

CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF SIR LEONARD WILSON KAMIT, CBE

17th January 2023

Lady Winifred,

Kaylene, Leonard, and Matlian

Family of Sir Wilson and Lady Winifred, from Oro and New Ireland,

Distinguished Guests,

Friends...

I am deeply grateful to Lady Kamit and children for asking me to deliver the Eulogy today for the late Sir Wilson, or Willie for a few of us.

Thank you Winifred, Kaylene and Leonard, for sharing your husband and Father with us, his friends, and with the country.

Son of John and Naomi

Sir Wilson was born in 1953, the son of John Casswell and Naomi Taroben. He was the eldest of nine: he had seven brothers and one sister. His father attended Sogeri Teachers College. His father was first posted as a teacher to Tufi in 1951, where Wilson was born. John was then posted to Kokoda in 1954, to Saiho, also in Oro Province, from 1955-1956, then to Kapakapa in Central Province from 1957-1958, Kapakararigi in Benabena, Eastern Highlands Province from 1959-1961, but then to Nasuapum in the Markham Valley, followed by Dregerhafen in Finschafen. Wilson of course followed his father's postings, experiencing the diversity of our nation early in his life.

Education

Wilson commenced his schooling in the Bena in 1959, but did grades 3 to 6 in Morobe.

He then attended Bugandi Junior High School completing Form 2 [now grade8) in 1967.

In 1968 he was awarded a scholarship by Mobil Oil (PNG) Ltd to attend secondary education at The Armidale School (known as TAS) in Armidale, Northern New South Wales.

Following completion of Form 6 or Grade 12 in 1971, he received the NSW Higher School Certificate, enabling his enrolment in Economics at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1972. He graduated with a Bachelor in Economics in June 1975.

Band of brothers

1968, some 55 years ago, was when I first met Wilson at The Armidale School. We were part of a band of Brothers from the then Territory of Papua and Territory of New Guinea, all

undertaking secondary education under scholarships – some from the Australian Government – myself, Barungke Kaman, Arnold Amet, Ilaisa Orere, Robert Aisi, Robert Kaul, Kina Bona, Nanadai Kila – and some from Mobil Oil (PNG) – Wilson, Albert Age, Ai Noka, Namon Mawson and Yaip Avini. Other students also attended TAS before 1967, and after us during the 1970s.

Sir Wilson said this of his time and experience at TAS, when he was addressing the Class of 71 Reunion in Armidale in 2011.

“The system of selecting students under various scholarship schemes enabled us to go abroad, mainly to Australia, and gave us exposure to living, mingling and studying among and with people of different cultures to ours, and with people from different walks of life in a country more developed than ours ... and,... to study away from the tribal and traditional environment enabled us to have a broader view of our country; continue to appreciate our cultures but also view ourselves as developing one big tribe of Papua New Guineans, not one loose country of 800 interests ...”

Sir Wilson was also very clear in his view that *“Australia [had] been assisting a lot in the process of nation building of PNG; however, it [was] incumbent on our own people to take leadership and responsible roles in government and commerce in the development of our country.”*

Wilson, Robert Aisi and Kina Bona subsequently joined Barungke Kaman, Albert Age, Arnold Amet and me at the University of Papua New Guinea.

A few words of time at UPNG

Whilst at UPNG, Wilson showed a passion for music and formed a band. There were just two members. They sang Bob Dylan and Cat Steven songs! I am sure you all know them. The band aspired to make it to the US and the world stage. Regrettably the agents were deaf, or blind, so Wilson and his colleague remained at UPNG and pursued non-musical careers after graduation. Their band was known as “KANANKAS UNITED”: Wilson was the lead guitarist and I was the other band member!

We also spent our Saturdays with the University rugby union club, playing at the different grades against teams in the Port Moresby competition...Defence Force, Colleagues Fari, Toaripi, Moripi, Vailala Mountains, and Fly. We inherited this passion from TAS where rugby union was equivalent to our religion...although TAS was an Anglican Boys School.

Of far more significance, during his time at UPNG, in 1973, Wilson’s attention was on a student studying a BA in Education, a young lady from Djaul, Kavieng District, New Ireland, of course, the one and only Winifred TARETAUFI. They became engaged in 1975 and were married in early 1976 at St Martin’s Anglican Church, Boroko.

