



## MINISTRY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

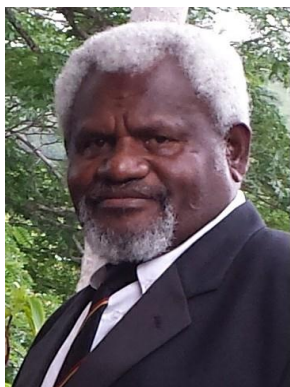
### PRESS RELEASE

**Hon. Malakai TABAR, MP**

**Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology**

#### **CHANGES IN HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION SECTOR**

*Greetings and welcome to another academic year.*



Since assuming office, the O'Neill-Dion Government has prioritised education. This has included unprecedented investment and focus on the Higher and Technical Education (HTE) Sector to improve **access** and **quality** and enhance **governance** for greater accountability in our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The achievement of PNG Vision 2050 goals is solely contingent upon the quality of available human resources in our country. Hence, investment and transformations within HTE Sector have centred upon building our country's human resource capacity to achieve its development goals for 2050. In launching this process, the following investments and achievements have been undertaken by the current government:

- ❖ **Passing and adoption of the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014*** – This new Act was passed and certified on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014. It effectively establishes the *Department of Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology (DHERST)* and streamlines all activities classified under the HTE Sector ensuring greater accountability of all HEIs and their functions.
- ❖ **Transformation of Office of Higher Education (OHE) to Department of Higher Education Research Science and Technology (DHERST)** – OHE was initially created as a scholarship clearing house in the late 1970s and later evolved into a policy secretariat under the Commission of Higher Education in the 1990s. It is now being transformed into a government department responsible for all activities under the HTE Sector. The management structure of this new department has been approved by the Department of Personnel Management. This year marks the beginning of this historical milestone where this organisation is now officially and fully functioning under DHERST.
- ❖ **Establishment of the PNG Science and Technology Council Secretariat** – In 2014 the Ministry for HERST established this secretariat. It is now a separate entity within the Ministry coordinating all research, science and technology functions.
- ❖ **University External Quality Assessments** – For the first time in the history of HTE, all universities have undergone external quality assessments, designed to assist each university improve their operations and quality of academic programs and teaching. Other HEIs will follow shortly.
- ❖ **National Higher and Technical Education Plan (NHTEP) 2015-2024** – The NHTEP 2015-2024 will be launched for implementation in February 2015 to guide all HTE development activity towards PNG Vision 2050 goals.
- ❖ **Accreditation of new higher education institutions** – Continuing improvement in access, five new institutions – International Training Institute, Institute of Business Studies, Institute of Banking and Business Management, Enga Nursing College & Sonoma Adventist College – were accredited in 2014 as HEIs. Other HEIs are currently being assessed for accreditation in 2015. This will increase access to tertiary education and training for year 12 graduates.

- ❖ **Ending of PNG UNITECH crisis** – The PNG UNITECH crisis which lasted for one and a half year was resolved in mid-2014, through successful intervention and corporation among major stakeholders coordinated by DHERST.
- ❖ **2014-2015 Selections** – Commencing enrolments for tertiary education have been steadily growing at 10% annually. This year marks a 21% increase - 5,628 students compared to 4,614 last year. This trend will continue until we can provide access for all qualified year 12 graduates within our development aims.
- ❖ **NATSCHOL** - The Government has reintroduced NATSCHOL pocket allowances in 2012 to ease the financial burden on parents. This will continue and expand in years ahead.
- ❖ **NEC Submissions** - Since 2012, the Ministry under the leadership of the O’Neill-Dion government has sponsored a total of 43 submissions of which 38 (88.4%) have been approved by NEC.
- ❖ **DHERST Funding** - Since taking office, the O’Neill-Dion Government has increased funding for HTE by over 300%. Funding to improve access and quality will continue. For 2015, the Government has allocated **51% of the total 2015 PIP Social Sector Financing** to DHERST. In monetary terms, this is **K197.5m** – the highest amount approved for the DHERST to-date.
- ❖ **Major Impact Projects**

- (1) *Infrastructure rehabilitation and recapitalization Program* – Since 2012 the government has consistently invested in rehabilitating and recapitalizing our six universities in order to improve access and quality of teaching and learning. Total expenditure to-date is **K102m** and a further **K62.5m** is allocated for 2015. An additional **K120m** is also allocated for Technical and Business Colleges, Teachers’ Colleges & Nursing Colleges Infrastructure Rehabilitation. This will continue under the current O’Neill-Dion Government.
- (2) *TVET Skills Scholarship Program* – This program specifically aims to redress the estimated 30% trade skills deficit in our country and supports school leavers to undertake basic trade skills training in TAFE colleges in Australia. Currently, over 700 young Papua New Guineans have passed through this program with a Trade Certificate II, III or IV and at least 50% of these graduates are now engaged in the workforce. To-date, total Government funding is K83m.
- (3) *PNG Open University* – Feasibility studies and project preparation for the establishment of Open University are currently in progress. This is a timely initiative for PNG, and it will be rolled-out to the 89 districts and will significantly increase *access* to higher education through *partnerships* with the sub-national Governments. An initial K3m has been allocated for this project.
- (4) *Western Pacific University (WPU)* - WPU will be an applied technology based university located in the central highlands. The process for building WPU has started and first enrolments are targeted for academic year 2017. At full capacity this university will enroll up to 6,000 students. To-date K12m has been allocated, with infrastructure funding to be negotiated with donor partners.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Acting Secretary Prof David Kavanamur. The HTE Sector has achieved much since Prof Kavanamur took office in 2012 and the above achievements are only some of them.

The Ministry under the O’Neill-Dion government remains committed in ensuring a vibrant and sound HTE sector. The DHERST now has greater responsibility in ensuring greater accountability across the HTE sector.

*This press release is authorized by*

Hon. Malakai TABAR, MP  
**Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology**