

Political limitations to the organisation and supply of quality and timely policy advice in Papua New Guinea

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An area that has received virtually no attention in the scholarly writings on Papua New Guinea is the role of the public service in providing policy advice to the political executive, and how that role might be constrained by prevailing administrative and political conditions. In Westminster systems, departments and line agencies play a crucial role in providing policy advice to ministers and cabinet. Advice should not only be robust and comprehensive, but it should also be free and frank, and politically impartial. Overall, the ability to provide quality and timely policy advice depends on the administrative capacity of line departments and agencies, as well as on how ministers manage their departments and the broader political context within which departments operate. This article discusses some of the political limitations imposed on three key central agencies—the departments of Finance and Treasury, Prime Minister and National Executive Council and Personnel Management—in their provision of quality and timely policy advice to the political executive. It is part of wider research on the role of the three agencies in organising and supplying policy advice and should be seen as a preliminary report of work in progress.

Background

Political executives require different types of advice at various points in time and from different sources. They may solicit political advice from political (partisan) advisors and they may also get policy advice from civil servants. Generally, policy advice may be of two types: operational advice, dealing with routine and administrative day-to-day matters of concern to a department's immediate portfolio, and substantive and strategic advice. Advice in the latter category has a 'broad, intersectoral, and longer-term focus, and involves anticipating and responding to the future demands of the government' (Boston et al. 1996:122), for example, advice on developing a set of strategic outcomes (objectives) of the government and how best to achieve them. It may also involve 'the production of systematic, in-depth, and well-researched reports on discrete policy issues' and the recommendations of appropriate policy actions (Boston et al. 1996:122), for example advice on poverty alleviation, combating crime or balancing the fiscal deficit. Providing substantive and strategic advice is more demanding since it requires a high level of

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skills, robust departmental capability and the need for comprehensive and reliable analysis of the preferred course of action (including the justification of such action).

Providing policy advice is not a simple matter and should not be taken lightly. Policy complexities and the crosscutting nature of many policy issues have placed great demands on political executives to respond decisively and effectively to policy challenges (OECD 2002; UK Cabinet Office 2000). A key aim is to make the right decision at the time needed. However, the pressure to respond decisively and effectively has created a demand for more robust arrangements for providing quality and timely policy advice. Despite an increasing tendency by governments to resort to a multiple provider arrangement—evident for example in outsourcing advice to consultants and/or policy think tanks and the use of special (partisan) advisors—the public service continues to be the key provider of policy advice to political executives in many Westminster countries. In Papua New Guinea, the primacy of the public service in the provision of advice is maintained by the fact that a limited and/or weak ‘policy advisory market’ does not allow extensive outsourcing of advice. It has also been the result of a long-standing preference by ministers and cabinet to rely on the public service for most of their advice.

Within the public service, central agencies (defined here as those few departments responsible for maintaining leverage and control over the public sector, and hence having an overriding influence at the centre of government) play a very influential role in policy formulation by the advice they provide. In Papua New Guinea there is no question that policy formulation at the ministerial and especially cabinet levels is highly influenced by the advice provided by the departments of Finance and Treasury, Prime Minister and National Executive

Council and Personnel Management. A key reason is that these agencies are vested with many centralised controls—for instance through overarching legislation such as the Public Service Management Act 1995, the Public Finance Management Act 1995 and the Prime Minister Act 2002—which reinforce their power and influence over policy advice. Indeed, the creation of the Central Agencies Coordinating Committee—which is primarily made up of the heads of the three agencies—through the adoption of the Prime Minister Act 2002 and the simultaneous amendments to the Public Service Management Act in 2002 further strengthened the role of these three departments in policy advice.¹ The Central Agencies Coordinating Committee has arguably become a ‘proxy cabinet’ (at least at the bureaucratic level), being able to control the entire public service machinery and influence the formulation of policy in an unprecedented manner. For example, the power of the Committee is evidenced by the fact that it now scrutinises virtually all advice coming from departments and agencies (especially those of a substantive and strategic nature), and advises cabinet accordingly.

