



STANIS HULAHAU
CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER



Central Government Office lodgment booth.

Reduced turnaround time for visa, passport and citizenship applications

We are pleased to announce new turnaround time for processing of applications for visa, passport and citizenship.

Papua New Guineans who apply for a new passport or for renewal can now expect a seven days turnaround time. The seven working days are for passport clients who pay the normal application fee of K100.

Clients who pay K300 for either new passport or renewal can expect to get the printed booklet within two working days or 48 hours.

Previously, it takes up to 15 working days to process new applications.

Chief Migration Officer Mr Stanis Hulahau, who has been appointed to the post early this year, says his focus would be on improving client service delivery and one of them is to reduce the processing and turnaround time.

New visa lodgements and visa renewal processing time has been reduced by five working days. Non-citizens who apply for a new visa or to renew their visa can expect an

answer in about 10 working days if their applications satisfy all the requirements.

Mr Hulahau announced that Permanent Residence (PR) applications have previously no set timeframe resulting in many of them experiencing prolonged delays.

Similarly, non-citizens who have applied for citizenship face rather similar uncertainty.

"In this review, we agreed that PR and citizenship applications can now expect at least three months for their applications to be assessed and deliberated on" Mr Hulahau says.

This review was part of service delivery improvements this Authority has taken on.

"As an organization that is evolving with time and subject to direction of government, changes in laws and policies, our business processes are inevitable to meet the expectations of our clients," says the CMO.

This new policies are introduced early June.

Merging work permit and visa current issues & what's beyond the merger

As new developments are taking place in the oil and gas, mining, commercial and agricultural sectors, there is an increasing demand for skilled labour and the government is taking steps to ensure its entry and work permits are keeping up.

Keeping up with the demand means to be human, understanding the needs of our clients and finding solutions. If our visa and work permit functions are still 'traditional' then we have fail as regulators. We must not be complacent but learn to accept changes that benefits all.

A work permit gives a non-citizen the 'permission' to work in the country and is administered by Department of Labour and Industrial Relations (DLIR) while the Working Resident Visa gives the non-citizen "permission" to enter and live in the country for a specific period of time.

Too often we have seen employer's sponsored employees given permits to work in a technical trade but ended up doing different jobs. Similarly, we have on numerous occasions noticed inconsistencies with information provided in work permits and employment visas. We must act now to erase such problems and tighten administrative gaps that limits space for corruption and improves investment opportunities.

There are unnecessary red tapes and high costs to PNG companies when trying to hire a non-citizen worker. We know those challenges and it's important we act now.

I hope that you are aware of the legislative changes passed in Parliament early this year to merge Work Permit and Employment visa.

It is my professional view that work permit and work visa are distinctive products but complements each other. By combining these two we help PNG companies save time and money and avoid doing everything twice. Employers are systematically forced to deal with two government agencies, pay two separate fees, complete two application forms, stand on two separate queues for lodgement, they are to comply with two distinct sets of laws and regulations and at the end the employer must supply two similar sets of supporting documents that may be inspected by two different government agencies. In other words, an employer is required to provide relatively same information to both DLIR and ICA as part of the application process.

This application process complements each other and the government believes merging both functions will reduce turnaround time and improves PNG's standing as an investment destination. It is important to note that while work permit function is transfer to ICA, the DLIR will retain the overarching responsibility for non-citizen employment policy.

The Marape Government is committed to its vision to create a "one-stop-shop" and a single permit for work and entry visa that limits red tapes, corruption and improve labour mobility and costs of doing business in the country.

I am particularly pleased that administrative arrangements are nearing completion and the physical transfer will commence next month. Clients can expect to lodge work permit and working resident visa applications at the ICA counter in the coming month.

I must inform you that work permit and visa functions will continue to operate independently pending a full review of legislative arrangements and regulations. After this process, ICA would develop a single visa category, to accommodate both permits.

