

## The people are entitled to know

**W**E now know that our 89 Members of Open electorates or districts have not been receiving K10 million a year in District Services Improvement Program funds every year.

Alotau MP and Minister for National Planning and Monitoring Charles Abel and the Director of the Office of Rural Development Paul Sai'i revealed this on Friday when responding to last Friday's *Post-Courier* editorial on the disbursement and use of DSIP funds.

Mr Abel expressed concern about the editorial implying that he, like other Open MPs, had been receiving money yet there is very little on the ground to show for it.

Minister Abel explained that the 89 MPs had received a total K21 million in DSIP funds over the last five years, and not K10 million a year.

He said the DSIP was a deliberate intervention by the national government to ensure that districts get direct funding for key impact projects like roads, education, health, and agriculture.

A total of K21 million - K20 million for DSIP and K1 million for National Agriculture Development Program (NADP) - was allocated for the Alotau District which was used to do major impact projects and not given to a few selected people or his political cronies, he said.

The *Post-Courier* editorial did not say that Mr Abel or any MP for that matter had used the funds to give to a select few or to political cronies.

Nevertheless, the people of PNG are thankful to the Minister and Mr Sai'i for providing details of the DSIP funding in the last five years. This should be done at least every six months.

The point of our editorial is about honesty, accountability and transparency in the use of DSIP funds; whether there are any guidelines to follow and to ensure that there is equitable distribution of the funds for basic services and infrastructure development projects in the local level governments and districts.

The people are happy to know that NPO and ORD are now working on mechanisms for fairness and equitable use and distribution of DSIP funds.

Minister Abel conceded that there have been many national programs over the years but very little on the ground to show for it, but some MPs are using their DSIP funds to get things done.

The onus is on the Government and Ministers like Mr Abel to make sure that the DSIP works for the benefit of as many Papua New Guineans as possible in the rural areas.

It is also good to see that the National Economic and Fiscal Commission (NEFC) is today publishing a warrant release poster for the first six months with respect to a total appropriation in the 2012 budget of K318,769,000 for goods and services grants to provincial and local level governments for health, education, transport infrastructure, primary production and village court operations.

According to NEFC boss, Dr Nao Badu, the purpose of the warrant release is to improve transparency and accountability in the delivery of basic services and provide an opportunity for the public to know what is happening to their money.

That's good. It's the Government's responsibility - the people are entitled to know.