But how effective are the roles of the three agencies in the provision of advice? Is the current environment of political management conducive to providing quality and timely policy advice? Preliminary evidence suggests that the existing political environment tends to limit the ability of the three agencies to provide policy advice to political executives. This short article explains some of these limitations. The findings of this research are contrasted with developments in other Westminster models to give some insights on how far Papua New Guinea differs from other Westminster systems. Information was drawn from a survey questionnaire and interviews with staff of the lead policy units of the three central agencies in early and late 2002. They are the

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Economic Policy Unit in the Department of Finance and Treasury, National Development Service and Government Service in the Department of the Prime Minister and National Executive Council, and the Strategic Policy and Development Branch in the Department of Personnel Management. Twenty-five policy staff responded to the questionnaire and another 23 were interviewed for this project. Their views and perceptions form the basis of the analysis in this paper.

Political instability and short-term policy cycles

The information and views collected suggest that the three agencies operate within a political context characterised by short-term policy cycles. This in turn has imposed limitations on strategic policy development and advice. It is apparent that short-term policy cycles have had a weakening effect on the capability of the three agencies to provide long-term (strategic) policy advice in a reliable and comprehensive manner. Of the 23 staff of the lead policy units interviewed, 87 per cent were of the view that continuation of policy has been problematic, and that policies tend to be terminated prematurely for a host of political reasons. A key issue is that short-term political imperatives of ministers (and cabinet) tend to override long-term anticipation and planning of policy: ministers often want to deliver what they see as important in a fiscal year (for example, in delivering short-term 'electoral projects'; see Reilly 2002) rather than concentrate on what will happen over the long term. This situation has a tendency to trigger quick-fix policy solutions without robust analysis and proposition of options. This problem is not unique to Papua New Guinea. Other Westminster systems have experienced similar difficulties—although

such difficulties often arise from different political circumstances. In New Zealand, for example, the new role of ministers as purchasers of policy advice following annual budget rounds, brought about by the Public Finance Act 1989, has been said to have resulted in the demise of advice that is long-term in focus (Chapman 1995). The short three-year electoral cycle has also been blamed for the narrow focus of ministers on short-term policy goals (Campbell 2001).

The biggest hurdle in the three central agencies in Papua New Guinea—and one that stands in marked contrast to other developed Westminster systems—is the pervasive effect of political instability created mainly by no-confidence votes in the parliament (see Reilly 2002). This situation has ensured that no government has served a full term in office since independence. In total there have been five no-confidence votes or prime ministerial resignations to date (Larmour 2000).

A key limitation arising from political instability has been the constant and often unwarranted shifts in government policy. Such changes send confusing policy signals to central agencies. Although setting the desired objectives of the government is the province of ministers, according to Chapman (1995:20) ministers are also likely to want sound advice on how outputs tie together to form a coherent strategy and what tradeoffs exist between outcomes. This requires ministers (and cabinet) to be transparent, outlining clearly the policy outcomes they anticipate and allowing key agencies to provide relevant advice in return. Evidence from this study shows that the ability of the three agencies, especially the Department of the Prime Minister and National Executive Council, to anticipate future demands for advice and to respond to long-term objectives of government (strategic policy advice) is severely constrained by the confusing and often illogical policy shifts at the ministerial and cabinet levels. Arguably, the ongoing

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difficulty in formulating clearly a broad set of government outcomes within central government to guide departmental planning of outputs is partly attributed to this problem (Sause and Aloï 2003).

Furthermore, the fear of losing control of government, and to some extent the electoral pressure to deliver 'goods and services' quickly, tends to force ministers to put pressure on the three central agencies to concentrate on spontaneous, operational advice. However, this style of providing advice has its own shortcomings. First, there is a risk of good technocratic advice being undermined by short-term political imperatives. To the extent that this happens, important contributions from the three agencies are likely to be over-shadowed by short-term political interests. This may undermine the policy capacity of the three agencies. Furthermore, maintaining a 'whole of government' perspective when giving advice may be swamped by the marginal interests of the minister. The three central agencies therefore may lose sight of their core mandate in maintaining policy coherence across the whole of government. Second, according to some policy staff, the demand for instantaneous policy advice for largely short-term policy goals tends to undermine the need for thorough and informed analysis on policy issues. Because of the need to respond quickly, critical information necessary for analysis is often missed, evidence is not gathered, policy options are not properly assessed, and advisors tend to rely heavily on intuitive judgement.² There is no problem with spontaneous advice, provided that there is a depth of experience among the agencies' policy analysts, and provided that staff have the required expertise and skills to provide advice as and when it is required. However, it was found that more than 60 per cent of policy staff in all the agencies have less than three years of work

experience as policy analysts, with little in the way of analytical skills for policy work. In the Department of Personnel Management, for example, it was found that more than 65 per cent of staff in the Strategic Policy and Development Branch were junior staff.

