



# Yumi Save Stopen Korapsen!

**La corruption rend un pays pauvre! Agissons contre la corruption!**  
 A weekly column on Good Governance, Accountability, Transparency and Responsibility with a view to eliminating Corruption  
 Transparency Vanuatu  
 P.O. Box 335 Port Vila, Vanuatu  
 Tel: 25715 Fax: 25716  
 YOU CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF TRANSPARENCY VANUATU AND BE PART OF THE COALITION TO FIGHT CORRUPTION.  
 YOU CAN CALL IN AT THE OFFICE AT THE HEMAS OCEANIA BUILDING OR CALL 25715 OR E-MAIL: [transparency@vanuatu.com.au](mailto:transparency@vanuatu.com.au) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

## Coroner's report on Bule's death - a real test of the Government's resolve

OVER THE YEARS THE PEOPLE of Vanuatu have become used to hearing and reading about their elected and appointed officials routinely mistreating and breaking the laws of the land.  
 Dozens of Ombudsman's public reports detailing every kind of misconduct:  
 Selling passports.  
 Misappropriating funds.  
 Theft of public assets.  
 Political interference in the statutory bodies.  
 Wrongful hiring and firing.  
 Rampant nepotism.  
 Abuse of tender processes.  
 Electoral fraud.  
 Robbing of the VCHB.  
 Using TDF workers pension funds to finance political funds.  
 The list is long and shameful.

The damning report by the Coroner, a Supreme Court judge, into the VMF actions in this matter is only the latest to be made public, though certainly one of the most alarming.  
 Shockingly, the circumstances over how John Bule died revealed that his injuries were sustained in an interrogation room at the VMF Cook Barracks on 29 March 2009 while the deceased was in the custody of a number of VMF officers for approximately only 30 minutes.  
 Within that 30 minutes the deceased suffered at least 32 different apparent injuries to his body in the course of what force means reportedly from a large number of incidents referred to in the evidence as a stick they were kept in the classroom and regularly used to recuperated cadavres.  
 It might be worth to note that Bule was picked up and another person with the stick.  
 The impact report highlights in detail the alarming behaviour of officers in the VMF, deficiencies in the procedures and conduct of Operation Killang and systemic problems within the Vanuatu Police Force and the VME. The VMF should hang their heads in shame.  
 The evidence given by the VMF officers was so bad, that the Coroner

labelled them as 'unimpressive, non-responsive, unwise and self-serving. They contradicted themselves and each other as to who was present during the interrogation, whom, ask questions and as to what actions the deceased took during the course of the interrogation.  
 It is hard to believe that even the current Police Commissioner, Joshua Bong, appeared to be unconcerned about the death of the deceased. A Duty Roster that was prepared before the inquest with the names of the VMF officers who purportedly were on duty on 29 March 2009 revealed that Mr. Bong has deliberately produced a manufactured, unreliable document and has concealed the original documentation'.  
 In fact, the document was revealed by one of those implicated that he had been directed by Mr. Bong to draw up the Duty Roster from his recollection in the week prior to the inquest and eight months after the event. This is absolutely unacceptable given the seriousness of the case.  
 The report apparently stated that if the evidence is found to be correct, then the 'Commissioner of Police has deliberately produced a manufactured, unreliable document' to which the Coroner stated, 'the most extraordinary obstructive behaviour in a judicial body by the country's leading law enforcement officer'.  
 Evidence highlighted concerning the attitudes and misconceptions of the VMF officers included:  
 1. That they are not police officers in name only. They regard themselves as an elite force and are an army and have no interest in police duties.  
 2. That their first loyalty and duty is to the VMF and their superior officers, not their country or their obligations to legally enforce the law of the country.  
 3. They should do anything ordered of them by their superior officers, including breaking the law if ordered.  
 4. That if they believe orders and

break the law, then the superior officers who give the orders will be responsible for the breach of the law, not them and  
 5. They feel to follow orders that break the law, they will be punished. They are in greater fear of that punishment and being in breach of the VMF group culture than they are of breaking the law.  
 The 10 recommendations in the report should now be fully considered and acted upon without delay when the evidence is still fresh in our minds. There is no doubt that a criminal case could be instigated and the Public Prosecutor should take the leading role on this matter.  
 Coroner Dawson said that such a culture of violence and unaccountability is a danger to the stability of the State.  
 The contents of the Coroner's report may be shocking; however, for those people who have followed Vanuatu public life over the years, they are certainly not surprising.  
 When there has been little or no public accountability and a complete absence of remorse, how can it be surprising when breaches of the law, large and small, occur time and time again?  
 When there is no need to fear any consequences, why would any leading public servant, member of the Police or VMF worry about what might happen if their misconduct is discovered?  
 For years, in newspaper editorials, in letters to the editor, on the campaign trail and in private conversations, the question has been asked and asked and asked - why is something not done when we see, even after another person exposed? Why are policies altered? Why don't the Police investigate and ensure cases go to the Prosecutor's office?  
 One answer is that for over a decade the officers set up to act as watchdogs and the public conscience, and also no report to the public have been hopelessly inadequate.  
 Whether because of incompetence or personal fears, the reality is that instead of being fed a steady stream of public reports and annual reports

from the Ombudsman and the Auditor General resulting more than a drizzle of trivial reports have appeared in public, and no annual public reports.  
 Also, the Public Prosecutor's office has routinely shied away from any significant prosecution of public leaders and "big men" generally.  
 All of these years of abuses have by and large simply been overlooked and accepted because of voter indifference, or fear within officials of not taking a stand.  
 We have seen lip service by leaders to democratic and good governance ideals on the one hand but on the other hand their turning a blind eye to any kind of abuse, no mat-

ter how large or death.  
 If the rest is anything to go by, there may be little chance of any real or effective action taken given the close political and financial ties between the Prime Minister and the former head of the VMF Joshua Bong (now Vanuatu's Commissioner of Police) who was the VMF's boss at the time of the creation of the illegal militia, and at the time of Bule's beating to death.  
 A letter confirmed the payment of VT 1,000,000 by the Prime Minister at the time Edward Natapei to Joshua Bong has already been made public by the then Minister of Internal Affairs George Ukele.  
 Sadly, intertwined with all the economic growth and the "Happy Country in the World" label is a culture of lawlessness, a culture that becomes increasingly entrenched with every abuse and with every lack of responsibility.  
 How is this shameful incident to be any different? Only time will tell.  
 Despite 30 years of "independence" and tens of millions of dollars of aid money spent in Vanuatu, a large chunk of it on police and VMF training and support, it is as if we are still very much in the beginning of all that needs to be done.  
 J To Page 6

## Transparency Vanuatu

### Freshwater 2 green space sacrificed for new church by the National Housing Corporation and the government

THE LOSS OF GREEN SPACES has been a feature of many media articles in the last few years as Port Vila's population has risen rapidly, green space within the town has become more and more precious as a community asset.  
 Instead of recognizing this and acting accordingly, one government decision after another has seen more and more of these little green corners eliminated from the plan of Port Vila.  
 In some of these cases, the land was simply subdivided by the sitting Ministers of the day to give away to their political cronies and in this most recent case, in one of the most densely populated areas of Port Vila, one of the last remaining green spaces has been handed over to one new religious organisation.  
 Will lessons never be learnt?  
 The vast majority of the residents opposed this very strongly, as soon as they became aware of the possible transfer of the land to the 4 Square. They even submitted petitions to the Mayor of Port Vila and other officials.  
 The Freshwater Community lodged a com-

plaint with Transparency Vanuatu (ALAC) who accompanied the community leader to see the Minister of Internal Affairs of Port Vila responsible for town planning.  
 Their hopes were high as the Minister is from a green party. Especially since the Minister humbly told the community leaders that he would investigate and try his best efforts to save the green zone.  
 There are 2 leases sold to the 4 Square Church one which was in have the offices of the National Housing Corporation and the green zone/park.  
 Both of them are gone.  
 Where are all of the young respondents to go?  
 Where can they go for recreation?  
 There have been complaints about how low the land prices of Freshwater will suffer if a church is erected in an area which is mostly residential.  
 The Community of Freshwater is very disappointed as when they bought their land, they had the promise that a green zone would be available.

The 4 square Church has in the last 10 years expanded its membership to high officers of Vanuatu: Police Commissioner and some Director General.  
 The Minister said that he would investigate this matter with the Manager of the National Housing Corporation and that he was waiting for a report before taking his final decision.  
 At the recent launching of the Port Vila zoning plan in the Parliament gardens, the Minister of Internal Affairs referred to several examples of bad planning decisions that would be investigated because of suspected corruption, and he said the people responsible for such bad planning decisions should be brought to account.  
 Unfortunately this particular bad planning decision and had transfer decision of the National Housing Corporation did not seem to attract ministerial intervention even though the community leaders of Freshwater were led to believe that something would be done and could be done to keep their green zone and their assets.



The location beside the Four Square Church Green Zone lease Feb 08. (DVF 11/08)