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Practical Growth Options: New Ireland Agricultural Development Study

“My response to the disappointing 2019 Budget included practical suggestions for getting growth going again in PNG in ways that truly benefitted our people. I want to give a quick report on further progress along this path that is being applied in the districts of Kavieng and Namatanai” stated the Shadow Minister for Treasury and Finance, Ian Ling-Stuckey.

“Three experienced agricultural development specialists have just completed field work for a study of agricultural possibilities on New Ireland. This work aimed to identify the untapped potential for village agricultural development. As well, production and sale of agricultural products offers the chance for many villagers to participate in the cash economy and enjoy the benefits that arise from this.

“Meetings were held with villagers from Kavieng and Namatanai districts in the Tikana, Lavongai, Sentral and Namatanai LLG areas including New Hanover and Tabar islands, Panamecho, Lelet and Danmirik. They met with agriculture, education and public health staff from provincial, district and LLG levels of government to consider issues and options for support. They also had discussions with catering and community engagement staff from Lihir and Simberi gold mines, representatives from the World Bank, the Market Development Facility, the PHAMA market access program, KIK, NPOL and PPAP, UNDP and ACIAR cocoa projects, Kavieng agri-business managers from Poliamba Oil Palm, Bisi Trading and Emirau Marine Products, as well as myself and the Member for Namatanai, Walter Schnaubelt.

“The didiman team identified improvements for both subsistence food production and cash crops, such as pathogen-tested sweet potato, improved varieties, agronomy and scheduling of fresh produce for formal markets, and introduction of clonal cocoa varieties combined with improved management practices. Training in food production and

basic nutrition at high schools, as well as village agriculture will also be recommended. Cash crops examined included cocoa, fresh food, oil palm, coconut products, galip, vanilla, betel nut and balsa. Information was gathered to prepare business plans for each possible cash crop.

"I am pleased that this expert team, in consultation with our people, consider that some of the proposed activities could be commenced early in 2019 as there is sufficient information and expertise in PNG to start these soon. Other activities need to be examined in more detail before a decision could be made on their suitability. These types of activities will be built into our districts' 5 year development plans" stated the Shadow Treasurer and Member for Kavieng.

"As I said in my budget response "So rather than planning a massive agriculture subsidy to besties, a subsidised cow herd or plans to bring tens of thousands of foreign workers to grow rice, I am starting with some very specific possibilities to improve agriculture. The aim is to both lift growth, but equally importantly, the plan is to raise the level of nutrition in my district." This agriculture mission and their recommendations are the type of practical, evidence-based steps that could be expected from a new coalition government which we hope will be formed early in 2019" said Mr Ling-Stuckey.

Hon.Ian Ling-Stuckey,CMG.MP
Shadow Minister for Treasury & Finance

23 December 2018