



Note: PNG's progress

By Matthew Morris
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A recent editorial in this week's Canberra Times ("Election creates new bed mates") wrongly described the O'Neill-Namah government's performance as 'a year of wasted time, inaction and serious delay in addressing PNG's fundamental problems.'

Far from 'inaction', the last year has seen impressive progress on a range of fronts, which I was able to observe as an advisor to PNG's [Independent Public Business Corporation](#).

- Legislation was passed to set up a [sovereign wealth fund](#) to manage mineral and LNG revenues and keep 'sticky fingers' off the funds.
- A [special task force](#) stepped up investigations into alleged corruption: prompting one prominent minister to [flee to Australia](#) to avoid questioning.
- There was a crackdown on [procurement fraud](#) in the health department, and legal action was taken to recover funds that had gone missing from public enterprises, most notably the [K96 million](#) that went to Australia-based Woodlawn Capital.
- The government abolished fees for [education](#) and [health care](#).
- It also stepped up investments in infrastructure: commencing construction of a [new port in Lae](#), rehabilitating the [power stations](#) that serve Lae, and opening a [new optic fibre connection](#) from Madang to Lae.
- Draft legislation was prepared for a [new independent authority](#) to channel mineral revenues into much needed maintenance of roads, hospitals and universities.

In the context of the political turmoil of the last year-with the drawn out fight between

O'Neill/parliament and Somare/supreme court—such progress is a remarkable achievement. It shows that reform is possible, even in a challenging environment. Moreover, it raises the bar on what should be expected from the new PNG government.

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A version of this note was published as a letter [here](#) in the Canberra Times.

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