identify and assess any environmental impacts of the Panguna mine since mining was stopped in 1989, and the social and human rights that are directly connected to these environmental impacts.

Beginning immediately after Easter, the research team will be traveling to mine-impacted areas to carry out environmental and social, health and human rights investigations. The work across impacted areas will run for at least four weeks, and is the first time data is being collected as part of the PMLIA. Over this time, the scientists will be collecting data from water, soil and air samples, as well as conducting interviews with local people from the impacted areas. Additional data collection will also include aerial surveys (from a plane) known as Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) surveys, as well as gathering information from weather stations setup for the study.

The field investigations will be completed across the Panguna Mine affected area in selected high-risk areas including: the Loloho port, in and around the Panguna Mine; the river system including the Kawerong River, Jaba River, Kuneka Creek and areas impacted by tailings deposition, and the delta area where the rivers system enters the Empress Augusta Bay.

The field investigations will be completed by an experienced team from global consulting firm, Tetra Tech Coffey. Tetra Tech Coffey has over 40 years of experience in Papua New Guinea and was appointed as the independent primary contractor by the PMLIA Oversight Committee at the end of 2022. It has a team made up of local Bougainvillean, Papua New Guinean and international experts and scientists.

The PMLIA was launched by the Autonomous Bougainville Government President in Arawa in December 2022. The first field study will run throughout April and May, and will be the first of three separate field studies that are planned for this year. This follows a month of visiting impacted areas where the research team met with local communities, leaders, and individuals and discussed the upcoming data collection process. This field study is an important part of the wider Legacy Impact Assessment which is scheduled to run for the next 18 to 20 months.

Theresa Jaintong, Oversight Committee member commented on the commencement of Phase One saying: "The field work that is due to start next week is of critical importance as it makes up the backbone of the Legacy Impact Assessment. While it is the first step in a long process, the team's work on the ground over the next month will ensure they can carry out a rigorous, and detailed, assessment of the impact of the mine on the surrounding people and areas."

Member of the Bougainville House of Representatives, Hon. Theonila Roka Matbob, who represents the communities involved in the complaint said: "We are in full support of the field work team as they begin Phase One of the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment. The data they will be collecting will play a crucial role in this whole process. It is important that we work together to support this team in doing their work by providing a safe and cooperative environment for them to complete their research. This will help ensure the best data collection possible, helping this process to understand the impacts the mine has had on the surrounding areas and people."

The data and findings from the completed Phase One of the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment will be presented in mid-2024 to the Oversight Committee and will be translated and shared back with the impacted communities.

The Oversight Committee oversees the entire Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment process and is made up of representatives from the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, landowner, clan and community leaders from the affected area, the Human Rights Law Centre, Rio Tinto and Bougainville Copper Limited.

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For additional information on the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment, please visit the dedicated website [here](#).

There are various ways to lodge a Complaint or voice a concern about the assessment process:

By phone: +675 71449914

By email: PMLIA.Secretariat@gmail.com

By mail: c-PO Box 313, Waigani

In person: at the PMLIA office, Ioro 2 Community Government Building