There is some concern that the overwhelming concentration on operational advice may have crowded out the need for developing capabilities in substantive and strategic policy advice. This situation may undermine the strategic ability of the three agencies to manage and coordinate crosscutting policy (including advising government in this area), and maintain a 'whole of government' perspective on policy formulation. Generally, it was found that the capacity to generate robust, evidence-based analysis on substantive and strategic policy issues is limited. Although this situation appears to have been a result of many internal problems faced by each agency (for example, a lack of expertise, poor infrastructure to sustain high quality policy work, and shortage of resources), an emphasis on operational advice has meant agencies have placed little effort on developing the capacity for strategic policy analysis and advice. The evidence indicates that the strategic policy competence of the three agencies has been weakened as result of the long-term neglect of investing in capability improvement. For example, staff access to critical data for robust analysis in the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council and the Department of Personnel Management has been problematic due to the long-standing problem of the lack of a library and relevant databases. In the Department of Finance and Treasury, the Forecasting Section of the Economic Policy Unit is constantly inundated with poor economic data, another long-standing problem. This has prompted one interviewee to question the reliability of the economic forecasts by the Department of

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Finance and Treasury. Suffice to note that the lack of strategic competence in the three agencies is likely to make the Central Agencies Coordinating Committee's task in advising cabinet problematic. If this problem is not resolved, it may lead to the weakening of the scrutiny and advisory role of the Committee. This in turn may weaken the policymaking capacity of the cabinet.

Ministerial expectations

In Westminster systems the minister is a key policy client for policy advice from the department. A key preoccupation of any department therefore is to respond to the wishes of the minister on a range of policy issues. In ensuring a sound system of advice, a department's capability to respond in a timely fashion to the needs of the minister and the setting of ministerial expectations on the quality of policy work, are important. The latter (ministerial expectations) pertains to establishing the required scope for policy advisory work. It implies that the minister must have some appreciation of the place and role of policy advice in policy formulation, be able to set high expectations for the quality of advice, and communicate such expectations to the department.

The need to set ministerial requirements on the level and quality of policy advice is important for a number of reasons. A critical issue pertains to the 'purchaser' role of the minister. This role stems from the principle that government (represented by the minister) purchases a variety of outputs from the department (in this case, policy advice) through the annual allocations to departments and requires a reliable service in return. As the purchaser of policy advice, it is reasonable for the minister to expect the department to maintain a policy advisory service that is able to meet the performance expectations deemed

relevant by the minister. The other reason pertains to the issue of ministerial responsibility. Given that the minister is accountable to the parliament and electorate, should public policymaking go wrong it is reasonable for the minister to expect high quality policy advice from the department.

Third, expectations set by the minister can be a powerful incentive for the department to improve its policy advisory capability. Provided that the capacity of the department to meet these expectations is regularly monitored, policy advice can be improved and the demands of the minister for quality and timely advice met (New Zealand 1999; Weller and Stevens 1998). In Westminster countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand it has been shown that the organisation of more robust and comprehensive advice was spurred by ministers' demands for more reliable and evidence-based advice (Uhr and Mackay 1996; UK Cabinet Office 2000; New Zealand 1999).

Finally, setting expectations and communicating these to the departments does help in the formulation and supply of policy advice. As mentioned earlier, policy advice provided by departments is often formulated on the basis of the broad vision and expectations of the government. Specific advice, for example in substantive and strategic policy, can be organised and delivered in a coherent and coordinated fashion in line with the intent of government if ministers make their departments aware of the expectations of government and how the department might contribute to achieving them.

This research shows that while ministers in Papua New Guinea rely on the agencies for advice for policymaking purposes, there appears to be little concern by ministers for ensuring that policy advice is supplied at a level that satisfies their expectations. For

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example, most staff interviewed did not believe that ministers have been setting relevant expectations in the quality and quantity of policy advice on key issues of policy. A common view is that there is a tendency to take the existing process of organising policy advice for granted and let the three agencies decide on the quality and timeliness of advice. This stands in marked contrast to recent developments in Westminster models where ministers are requiring more robust and empirically based advice from their departments (UK Cabinet Office 2000; Di Francesco 2000).

