

## **Why does the Prime Minister need an Explanation on Why Services are failing to be Delivered?**

The Prime Minister wants Departmental heads to explain why services are not reaching the population. It's odd that he doesn't know the answer. For many years operating funds for recurrent goods and services and infrastructure maintenance, particularly at sub-national level, have been hacked back. As NEFC has highlighted, in nearly all provinces there is totally inadequate funding for core services, like health and education, even after the amendment to inter-government financing. National road maintenance for the entire country has been provided a paltry K30 million for 2010, with nothing for emergency repairs, which consumed most of these funds. The public service has long been undermined by politicisation of appointments (so that many PS bosses tell Ministers what they want to hear, not the plain facts) and lack of routine training and staff replacement in priority services has left many key professions bereft of service providers, so that most nurses and midwives, for example, are at or near retirement.

And where's the money gone? into massive corruption at the political and bureaucratic level, burgeoning payroll (with ghosts, duplication and poor performance, but inadequate staffing in various priority areas) politically determined and wasteful development budget schemes, white elephants and luxury (e.g. under DSIP, NADP, proposed Bautama hospital, falcon executive jet etc), and into various Ministers' and officials' almost incessant and often totally unproductive overseas travel and allowances. Various medium and longer term plans are prepared, some are sound but others nonsense (but no- one says so), but, as with the MTDS 2005-2010, the priorities are ignored in practice. The Government is hooked on the belief that LNG will fix the country's problems, but unless the public sector (including political tier) becomes accountable and, where necessary, overhauled and, particularly corruption (from Lands to Agriculture, Finance and the Districts) tackled, enabling government to play its part for the interests of the whole population (rather than its own interests) LNG will worsen rather than improve the country's longer term plight, and another great opportunity to invest in the population and PNG's future will be wasted. This may seem obvious to most outside and many within government, but apparently is not being spelt out. It's positive perhaps that at least there's recognition, including by the PM, that all is not right and much needs addressing.

Greater public disclosure of 'public expenditure' down to local level, and a new culture of service provision, rather than the prevailing tendency towards secretiveness within government would also be a step in the right direction.

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