



MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES
Office of the Minister

Level 4, Pacific Place Building
P.O. Box 320
PORT MORESBY NCD
Papua New Guinea

Telephone: (675) 321 3937
Facsimile: (675) 321 5048

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NEC appoints new Managing Director and Board Members of IPBC

The Minister for Public Enterprises Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta announced today that NEC had appointed Mr Thomas Abe as the new Managing Director of the Independent Public Business Corporation (IPBC).

“The position was publicly advertised as the Government wished to demonstrate its commitment to transparency and desire to get the best qualified person for the job. Mr Abe was selected from a large field of candidates; the assessment of all candidates was undertaken by an independent, professional recruitment firm.”

Sir Mekere said that Mr Abe’s track record as a public servant was exemplary. “Mr Abe is extremely well qualified for this position, having previously worked in Foreign Affairs, Trade, IPA, Treasury and ICCC. His seven years as head of ICCC gives him a unique insight into the regulatory framework for public enterprises.”

“Papua New Guineans can thank Mr Abe for revolutionising their lives through access to telecommunications. It was his firm stance and resolution to follow the law that allowed Digicel to continue operations and expand throughout the country. Through his work at ICCC Mr Abe also became well known and well regarded in the private sector.”

Sir Mekere said that the Prime Minister and Cabinet were confident that Mr Abe would work closely with him as Minister to sort out a host of problems left behind by the previous Minister Arthur Somare.

Sir Mekere also announced that NEC had appointed Dr Thomas Webster, the Director of the National Research Institute as Chairman of IPBC. “Dr Webster is well known and highly respected throughout Papua New Guinea, through his insightful research and comments on public issues and public policy-making.”

“The terms of the previous members of the board expired in early August. It was important to have a new Board in place immediately so that the work of

monitoring of state enterprises and rehabilitation of a number of them can start.”

“Other board members appointed include Ms Felecia Dobunaba, Mr Peter Aitsi (the nominee of Transparency International) and Mr Aho Baliki (the nominee of the Institute of Bankers). Two more members to represent the Institute of Directors and the PNG Chamber of Commerce will be appointed shortly. The full board also comprises three ex-officio members – the Managing Director, the Secretary for Treasury and the Secretary for Justice.”

Sir Mekere said that there was much work to be done and that he looked forward to working with the new Board.

“Arthur Somare keeps telling the nation that all the state-owned enterprises are performing fabulously as a result of his policies and actions. Nothing could be further from the truth. All are grossly under-capitalised. Some are bumbling along. Others are dead, but refusing to fall down.”

“Arthur Somare mutated IPBC into an octopus, with tentacles everywhere. This has weakened the central role of IPBC from being a house of rehabilitation to a warehouse storing junk. He also turned IPBC into a petroleum house in competition with Exxon, Oil Search and Petromin. It will be a big task for the new MD and Board to sort out the accumulated rubbish.”

Sir Mekere said that his first priority would be to attend to serious issues facing Telikom and PNG Power. “These utilities are vital to support social and economic development. We cannot ignore the state they are in any longer. In the short time the O’Neill-Namah Government has, I am determined to find solutions and effect change.”

Mekere Morauta KCMG MP

Minister for Public Enterprises