Setting formal parameters for policy work has been a critical aspect of developed Westminster countries in developing robust systems of advice (New Zealand 1999; UK Cabinet Office 1999). Within the three PNG agencies such formal arrangements are either weak or non-existent. Survey responses suggest that while there were instances of ministers setting expectations, these have been sporadic and depended entirely on individual ministers, with ministers in the departments of Finance and Treasury and Personnel Management having the least favourable record of setting expectations on policy advisory work. Moreover, communicating expectations on policy advisory work has been problematic. For example, survey data show that more than 70 per cent of staff in the departments of Finance and Treasury and Personnel Management did not believe that ministerial communication has been transparent and effective. In the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council, 55 per cent did not believe that ministerial communication was effective. Also, discussions with staff show that 'ministerial expectations' has been an area of confusion, and that the central agencies are usually left guessing as to what the minister expects. There is therefore some loss of direction in both strategic and substantive policy.

Overall, there appears to be little interest shown by the ministers in their purchaser role. There was virtually no concern for the kinds of advisory output ministers should receive and whether the process of producing such outputs has met the required standards of 'rigour, honesty, relevance and timeliness' (Waller 1992:441). There is little evidence to support the view that ministers regularly hold their respective agencies accountable for the advice they receive. Instead, the evidence indicates that the lack of ministerial interest may have created a situation in which each agency sees little value in organising and delivering policy advice in a robust and comprehensive manner.

Ownership interest

Ministers are not only purchasers of policy advice. As members of cabinet (and the government) they have a responsibility to maintain the government's 'ownership' interests in departments. The ownership role of ministers requires ministers to take an active role in ensuring that each agency is fully capable of meeting the demands placed upon it for high quality policy advice. Data derived from the interviews indicate that while ministers rely on the three central agencies for much of their advice, they do not always take their ownership role seriously. There was a strong impression that ministers take for granted that the three agencies have the necessary capability to provide high quality advice.

A key area that respective ministers tend to overlook pertains to resource allocation. Government formulates the budget and parliament approves it. However, it is the minister who is expected to play the key role in ensuring that resources are committed for policy advice. Moreover, where serious disparities in resource allocation exist, it is the minister who should try to ameliorate

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such disparities. This has not been the case in the three agencies. Overall, ministers tend to overlook their ownership responsibilities. This problem is not unique to Papua New Guinea. The demise of departmental capability to provide robust advice arising from ministers overly focusing on their purchaser role has also been a problem in New Zealand. Campbell (2001:259), basing his analysis on the Schick Report (1996) evaluating New Zealand's output-based public management reforms, points out that the over-emphasis of ministers on outputs 'has not focused sufficiently on the fact that ministers are trustees of the long range viability of their departments.' Quoting Schick, he notes that

...they [ministers] should forebear from demanding so much by way of outputs and from pushing the purchasers price down so as far as to jeopardise the departments' long-term capacity to perform (1993:43).

There is a difference between New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Whereas anecdotal evidence from the ongoing work of the New Zealand State Services Commission suggests that efforts are being placed on correcting the overemphasis on the purchaser role of ministers, there is still a need for significant improvement in Papua New Guinea. For example, budgetary allocations to training and capital formation—two key inputs for building agencies' capability in policy advice—has fluctuated; in some years the three agencies have missed out on their allocations.³ Overall, the allocations were insufficient and represented about only a third of what was required in the three-year period. It was strongly felt by several officials that ministers were not doing enough to protect their ownership interests by ensuring that resources are committed to ensure their agency's capability as well as addressing the disparities that exist among the three agencies.

Security of tenure and 'free and frank' advice

Departmental heads are the lynchpins of policy advice (see Rhodes and Weller 2001). In Westminster systems, the role of departmental heads in giving advice is impacted by a range of factors including key conventions such as their security of tenure, the observation of the principle of 'free and frank' advice, and other public service principles (Hensley 1995). As key advisors to the government, departmental heads provide important advice on matters of policy to ministers and cabinet almost daily. When policy advice is prepared internally, it would be expected that such advice would originate from departmental advisors, then go through the departmental head to the relevant minister and/or to cabinet. Conversely, ministerial requirements of policy advice are usually communicated to the department via the departmental head. The establishment of the Central Agencies Coordinating Committee has strengthened the position of the heads of the three agencies. Not only are they able to advise their own minister but also they are able to influence cabinet directly through their membership of the Committee.