INSIDE:

In the midst of the pandemic are stories that defied the odds -surviving the deadliest virus in a foreign country. We feature five ICA staff members serving in Papua New Guinea Diplomatic Missions. Read their story in this issue.





Chief Migration Officer Mr. Stanis Hulahau (far left), Tourism Promotion Authority CEO Mr. Eric Mossman Uvovo, Department of Personnel Management Secretary, Ms Taies Sansan, Governor General Sir Bob Dadae, Kokonas Indastri Koporesin Managing Director Allan Aku and NBC Managing Director Kora Nou.

Employment Contract sealed

Chief Migration Officer Mr Stanis Hulahau has signed his four-year employment contract at the Government House at Konedobu, Port Moresby on 13 May 2021.

He is the third permanent CMO appointed since the establishment of Immigration and Citizenship Authority (ICA) in 2010. Immigration was a division within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade until the separation.

Mr Hulahau was among three other Departmental heads who signed their employment contract through the Head of State and Governor General, Grand Chief Sir Bob Dadae, and witnessed by Department of Personnel Management Secretary, Taies Sansan.

"I am humbled and satisfied that this process is over and I can concentrate on my administrative duties for the next three and a half years," Mr Hulahau said after the ceremony.

The ceremony was special with the presence of his wife, the younger son and his biological parents who arrived from East Sepik province to witness the ceremony.

Sir Bob challenged the four head of departments to be committed in their service to the nation and the people.

Mr Hulahau was appointed to the CMO's position on 27 January 2021. Previously, he was the Deputy Chief Migration Officer in charge of Borders, Enforcement and Compliance Division from 2018 after he left the Prime Minister's Department as Director, Office of the Security Coordination and Assessment.



Caption (Top right): CMO Mr Hulahau and the Governor General Sir Bob Dadae and Secretary DPM Ms Taies Sansan with the immediate family members and ICA Senior Executive staff members stands for a group photo.

Right: Mr Hulahau signs this 4 years employment contract.





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ICA officers from the Borders Support Operation at the Port of Motukea with the owner of the vessel CS Reliance who disembarked the vessel in May 2021. From left Ms. Jean Kirarok, Ms. Pauline Mitil Solomon, Ms. Theresia Nali and Mr. Sai Kolopu (all in vests).



We are working closely with the BSP Financial Group Ltd on improving our online payment gateway and e-payment products. "I am pleased that BSP has been very supportive and are making sure our needs and requirements are met," CMO Hulahu said.

ICA and BSP are working to improve the online payment platform and provide a user-friendly experience for our clients.

Since the introduction of the online payment portal on the website www.ica.gov.pg we have been able to double revenue generation for the government. To weigh it up, our fees are charged in US Dollar equivalent. We are looking forward to more cooperation with BSP Group to digitise our payment systems.

Traditional Border Crossing and Covid-19 restrictions



Ms Lynett Kani (in blue ICA polo uniform) and the awareness team in Central Bougainville.

Authorities in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB) are stepping up efforts to inform and educate traditional border crossers about the risk of transmitting the Covid-19 virus when illegally moving to and from the Shortland Islands of Solomon Islands.

The AROB government has imposed a ban on TBC since the outbreak of the virus on the island and urge locals not to visit relatives or trade across the sea border.

Senior Migration Officer, Lynette Kani, based in Buka, has been working closely with Health, Customs and Police to carry out awareness programmes in Central and South Bougainville.

"I was part of a 10 days Border Health Awareness in Central Bougainville. We targetted Traditional Border Crossing communities to educate and inform them about the closure of the maritime border and the risk associated with the virus.



Consultation with the TBC Chiefs of Buin at the Buin Secondary School Hall. Photo by L.Kani

Besides, Ms Kani was pleased to be part of a consultation that aimed at rezoning the Tradition Border Crossing villages along the coast of Bougainville.

This exercise was spearheaded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Department of Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs.

Ms Kani said this was the first of its kind since 1989 and the exercise aims to update names of the TBC villages in Bougainville given the changes in the current system of government in AROB. Once the consultation is concluded then the two governments of PNG and SI will sign the new agreements.

