



Independent State of Papua New Guinea

## Department for Religion and Community Development

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **OFFICE OF RELIGION TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY OF CHURCH STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

Minister for National Planning and Monitoring, Hon. Charles Abel this morning handed over the responsibilities of the Church State Partnership Program to the Department for Community Development and Religion, which was received by the Minister, Hon. Delilah Gore.

The Handover-takeover ceremony held this morning at Lamana Hotel, was also to announce the 2016 Education Infrastructure Grants to recipient member Churches to the PNG Church State Partnership Program by the Department for National Planning and Monitoring.

The Department of National Planning has over a number of years, only held these responsibility for the PNG Church State Partnership Program in the Interim to review the Social Development program until it was in order before the full responsibilities were handed over to the Department for Community Development and Religion who are the appropriate custodian for Church Development Programs.

While thanking the Churches for their continuous support and the strong partnership with the Government, Minister Abel reiterated, Churches play a vital role in the Development of the country and obviously are the number one partners of the Government particularly in the delivery of Education and Health services as being the Primary priority areas the Government is focused on.

According to Minister Abel, a K12million funding was allocated for the Church State Partnership Program in 2015-2016, with a further K10million allocated in 2016. However, the funding was not received in the timely manner that was expected or in the full amount that was appropriated. He stressed that, this was because of the cash flow issues that was faced by the Government and them having to prioritize through supplementary budgets or re-prioritize on expenditure.

“As we go forward of course, the government has placed a further funding of K20million to enhance the Church State Partnership Program and that appropriation has been placed directly under the Department for Community Development & Religion. That is the Department that has the appropriate mandate, in terms of Church Partnership Programs and the government’s relationship with the Churches.”

“To avoid those continuing issues of the past, I would ask that we all comply with this Policy that I keep referring too. We try and keep the implementation of public funds as focused as possible on outcomes and align as much as possible with the government’s purpose and intention,” said Minister Abel.

Despite the allocation of the amount of funds mentioned by Minister Abel only K2.5million will be dispersed or distributed this week to the participating churches under the Program. The funds has been already deposited into Bank South Pacific (BSP) and will be transferred through direct deposits into the Churches accounts.

In thanking Minister Abel and his Department for handing over the responsibilities of churches to the Department for Community Development and Religion, Minister, Hon. Delilah Gore also echoed her counterpart's sentiments about the important roles that the Churches play in the country.

She said, Churches are always there amongst the people and with the people, and they are the ones that respond first to the people where there is a need. And that is how important the Churches roles are as a major partner in the work the government is focused on.

“The Office of Religion comes under the Department for Community Development and Religion, and we have staffs that are ready to partner and work together with the churches to continue the good work the Department of National Planning has done and deliver the most needed services to our people” said Minister Gore.

Minister Gore added that, while we continue to focus on Education and Health, the Department for Community Development and Religion, and the country continue to face challenges in other areas that needs urgent attention.

“We have these challenges of community and home based issues such as Gender based violence, Persons living with disability that needs attention by this government, children related issues and many others that needs our attention,” said the Minister.

In her closing remarks, Minister Gore said, while we partner with the churches to deliver services of Education and health, her department will also work together with the churches in line with the policy to see how best churches can assist to address other pressing issues that are affecting the country.

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**APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY**

**Ms Anna Solomon**

**SECRETARY**

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