



## **Granting of lease queried**

MEMBER for Kairuku-Hiri Paru Aihi has questioned the granting of a special agriculture and business lease for 99 years to Mekeo Hinterland Holdings Limited for 116,400ha of customary land by the State.

Mr Aihi has called on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Lands Sir Puka Temu to explain how the lease was given to the company without the knowledge, consultation and involvement of customary landowners.

He said Government records showed that:

\* On Nov 30, 2007, the State acquired and granted to Mekeo Hinterland a special agriculture and business lease for 99 years; and

\* On Dec 17, 2008, Department of Environment and Conservation secretary Dr Wari Iamo issued the Environment Permit to Mekeo Hinterland.

Mr Aihi said he understood that Mekeo Hinterland and a Malaysian company, Albright Limited had submitted applications for a logging permit in that project area.

He said Mekeo Hinterland has a sub-lease agreement with Albright Limited to log timber for export and oil palm project.

Also, a current MP and a former Central politician are on the Hinterland board as chairman and treasurer while the company secretary is from Mekeo.

“People in the affected areas of Gulf and Central province who will be affected by the project have not been consulted for their inputs,” he said.

Mr Aihi said the project involved covered part of his Kairuku-Hiri electorate and was important for Sir Puka to come out and inform the people exactly how this deal was concluded and is in whose interest.

[http://www.thenational.com.pg/070709/ween\\_papua.php](http://www.thenational.com.pg/070709/ween_papua.php)

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