

Updates on the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment

26 February 2024: The first Oversight Committee (OC) meeting of 2024 will be held this week, kicking off what will be an important year for the Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment (PMLIA). The fourth round of community dialogues, which is undertaken by local facilitators in impacted communities to collect feedback and answer questions on the Impact Assessment will follow the OC meeting in the coming months.

The OC meeting comes at an important juncture as the Impact Assessment nears a major milestone with the results of the data collected during the three field campaigns, as part of Phase 1, planned for presentation to impacted communities in mid-2024.

The PMLIA is an independent process established following a complaint from Bougainville landowners against Rio Tinto and lodged by the Human Rights Law Centre with the OECD Australian National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct in September 2020. The Complaint concerns the impacts arising from previous mining operations at the Panguna mine site which Bougainville Copper Limited, formerly majority-owned by Rio Tinto, used to operate.

The PMLIA process is not associated with the recent extension to the exploration licence granted to Bougainville Copper Limited by the Autonomous Bougainville Government. The PMLIA will continue with planned activities for 2024, including the presentation of results from the field campaigns to communities and a final report detailing these results due this year.

Independent contractor Tetra Tech Coffey conducted these field campaigns which included numerous site inspections by different technical experts and engagement with local communities. It also included 425 household surveys and the collection of over 200 water samples from waterways and drinking water sources, a collection of over 250 soil samples, and over 200 food samples. The samples collected were sent to accredited laboratories in Australia for analysis.

Tetra Tech Coffey are spending the first half of the year analysing the data to form the Phase 1 report that identifies the impacts of the Panguna mine and the effects it has had on the surrounding environment and the social and human rights impacts directly connected to the environmental impacts.

Tetra Tech Coffey are scheduled to deliver a draft report to the Oversight Committee in mid-2024. The results in the draft report will then be presented to impacted communities across select locations to collect feedback on the findings and answer questions. Feedback will be collated from communities, the Technical Sub-Committee and the Oversight Committee, who will review the report and feedback and decide on the next steps. Recommendations will be made following this on what impacts from the mine need to be addressed.

This will conclude Phase 1 of the Impact Assessment, the aim of which is to understand what the impacts are from the Panguna Mine. Phase 2 of the Impact Assessment will look at how any identified impacts should be remedied, and cannot be determined until after the final report has been delivered to the Oversight Committee.

Martin Brash, the Independent Facilitator commented: "The Oversight Committee comes at an important juncture as the Legacy Impact Assessment nears a major milestone with the findings of the Phase 1 study due to be presented to the impacted communities by mid-year.

“The Parties to the complaint, Rio Tinto and the Human Rights Law Centre, wish to express their appreciation to their colleagues in the OC from the Autonomous Bougainville Government, GoPNG, Bougainville Copper Limited, and Community Leaders as well as to the OECD Australian National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct (AusNCP) for their support and perseverance in getting the Legacy Impact Assessment to the current stage and look forward to further constructive discussions that will lay the foundation for long-term solutions for the impacted communities.”

The Legacy Impact Assessment is funded by the Panguna Legacy Assessment Company (PLAC) and is an independent assessment of the environmental impacts caused by the mine, and the subsequent social and human rights impacts directly connected to these environmental impacts. The Legacy Impact Assessment is not connected to any agenda surrounding the mine re-opening or not re-opening.

The Oversight Committee oversees the entire Panguna Mine Legacy Impact Assessment process and includes representatives from the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, landowners, clan and community leaders from the affected areas, 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](#) and Facebook page [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 Secretariat office, Arawa, Section 11 lot 44A