However, despite the agencies' increased scope of influence, this study found that the ability of the departmental heads to perform their role as chief advisors to ministers and cabinet in a free, frank, and politically uncompromising manner has been very shaky. Although under the existing Westminster conventions the heads of the three agencies (potentially) have the ability to give policy advice that is objective and impartial, comprehensive, honest and unconditioned by fear (Hensley 1995; Voyce 1997), this may have been very difficult to achieve in practice. Such a difficulty holds important implications for the exercise of important conventions (especially with

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regard to the principle of ‘free and frank advice’) and especially for the quality of policy advice. Almost every official interviewed felt that there has been a heavy politicisation of the appointment and termination of departmental heads, and that a lack of security of tenure has been a critical issue preventing departmental heads from effectively performing their role as key advisors to ministers and cabinet. In short, there is a view among many officials that advice is likely to be heavily tainted with political interests, and those who give politically unpalatable advice are most likely to be terminated. Referring to the frequent turnover of departmental heads without justifiable reasons and the rise in crony appointments, many of those interviewed have a strong feeling that these factors have created an environment where departmental heads and their departments are unlikely to give free and frank advice.⁴ These views confirm the perceptions of staff of 13 departments and agencies surveyed in the earlier study by Berry and Harris,

[a]ppointments of departmental heads [were] too regular and politicised, and appointments are no longer based on individual merit. This does affect the operation of the department concerned (2002:18).

Generally, there appears to be a widely held belief among those interviewed that the existing political climate has increased the risks faced by civil servants. Departmental heads and senior civil servants are now more vulnerable to political reprisals should policy advice be found to be politically incorrect, inconsistent, or at odds with the views of the minister and prevailing policy posture of the government. Indeed, the existing situation raises several key implications for the tendering of quality and timely advice. One adverse consequence is that the tendering of good policy advice may

be constrained by the ‘need’ to provide politically expedient advice. To the extent that this is the case, the three agencies would cease to be apolitical—a key convention for the operation of the public service in a Westminster system such as in Papua New Guinea.

A more adverse implication relates to the quality of policy advice. In Westminster systems, the quality of policy advice is a function of civil servants having the freedom to use their skills, expertise and experience to provide cogent and robust analysis on policy issues and propose policy options unconditioned by fear (Voyce 1997). A primary consideration is to consider all the relevant facts and information pertaining to the issue at hand. If policy work is conditioned by fear, analysis may be limited and the options proposed may not be relevant since key information may be deliberately withheld. To the extent that this is the case, policy formulation and implementation will be impaired by poor advice injected into the decision-making process.

Ministerial responsibility

The responsibility of ministers for the affairs of their departments carries the duty of accountability for what goes on in their portfolio. With regard to policy advice, the duty of a civil servant is to give free and frank advice, but the minister (or cabinet) has the discretion to accept, vary or reject the advice. In some cases the minister (or cabinet) may ask for competing advice from outside the department. Ministerial responsibility over advice entails situations where once there is ministerial acceptance of advice rendered by a civil servant, the civil servant remains anonymous and the minister is wholly accountable to parliament (and eventually to the electorate) for any decisions that transpire from that advice. The differentiation

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in the responsibility for policy advice is often reflected by the distinction between 'policy advisory outputs' (that is advice provided) for which civil servants are responsible and accountable for, and the impact of policy advice (that is whether the decision taken from advice has created the desired change), for which politicians are accountable (see Chapman 1995; Di Francesco 2000). A fundamental reason why this demarcation of responsibility is important is to shield civil servants from any political and electoral reaction and allow them to get on with producing policy advice frankly and impartially.

A key finding of this research is that ministerial responsibility is not treated seriously in Papua New Guinea. The majority of staff interviewed did not believe that the concept of ministerial responsibility is properly understood. Nor did they believe that ministers would accept blame for policy, even if such policy were derived from advice that has been judged relevant and accepted by the minister.⁵ Instead, there is a perception that civil servants, particularly departmental heads, will be blamed for the advice. Some officials viewed this 'blame syndrome' as serious and pointed out that civil servants could be sacked if advice is wrongly perceived to be poor. Certainly, the heavy politicisation of the appointment and termination of departmental heads has exacerbated this fear. In an environment where ministers are less likely to accept responsibility over policymaking, and where departmental heads have been frequently replaced without 'reasonable' cause, departmental heads are more likely to be the scapegoats of adverse public reaction to policymaking.

