

# Outcome Issues



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The Outcomes Issues Study addresses three main areas:

1. Issues related to Referendum Administration
2. Political, Economic and Social Scenarios following independence or the rejection of independence
3. Coordination Mechanisms for Implementation of the Referendum Outcome.

Our analysis approaches these issues from a comparative perspective, drawing on other situations in which similar referendums have taken place. We set out key lessons for good practice for the referendum process as well as coordinating and implementing the result and managing the consequences – both negative and positive – of a once in a lifetime decision for all the citizens of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea (PNG).

The report describes the methods and lessons from other referendum processes; it uses these processes to consider the issues that may arise for Bougainville following either referendum outcome; and it makes recommendations in support of a referendum process that is free and fair and recognised by all citizens of Bougainville and PNG as legitimate. It also addresses the political, legal, economic and social issues that tend to raise after referendums such as this, with a view to managing the outcome of the referendum.

Our analysis suggests that the referendum process is a key part of the outworking of the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA). In this sense the holding of the referendum is just as significant as its outcome. A vote for independence will result in the formation of a new state. A rejection of independence will have equally profound constitutional implications. Whatever the result, the referendum will mark a defining moment for Bougainville, and a key milestone in the implementation of the BPA and require significant amendment of the constitutions of both Bougainville and PNG.

It is important that the referendum aspires to be the ‘settled will’ of the people of Bougainville. Proactive steps should be taken to encourage wide public participation in the design of the referendum process, and to use this as an opportunity for education around the peace process and the reasons it included the referendum.

The analysis emphasises four key observations:

1. Getting the technical referendum issues sorted satisfactorily is one of the key ways to avoid conflict over outcome. Running an efficient, legitimate referendum may not be a sufficient condition for avoiding conflict but it is a necessary one. A contested, illegitimate referendum may very well become a catalyst for further conflict.
2. International friends of the peace process and BPA need to signal that they will support the outcome of a free and fair referendum and support the parties to ensure a peaceful implementation of the referendum outcome.
3. Whatever the outcome, the human rights and equality of everyone should be respected, and steps should be taken to include the aspirations of those whose preferred outcome was not endorsed in any revision of the constitutional settlement.
4. The status of Bougainville will be transformed following the referendum, whatever the outcome. We recommend that both PNG and ABG should produce ‘white papers’ on both post-BPA autonomy and independence to provide a proper blueprint for both possible outcomes.