Post UPNG – 1975 onwards

Sir Wilson's career, apart from a brief diversion into the then Department of Housing, centered around the Bank of Papua New Guinea. He worked there for 37 years, peaking as the Governor for 10 years from 1999. On leaving the Bank, he was appointed in December 2009 as the Alternate Director on the Board of the Asian Development Bank based in Manila, Philippines

On return to Port Moresby in 2012 and subsequently, he was appointed to the boards of several major financial, investment and business corporations. So his service and contribution to Papua New Guinea's banking and financial services sector spanned some 48 years. Acting Governor of the Bank of PNG Mr Benny Popoitai and Mark Baker, the CEO of ANZ Bank will share their insights on this.

I had the privilege to work with him on four particular occasions.

We were a team of three - the late Koiari Tarata, then Secretary for Treasury, Sir Wilson as Governor of the Bank of PNG, and my own role as Chief Secretary to Government, during the period of 1999-2002 under Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta.

We worked as a team; and we negotiated with the IMF Missions as a team. And we enjoyed watching the baffling faces of the IMF Missions with our intermittent breaks into Motu!

As Sir Mekere's term ended in August 2002, I exited from the public service in September 2002, and Secretary Tarata passed away in 2003, the task of sustaining and implementing the banking and financial sector reforms of 2000 remained squarely on the shoulders of late Sir Wilson. The evidence of his successfully leading and embedding the reforms are clear for all to see.

The impact of the superannuation reforms has reached the lives of millions of Papua New Guinean workers and their families - in the public service, the PNGDF, Police and CIS, and in the business and wider PNG community.

And in promoting the superannuation industry, Sir Wilson also publicly declared during the Nasfund Anniversary celebration, that he had awarded himself another title to that awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II... "GF08 - Grandfather of Eight", as further evidence of his enduring contribution to the superannuation industry, so he said!

We also established the first PNG "commercial" microfinance company, PNG Microfinance Ltd, with BSP and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) as a joint venture with PNGSDP. And so, Sir Wilson, as Governor, opened the doors for expansion of financial services to the ordinary people.

In 2013 the Government compulsorily acquire the shares of PNGSDP in Ok Tedi Mining Ltd leading to major legal proceedings in PNG and Singapore. At stake was the approximately US\$ 1.4 billion (or about K 4 billion) of the PNGSDP managed Long Term (Future Generation) Fund for the people directly affected by the operations of the Ok Tedi mine in Western Province.

Throughout this unprecedented period Sir Wilson remained steadfast with Sir Mekere in protecting the Long Term Fund.

These definitely have made a real impact on people's lives, and a legacy of good policy and leadership!

More recently in 2021, Sir Wilson, Professor Stephen Howes of the ANU and I were appointed by the Minister for Treasury Hon Ian Ling-Stuckey, as members of an Independent Advisory Group (referred to as IAG) to review the Central Banking Act and Financial Sector Regulations. Sir Wilson's exceptional expertise and insight was a great asset to the review. Our work is yet to be completed, and we will certainly miss Sir Wilson's valuable contribution.

One challenge, as Sir Wilson has left with us, is in Life Insurance.

He questioned: *"Should Life Insurance be compulsory, so that the financial burden on families is eased when one dies? We hear about the cost of Haus Krai, funeral expenses, etc. leaving huge financial pressure on surviving families.*

And so, Sir Wilson, continuing to be concerned about the burden such expenses have on people, set the example of pronouncing his personal reforming wish for "...NO Haus Krai and Kastom Wok."

As member of UPNG Interim Council

Sir Wilson also agreed in mid 2020 to serve on the UPNG Interim Council, a largely voluntary role but very demanding of him and members of the Interim Council. He was re-appointed in 2021 and 2022 and agreed to be re-appointed again this month. He considered it his duty to make a contribution to the University that graduated from, and for the benefit of the next generation of students.

As Chairman of the Council's Finance Committee he discovered the immense systemic and systematic deterioration in the University's financial management. And he knew what he and we had to do to re-establish and modernise the financial management system.

He was also deeply concerned about the accommodation of University Staff, and wanted to establish a scheme in which University Staff would own their own homes.

And, he wanted to see the University establish a banking and financial services school or center, a vision he held whilst he was Governor of the Bank of PNG.

