



COMMUNITY COALITION AGAINST CORRUPTION

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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media too Important to rush through Policy Consultation

Thursday, 16th February, 2023, Port Moresby – Concerns have been expressed by the community as to the haste in which the Government is conducting consultation on a draft National Media Development Policy which could undermine media freedoms in Papua New Guinea. The Community Coalition Against Corruption (CCAC) in a media statement is calling on the Department of Information and Communication Technologies to extend the time and breadth of consultation on this proposed national policy.

“Extended and broader consultation is required for this as media freedoms are vital to our democracy. The two weeks given for consultation is not sufficient to consider the national and societal impact of this Media Policy and whether it is actually required. For instance, while the abuse of social media platforms is a new issue that is given as justification for the Media Policy, there are already existing laws that address the issue without undermining media freedom. This month when we commemorate the legacy of Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, we recall his personal stance when Prime Minister opposing the regulation of PNG’s media when a similar bill was proposed in 2003,” said Transparency International PNG Chairman Peter Aitsi, in his capacity as co-chair of the Community Coalition Against Corruption.

“The editorial independence of newsrooms is a cornerstone of a functional democracy. Undermining media freedom, diminishes the role of the media as the mouthpiece of the people, holding those in power to account. Failure by the Government to provide adequate time and conduct meaningful consultation, will ultimately undermine confidence in the Government and the country, both domestically and abroad. If the concern is poor journalism, then the solution is more investment in schools of journalism at tertiary institutions, this will also increase diversity and pluralism in the quality of journalism. We need newsrooms with access to trainings on media ethics and legal protection from harassment,” said Media Council PNG President Neville Choi, in his capacity as co-chair of the Community Coalition Against Corruption.

The Media Policy was initially released by the Department of ICT on 5th February 2023 and the public was only given 12 days to comment on the document, with the current deadline for feedback being 17th February 2022. The policy includes provisions for the regulation of media and establishment of a Government Information Risk Management (GIRM) Division within the Department of ICT to implement measures to prevent the unauthorized access to ‘sensitive information’.

The Community Coalition Against Corruption is a loose network of organizations that come together to discuss and make recommendations on national governance issues, it is currently co-chaired by Transparency International PNG and the Media Council PNG.

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What is the Community Coalition Against Corruption? Initially co-founded by TIPNG and the Media Council of PNG in 2002 with the support of churches, chambers of commerce, the Ombudsman Commission and the office of the Public Solicitor, the Coalition is a collective community network committed to standing together against the evil of corruption.