The agreements that will be renewed are:

1. Basic Agreement on Border Arrangement 2004
2. Agreement on Special Administration
3. Treaty Concerning Sovereignty, Maritime and Seabed Boundaries.

Covid-19 experiences

read about the personal experiences of immigration officers serving in Papua New Guinea Diplomatic Missions and Posts overseas during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lindsay Sawaeba

First Secretary - Immigration & Consular Affairs
Kundu Beijing
PNG Embassy in Beijing, China

WHEN LINDSAY SAWAEBEA took up posting in Kundu Beijing as First Secretary Immigration and Consular Affairs in 2017, he did so with a desire to protect and serve the country.

Lindsay has no idea his stay in Beijing would turn out to be his best and worst experience.

In November 2019, he heard locally engaged staff talked about a new flu-like virus that is spreading out of Wuhan, a Chinese city about 1000 kilometers from Beijing.

"Local staff knew about it but no one took it seriously," Lindsay recalled. Not long, the virus was detected outside China and soon after the World Health Organization has identified the new virus as "Coronavirus or Covid-19" and declared it as a pandemic in early 2020.

Lindsay knew the situation was serious. Understanding Chinese *Mandarin* was a little bit tricky but he depended heavily on English channels for news and information on Covid-19.

"At first there were many misinformation that caused us to panic," said Mr Sawaeba. "But China is well controlled and in fact Beijing is the safest place to live during the pandemic."

He recalled using the *WeChat* application to communicate, pay bills, check body temperature and even for recording his movements.

"The Chinese government has used technology to drive the numbers down and I am impressed with how this country has managed its pandemic crisis domestically," said Mr Sawaeba.

Lindsay is slowly finding the balance and is adjusting into the new normal settings in Beijing.

He is now enjoying the sunshine and is hoping the weather can heal the wounds. "Now its summer in China and regulations are relaxed but we expect it to change," the Milne Bay native is crossing his fingers and is hoping the

virus is eliminated so he can plan a visit home - to his beautiful Misima Island.

Lindsay and his colleagues at the Embassy have sacrificed their health and safety to work during the height of the pandemic to assist Papua New Guineans who need consular assistance. Lindsay said contact tracing was a major challenge for them.

"Our challenge is to have a central registry for all citizens that will give us leverage to identify where our people live and we can allocate resources accordingly," he observed.

The number of PNG nationals in China is manageable with about 300 students enrolling in Chinese Universities making up about 98 percent of the total.

"We received a lot of request from PNG citizens to go back home," Lindsay recalled. But going back is a personal choice. Some students decide to stay as universities locked their gates to keep them safe inside.

Mr Sawaeba said things are now different in his home. "My children were not allowed outside the house for eight months. For eight months they were glued to the TV and iPads. Though schools provide online learning tutorials, I am now seeing behavioural changes towards their attitudes and social interactions after staying indoors for almost a year.

Yvonne Karo

Senior Immigration Officer
Kundu Beijing
PNG Embassy in Beijing, China

YVONNE KARO's neighbors taught she is the craziest Pacific Islander living in the neighborhood.

At the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Beijing was in complete lockdown and the streets where you normally can expect hundreds of thousands of visitors daily were completely empty - no one walks outside.

On several occasions, Yvonne's neighbors saw her leaving the house and they were staring from their apartments with curiosity.

Yvonne never bothered about what they were thinking. Staying indoors to save her family from coronavirus would mean starving herself and her four children.

"Staying indoor is the best possible solution but I can't lock up there and see food and groceries running out and hoping that all is well.

"At one stage, I came out of my apartment to go shopping. There were no one on the streets except one European that I passed by on my way to the supermarket, Yvonne was recalling the nightmares she had had during the lockdown.

Yvonne felt like the world would end if she tests positive to the virus. "I have four children and my husband is away and I'm really scared. Sometimes I breakdown and cry. It's really hard for me," she said.

