



KIBCA

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Good Start on Logging Conflicts of Interest, but More to be Done on Corruption

KIBCA welcomes the decision of the Danny Philips Government to remove Bodo Dettke as Minister of Forest this week. Yet more strong action is needed by the Government to eliminate other sources of corruption and conflicts of interest by public officials.

“The decision yesterday to remove Forest Minister, Bodo Dettke, was necessary to restore credibility and independence to the administration of forestry in Solomon Islands,” said Mr Ferguson Vaghi, KIBCA Coordinator.

“As long as Mr Dettke owned a logging company, there would be a serious perception of bias and conflict in his role as Forest Minister. As Minister he was also responsible for regulating his own company’s activities.”

KIBCA had successfully taken Success Company to court for failing to follow the environmental laws regulating logging and for logging above 400m without an approval from the Forestry Ministry. In an historic judgment last week validating the role of a landholders’ representative body, the High Court ordered logging on Lot 1 on Kolombangara Island to cease until the necessary approvals were obtained.

Mr Vaghi said, “The matter does not end there for KIBCA. KIBCA is lodging a complaint about the corrupt and biased dealings that led to the logging in the first place. “

“Several lots of registered customary land on Kolombangara Island have been without trustees for several years, and KIBCA is concerned that the Trust has not been managed in the interests of landholders during this interim period.”

“Decisions may have been made to benefit certain individuals, rather than the communities and families whose land it is held in trust for.”

“A clear majority of local landholders have been opposing the logging deals on these lands. On Lot1, the land the subject of the recent Court ruling, KIBCA received signatures of over 100 local landholders opposed to the logging.”

“KIBCA will be passing on the information to the Attorney General to investigate.”

“We are coming to Honiara next week to raise these issues with representatives of the Solomon Islands Government. We will ask the Government to ensure registered land trusts are managed in the interests of the villagers, not to benefit the personal interests of a select few.”

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