A lack of ministerial responsibility creates several risks for policy advice. First, it is unlikely to instil the kind of confidence necessary for supplying high quality policy advice. Departmental heads work in a very

complex environment and they need the support and confidence of their ministers. No departmental head wants to work in an environment where they run the risk of being blamed, especially for advice that the minister has had the opportunity to discuss with them and accept as relevant. A lack of ministerial responsibility is likely to bring about a situation where heads of departments will lose confidence and in some cases they may shy away from their responsibilities for fear of being blamed.

Second, a broader concern pertains to the accountability of ministers and the government as a whole. If ministerial responsibility is lacking and if departmental heads are likely to become scapegoats, this may undermine the accountability of ministers for poor policymaking. Third, a lack of ministerial responsibility is likely to undermine the need for setting strong ministerial expectations for robust and quality policy advice. Improvements in policy advisory arrangements in some developed Westminster countries came about as a result of strong pressure by the parliament on ministers and the government to improve the quality of policy advice. In Australia, for example, the policy management reviews, which have sought to evaluate the process and quality of advice by central agencies at the federal level, were brought about by parliament questioning the value of advice from central agencies (Weller and Stevens 1998).

Finally, a lack of ministerial responsibility runs the risk of undermining the principle of free and frank advice, which is central to the supply of quality policy advice. Under such conditions, good technocratic advice may be compromised. Furthermore, there is a risk of departmental heads being partisan in the advice they provide. By doing so they may relegate their role to that of political advisor and hence undermine the non-political stance of the Papua New Guinea public service.

Conclusion

Broad conclusions can be drawn from the preliminary findings emerging from this research. One is that the ability of the three central agencies to provide good policy advice will continue to be weakened if important changes are not made at the political level. Second, some of the political limitations affecting policy advice are not unique to Papua New Guinea and can be found in other developed Westminster systems as well. For example, the effects of short-term policy cycles, and pressure by politicians to provide spontaneous advice and its adverse effect on robust and comprehensive analysis, are evident in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere. Short-term bureaucratic responses (in the form of advice) are common across Westminster systems. However, one can detect some fundamental differences as well, which offer some explanation for Papua New Guinea having a unique form of parliamentary democracy (Dorney 1990). Fundamental differences can be seen in the way the practices of 'free and frank advice', 'security of tenure of departmental heads' and 'ministerial responsibility' have evolved in Papua New Guinea and therefore are different to the classic Whitehall model. Unfortunately, the evolution of some of the key principles mentioned above has undermined, rather than enhanced, the quality of policy advice. What this research has shown is that the political context within which the three key agencies—Finance and Treasury, Prime Minister and National Executive Council and Personnel Management—operate determines their capacity in the provision of policy advice. Serious attention needs to be given to reforming the political environment, especially with respect to those political factors that bear on policy advice. This includes a balanced emphasis of ministers

and cabinet on the type of advice required, improving the purchaser and ownership roles of ministers, investing in strengthening the long term strategic capability of agencies, improving ministerial responsibility, and improving the system of appointing and terminating departmental heads.

Notes

- ¹ The Central Agencies Coordinating Committee membership comprises the departmental heads of the three central agencies covered in this article and those of the departments of Provincial Affairs and Attorney General.
- ² Some of Curtin's (2000) analysis on the short-term financial solutions to Papua New Guinea's woes in financial management in the 1999 budget at the expense of realistic, long-term strategies in fiscal policy management illustrates this point.
- ³ For example, allocations to capital formation (as a percentage of total allocation to each agency) for the period 2000-2002 were 14.5 per cent for Department of Finance and Treasury, 8.0 per cent for the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council, and 0.6 per cent for the Department of Personnel Management. In that period the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council and the Department of Personnel Management did not get any funding for capital formation for two years. Further, there were gross disparities in funding favouring Department of Finance and Treasury.
- ⁴ Since the demise of the Public Service Commission in 1986 and the creation of the Department of Personnel Management, appointments have been at the mercy of various politicians controlling government. The result has been the over-politicisation of the appointment and termination of departmental heads, constant sackings, and interference into departmental management. In 2003, the new Somare-Marat Government decided to restore the powers of appointment to the Public Service Commission through

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constitutional amendments. However, even this does not seem to be followed as there have been recent controversies surrounding appointments, for example in the case of the National Fisheries Authority and the Independent Public Business Corporation.

- ⁵ The summary of those interviewed showed that 61.5 per cent in Department of Finance and Treasury, 60 per cent in the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council and 71.4 per cent in the Department of Personnel Management were of the view that the exercise of ministerial responsibility is rare.

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