



Independent State of Papua New Guinea
High Commissioner

Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to begin by paying my respects to the traditional indigenous custodians of the land on which we meet today, their elders, past, present and emerging.

Thank you, Margaret for the kind introduction and also to my good brother Brendan Coombs for inviting me to address this important forum.

It fills me with great pride to see the next generation of HR and Payroll professionals from the Government and other organisations and agencies here today. I know many of you from my time with the Department of Personnel Management. We have people here today from all parts of our great country.

Why are we here today? The theme for this Seminar is “Empowering HR and Payroll – People, Processes and Technology”

What does that mean in practice, what should we be aiming to achieve by empowering HR and Payroll in general and in the PNG Government in particular.

To me, these are the main outcomes we must achieve:

- Accountability and Transparency
- Budget Control and Fiscal Discipline
- Attracting and Retaining Talent
- Minimizing Corruption
- Ensuring Equity and Fairness
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance
- Public Trust and Confidence
- Supporting Economic Stability and
- Gaining Efficiency in Government Operations.

As the majority of us are Public Servants and we use the Westminster system of government and doing these things is crucial for the effective functioning of public institutions and ensuring fairness and transparency in the public sector.

In the Westminster system, accountability is a fundamental principle where ministers are responsible for the actions of their departments. Proper Human Resource and Payroll management ensures that public funds are used appropriately, with clear records of how resources are allocated to pay government employees. This reduces the risks of fraud, ghost employees, and corruption, promoting transparency and trust in the government.

Payroll is one of the largest expenses in any government. Efficient payroll management ensures that public sector wages remain within the budgetary limits set by Parliament, thus avoiding overspending or mismanagement of resources. This is particularly important where public funds are limited and need to be carefully managed to address other pressing priorities like healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

An organized and properly managed HR and Payroll system ensures that government employees are paid on time and fairly, according to their grades and positions. In a Westminster-style government, where public service roles are often career-based, efficient payroll management helps attract and retain skilled professionals. It fosters confidence that employees will receive the correct compensation, improving motivation and reducing turnover.

Many countries like PNG have corruption as a significant problem that can undermine governance. A well-structured payroll system reduces the chances of corruption by automating processes and providing clear documentation of payments. It ensures that only legitimate employees receive salaries, cutting down on ghost workers (fake employees added to the payroll), which has been a common issue in some developing countries.

Our system ensures that civil servants are compensated based on their job classifications, years of service, and qualifications, preventing disparities and favouritism. This is especially important where we aim to emphasize meritocracy and fair competition for public service jobs. When payroll is managed fairly, it reinforces the sense of fairness and equity within government institutions.

We are bound by legislation and regulations governing public sector employment. Proper HR and Payroll management ensures compliance with these laws, including tax regulations, superannuation contributions, and labour laws. This protects both the government and its employees from legal issues related to underpayment, overpayment, or failure to meet regulatory obligations.

We cannot afford to lose focus on the citizens of our country. They are more likely to trust the government when it demonstrates efficiency, transparency, visibility and accountability in managing public resources, ensuring that public servants are paid accurately and on time, contributes to the overall trust that our citizens place in their government. This is public confidence in the government and its institutions of state.

It is critical that we remember that the Government is the largest employer and that the public sector forms a large part of the formal workforce. It provides a regular income for these workers, which in turn boosts consumption and supports local businesses and promotes economic stability.

Fraud, such as manipulating pay rates or adding non-existent employees, can severely drain government resources. Our HR and Payroll system must reduce these risks by ensuring there are checks and balances, audit trails, and clear records.

A well-managed system ensures that the government operates smoothly by eliminating errors and delays in salary payments. This improves employee morale and productivity, as civil servants can focus on delivering public services without concerns about payroll issues. Departments are accountable to Parliament and efficient, effective and ethical payroll management reflects positively on departmental leadership and the government as a whole.

The PNG Government's HR and Payroll system is critical for promoting transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility. It ensures that public servants are paid fairly and on time, reduces the potential for fraud and corruption, and strengthens trust in government institutions. Ultimately, it helps governments allocate their limited resources more efficiently and effectively, contributing to the broader goals of development and good governance.

The Public Service Values and Ethics Based Leadership and Management Capability espouses SIX CORE VALUES THAT MUST BE UPHELD BY PUBLIC SERVANTS. These are; HONESTY, ACCOUNTABILITY, INTEGRITY, RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT and WISDOM.

I urge you all here to make the most of this opportunity to discuss what the PNG Governments HR and Payroll System can do now and what is possible with a successful upgrade and using Ascender to manage the PNG Governments workforce.

It can only happen if there is genuine collaboration and partnership between the Central Agencies, the Vendor and possibly donors.

Thank you Brendan and the team at Concept for organising this Seminar and for your ongoing in-country support for what is probably our major IT system.

With that I would like to officially declare the Seminar open and wish you all the best for your deliberations.

H.E. JOHN MA'O KALI, CMG OBE
High Commissioner