Yvonne's husband was 7,000 kilometers away. He works as an engineer in a Oil and Gas company in Queensland, Australia. He visited them in Beijing in January 2020 and two weeks after he left for Australia, the Australian Government announced a lockdown and stop flights to and from mainland China. He was stuck in Australia for over 13 months.

Yvonne has to solely manage the situation. "I was traumatised! I have to force myself out of the house to go and buy food, PPEs, and groceries. I tell you Beijing is a ghost town. No people, no cars." Yvonne recalled.



Wearing five face masks and three surgical gloves every time she steps outside the house, she recalled the odd things she did trying to maintain social distancing and using a toothpick to access elevators.

She was thankful for the support from the locally engaged staff and her colleagues at the Embassy. With little support from the PNG authorities, they were pushing beyond their weight to assist nationals who seek consular support.

From Handra village in Kubalia, East Sepik, Yvonne now understands why she needs to learn Chinese Mandarin. "It's easy with people who speak Chinese language. You can't beat the Chinese in doing shopping. They'll run everything off and you'll stand there surprise," she spoke of her own experience trying to shop for groceries.

"My husband sent us PPEs from Australia that really helped."

Now the situation has improved but like Lindsay, her four children are becoming addicted to TV and mobile phones after being locked indoors for over 8 months.



Selen Blehe

Second Secretary -Immigration
Kundu Kuala Lumpur
PNG High Commission, Malaysia

SELEN BLEHE is keeping her heads up and believes prevention is better than cure. She is constantly taking hot water, garlic and lemon as non-medical remedies to stay fit against the coronavirus.

Selen is constantly monitoring news channels in Kuala Lumpur. The number of confirmed cases in the city has climbed passed 80,000 this month and the Malaysian government has announced an extension of lockdown into the month of July until daily reported cases dropped.



Selen says the High Commission has encouraged staff to work at home and turned up only on Mondays and Thursdays but with the growing numbers, high penalty fees for breach of covid protocols and the current lockdown things might change.

At the workplace she is encouraging clients to make online appointments and is doing her best to do everything online and limit any chances of going outside her home.

Like Lindsay and Yvonne in Beijing, she is also feeling like they are on their own. Less communication and little support from the government. Though things are tough, they know that they must continue serving the government and same time provide consular assistance to Papua New Guineans who are in need.

Selen is keeping her fingers crossed and is hoping her husband and two sons would make it through. While she believes strongly in her Christian faith, she is also mindful of the growing number of publications and social media reports about the virus by different people that is causing anxiety.

When too much information about the virus is causing panic, she sometimes thinks of her peaceful village in Bena, Eastern Highlands province and the juicy pineapples and different fruits that can provide defensive immunity.

Though home is far, she has high expectations that travel restrictions would soon be uplifted and vaccines would not become a priority so she can return on Christmas.



Peter Vogae

2nd Secretary - Immigration & Consular
Kundu Delhi
PNG High Commission in New Delhi, India

PETER VOGAE survives countless flu and respiratory illness back home but when the new flu-like virus reached India, he was shocked to see dead bodies cremated in open fields and hospitals running out of oxygen to treat patients with coronavirus.

Growing up in Kombe, WNB province, Peter would take herbs as remedies for flu. This time he was far from home and seeing the death toll in India passed 300,000 he knew it's a matter of life or death.

Peter works as Second Secretary Immigration and Consular at Kundu New Delhi - PNG High Commission in India.

India records over 30 million confirmed cases to date and the numbers are now slowing down but authorities are still concerned about the deadly Delta variant.

In his own words he said "when going out is like saying your last goodbye and hugs with a last prayer. This is so real and scary."

Mr Vogae took up the posting in 2019 and moved to New Delhi with his wife and three children. They are halfway around the world and the thoughts of returning home was constantly popping up at the back of their mind.