These are the critical areas that the University will pursue.

- **National and international recognition**

For his services to our people and nation, Wilson was recognised and awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in June 2000. And in June 2009,

he was awarded and appointed a Knight Bachelor (Kt), and vested the title SIR WILSON KAMIT throughout the Commonwealth of Nations.

- **His Church and faith**

Wilson was a devout Anglican, his mother having been brought up by an Anglican deacon. Wilson received his letter notifying him of winning the Mobil scholarship to study in Australia from a priest, Father Leadbetter, who was serving at Wanigela Parish at the time. Leonard says that the family thought this made a significant impact on Wilson, as he always insisted that the family never forget the influence of the Anglican Church on their lives.

At the time of his death, Wilson was the longest serving member of the Board of Trustees of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea.

- **As a husband, father and grandfather**

And whilst so far I have focused on Sir Wilson's roles "at work", his life's journey is also just as much a story of a partnership bound by the vows he took on his wedding day.

Wilson's and Winnie's lives were cojoined, providing constant support to each other, throughout their 47 years as husband and wife. Wilson ensured that in addition to being a wife, mother and Bubu, Lady Winifred blossomed in her own career, as a teacher, school inspector, Ombudsperson, Public Services Commissioner, lawyer, and as an eminent Papua New Guinean woman leader, serving on multiple boards.

One such partnership is evidenced by his membership of the Board of "PNG Coalition for Change", an advocacy group chaired by Lady Winifred against violence on women and children. Their work contributed with others to the passage of the *Family Protection Act*.

Winifred loved Wilson, walked with him, cared for him, stood by him, uplifted him, and persevered with him in good health, in sickness, and through the joys and challenges of life.

They gave life to two children - Kaylene and Leonard, and also brought up Winnie's niece Matlian. And through them their grandchildren, who without doubt were the joy of his life.

I recall attending a meeting with him with the IMF and World Bank in Washington, and that momentary lapse during the meeting when he was captivated with his mobile. He was actually watching his Bubu Sarah! I immediately amusingly "chastised" him. Wilson was devoted to his grandchildren. The busyness of leadership responsibilities never diminished his commitment as a grandfather.

[Of course, when he noted my own pre-occupation with my Bubu in similar situations, he made sure I did not forget that moment in Washington DC!!!]

So as we are celebrating Sir Wilson's life and the blessings we have each received from knowing and being with him, we also acknowledge, honor and celebrate Lady Winifred. And

we pray God's comfort and peace for her, her children and grandchildren for their life's journey ahead.

Who was this man?

He was a generous and trusted man, whose words were few, but actions spoke very loudly...humble, did not seek to be noticed, allowed others' voices to be heard first, loved and adored his grandchildren. A serious looking man but when he smiled there was great warmth, sincerity, and joy.

This is the Wilson, Sir Leonard Wilson Kamit that many of us know!

So what?

In the scheme and journey of life, we all seek to make a difference. So often the dominant narrative is to address our challenges through government, politics, public policy expertise, and institutional reform. Yes, these are appropriate and critical ingredients.

And this is a constant debate in our country. We hope for this with every general election and appointment of government and Prime Ministers and Ministers.

And with the advent of technology and social media, we see the emergence of over-night experts in literally every field.

Within all these dimensions and throughout his journey of life, he stood tall!

He was a Papua New Guinean, from his growing up and early schooling in Oro, Eastern Highlands, and Morobe, in his secondary education with his band of brothers at TAS, throughout his various responsibilities, and through his marriage.

And in all this, the story and lesson of this one person, Wilson Leonard Kamit, through his quiet and humble service, his leadership, his partnership with his life-long soulmate, Lady Winifred, his devotion to his family, demonstrate that, we can all, individually, make a difference for the better - for our family, for our community, for our workplace, and for our nation.

And so Leonard Wilson Kamit, thank you for your example.

Dear Sir Wilson, Willie, our colleague, our friend, our brother, thank you for the blessings that you have brought to us.

Awara O Oro, Farewell, Aioni, Bamahuta ... Kiwaiyape Sir Wilson, am mara ibotu, ke dauwa kabitam!

My sincere prayers Sir Wilson, your time came, Rest in Peace!

Robert Igara