



THE NATIONAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

27th April 2021

RE: MINISTER TO REVIEW THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN DEVELOPMENT

The Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and Sports was engaged with the National Research Institute (NRI) Council members to ensure dialogue and communication on matters affecting the country and ensure PNG makes decisions based on evidence and research.

Hon. Wesley Raminai stated that NRI needs to research into the quality of education and the persons that are coming out of the education system to see whether we are producing quality and appropriately educated and skilled persons required by the country. Further, he emphasised that the population is growing and what are the areas and the industries that will sustain the number of people?

Hon. Dr. Allan Marat, MP, Deputy Opposition Leader and Council member stated that research and innovation is critical in the country but most or all the research institutions are defunct, or have disappeared into department or agency structure such as the Coconut and Cocoa Research Institute, Coffee Research Institute, Fisheries Research station at Kanudi and mining or geological research.

The Chairman of NRI, Wilson Thompson expressed confidence in Minister Raminai for his endorsement of the new council members including two Members of Parliament and two community representatives to the National Executive Council. He emphasised that NRI is an independent research institute and think tank for the government and the people of PNG by virtue of the composition of the Council which comprises two MPs, two vice chancellors of UPNG and Unitech, the secretary for National Planning and the secretary for Personnel Management and two community representatives. The Council appoints all staff including the Director and determines its own terms and conditions and the decision of the Council is final.

In view of the Minister's vision to reform the research and innovation in PNG, Mr Thompson said that NRI has shifted away from political, economic, cultural, education, environmental and policy research to cater for the vacuum left by many research institutes. NRI is concerned that the Institute of PNG Studies and the National Film Institute that were transferred out of NRI have not delivered as it had under NRI.

NRI also assisted in behavioural studies related to health and diseases and also health administration. Since 2010, NRI has ventured into food security, agricultural research and agriculture economics, and mining impact and resource management due to the collapse of the Coconut and Cocoa Research Institute, Coffee Research Institute, and other research agencies such as Geological Survey of PNG, Wau Ecology Institute, Kanudi Fisheries Research

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Inquire, inform, influence

Station, and Department of Agriculture and Livestock Research stations: Kapiura Oil Palm, Menifo Sheep, Kama Pig, Korofeigu Cattle, Murua Rubber, Benabena Goat, Moitaka Quarantine, Fimito Apiculture and Garaina and Kuk Tea Research.

The NRI Council also endorsed the minister's call for the relocation of all research institutes from all departments and agencies to one ministry to coordinate all research and innovation including providing grants to any Papua New Guinean and others who want to research into any matters beneficial to PNG. Further, there needs to be consultation with the Constitution and Law Reform Commission to review all legislations that established various research agencies and institutes and probably come up with an overarching legislation to cover all research and innovation such as the Higher Education Act.

Minister Raminai concluded that research and innovation is key to any progress in any society and also businesses need research to progress. Agriculture in PNG has been affected due to poor coordination of research including priorities and fragmentation in research and in policy formulation and influencing it. Copra and rubber were introduced in the 1880s as plantation crop but we could not show any research that tells the story of copra or rubber. The National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) is so focused on small growers and most of its research is irrelevant to the needs of the farmers and business.

We were told that there were 101 uses of coconut but that could be stories of coconut trees from other countries or maybe our coconut trees are not strong enough to produce certain products. Only research can show us and so far, the Coconut and Cocoa Research Institute and NARI has no better story to tell us and take the coconut and rubber into innovation. NARI is not resourced and guided effectively to undertake research into plants and animals, and pests and diseases and impact on trade. Further research is required in terms of external trade, biosecurity and also protocols relating to phytosanitary and trade protocols under say APEC, Commonwealth or MSG Agreements as well as clearance for exports. The focus of the Government is on agriculture and so must be our research and advice.

With the experiences and leadership from NRI, Minister Raminai expressed confidence in the NRI Council and expressed his concerns and visions to provide guidance and support to restructure and focus all research and innovation agencies in PNG.

For further details or information, contact me on address below or Esther Haro, Executive Support Manager on Tel: 326 0300 or email: Esther.Haro@pngnri.org .


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