"At first I taught it's like a normal flu, but it's becoming scarier, when at its peak, the best hospitals in New Delhi are unable to cope. Seeing the numbers going up, dead bodies burnt openly and people crying for their loved ones everyday, I felt as if the world would end before me.



Peter, sees first-hand the terrible effect covid-19 has had in his neighborhood in New Delhi. One time he was driving out and saw people struggling to at least find a space in the hospital. Shops are fast running out of essential PPEs and everything almost come to a complete stop. "I saw despair and tiredness on the face of people I drove passed," he recalled. "These people are desperate to save their loved ones."

Wellington Navasivu

2nd Secretary - Immigration (former)
Kundu Manila
PNG Embassy in the Republic of Philippines

WELLINGTON NAVASIVU was helpless when his covid-19 test results returned positive. Manila was in a lockdown and around the same time the PNG government has stopped all international flights to and from the Philippines in early 2020.

He knew help would not come from outside. Immediately his wife and three kids started taking action to isolate him at home.

Wellington knew he was asymptomatic and there's less chances he could spread the virus but his wife is taking every precautions to ensure he receives the best care and avoids close contact with anyone in the house.

"My family was affected by the news and infact they were more traumatised than I was. I knew I would overcome this and I did," said Mr Navasivu.

In 2018, Mr Navasivu was posted to Kundu Manila as Second Secretary Immigration. He was a classic diplomat and is proud of his Good-enough island heritage and his upbringing in the islands off Milne Bay.

Wellington survives Covid-19 and his story taught us to be more careful in observing all precautions such as social distancing, hand washing and wearing of face masks.

"Covid virus is like the normal flu but all this misinformation circulating on social media is causing us to panic," Mr Navasivu said. "This virus reminds me about the importance of personal hygiene and eating healthy food."

Shortly after he recovered he agreed to return and work at the headquarters. He was appointed as acting General Manager International borders and soon after moved a step ahead to become Officer in Charge of the Visa and Passport Division.

Government worker at centre of fraud payments

A senior public servant at the Department of Finance is wanted by Police for questioning after his name came up as a primary suspect involved in producing fake Migration Service Fees (MSF) receipts and using freelance agents to facilitate his 'dirty work,' the Chief Migration Officer has revealed.

"That particular officer from a reputable government department has been doing that for a very long time and we have been on the lookout to catch him," said Stanis Hulahu, the CMO. "He's one of the culprits that produce fake MSF receipts and attached with visa or passport applications".

On 12 July, the suspect, who collaborated with a freelance agent, gave a fake receipt totaling K4,300.00 as payments for a "Change of Status Application" for a non-citizen.

The fake receipt issued from *Vulupindi Haus* has a receipt number that belongs to a passport application that was lodged at *Koitachi* Passport Office in March 2021.

The suspect used the old receipt number to reprint on a new form. The fake receipt was given to the agent for lodgement but was detected by ICA officers at the counter at the Central Government Office.



Police and ICA officers interrogating the freelance agent.

The counter service officers who identified the fake receipt quickly notified the Compliance team who picked up the freelance agent.

Upon questioning, the agent referred them to the primary suspect, a government officer at *Vulupundi Haus*, who he collaborated with to print the fake receipt.

The agent was arrested by police and locked up at the Boroko police station holding cell.

Police are now on the lookout for the primary suspect.

Mr Hulahu said government officers who are involved in defrauding the State should be punished by law and must be removed from the public service.

"Some public servants are honestly working to generate money for the government while few others are working against to defraud the state," said the Chief Migration Officer.

"This practice has been going on for a long time and we have successfully identified and prosecuted some offenders already. This case is similar to other fraud payment cases and we will refer them to the police for formal charges and to allow the suspects to explain themselves in court."

ICA has done away with cash payments has introduced EFTPOS machines in all the branches nationwide for MSF payments. Similarly, clients with a visa debit card are provided an option to pay online using the Online Payment Portal available on the website www.ica.gov.pg

Coming Soon!

'merging of Work Permit and Working Resident Visa'

watch this space