

Panguna Mine Action: First Court Hearing

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 18 October 2024:

The first hearing for the Panguna Mine Action was held at the PNG National Court on 9 October 2024 before Hon. Deputy Chief Justice Ambeng Kandakasi.

Appearing in Court for the Class Members were Senior Counsel Ron Webb, together with Michael Goodwin and Daniel Bidar of Goodwin Bidar Nutley Lawyers.

Lead claimant Martin Miriori travelled from Bougainville to represent the over 5,000 Class Members.

The Court ordered that BCL and its lawyers be restrained from submitting evidence obtained from private class members and from directly contacting private class members. Other matters were deferred to the next hearing to be held in February 2025.

Following the hearing, Mr Miriori said: “This is an important and historic first step towards finally achieving justice for the affected people of Bougainville. We are looking forward to the next hearing in February.”

Further updates will be provided as they become available.

ENDS.

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Notes to Editors

1. Details of the claim and associated materials including images and videos of the affected lands and peoples can be found at: <https://www.pangunamineaction.com>
2. Solicitors for the plaintiff and class members are Goodwin Bidar Nutley Lawyers, of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and Morris Mennilli, of Sydney, Australia.
3. Bougainville Copper Limited (as it is now known) (“BCL”) operated the Panguna Copper Mine (“Panguna Mine”) between 1971 and 1989, during which period Rio Tinto was the controlling shareholder in BCL. Operations at Panguna Mine saw the disposal of tailings and other waste products often directly into the Jaba-Kawerong river system and associated valleys, at huge scale for many years. During production, approximately 90,000 to 120,000 tonnes of waste rock and approximately 80,000 to 140,000 tonnes of tailings were produced by the Panguna Mine each day.
4. Panguna Mine, Google Maps ref: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/QEckPeHj1byYgcCb8>