

Papua New Guinea



KEY FACTS

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| Joined Commonwealth: | 1975 |
| Population: | 6,732,000 (2009) |
| GDP p.c. growth: | -0.4% p.a. 1990–2009 |
| UN HDI 2010: | world ranking 137 |
| Official language: | English |
| Time: | GMT plus 10hr |
| Currency: | kina (K) |

Geography

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| Area: | 462,840 sq km |
| Coastline: | 5,150km |
| Capital: | Port Moresby |

The Independent State of Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific shares a land-border with Indonesia; its other near neighbours are Australia to the south and Solomon Islands to the east.

Papua New Guinea includes the eastern half of the world's second biggest island, New Guinea, bordering the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya to the west. The rest of the country is made up of about 600 small islands, the chief of which are the Bismarck Archipelago, the Trobriands, the Louisiade Archipelago, the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, and some of the islands in the Solomons group, including Bougainville. The country comprises the region of Port Moresby and 19 provinces (21 from 2012).

Main towns: Port Moresby (capital, pop. 307,600 in 2009), Lae (Morobe, 73,000), Arawa (on Bougainville, 39,700), Mount Hagen (Western Highlands, 39,000), Popondetta (Oro, 37,800), Kokopo (on New Britain, 33,000), Mendi (Southern Highlands, 27,200), Madang (Madang, 26,900), Kimbe (on New Britain, 22,800), Bulolo (Morobe, 19,100), Goroka (Eastern Highlands, 18,200), Daru (Fly river, 17,300), Kavieng (on New Ireland, 17,200), Wewak (East Sepik, 16,700), Wau (Morobe, 16,400), Alotau (Milne Bay, 13,900), Vanimo (Sandaun, 12,100), Kundiawa (Simbu, 10,400) and Rabaul (on New Britain, 7,000).

Topography: The centre of the main island is a rugged mountainous ridge, with several wide valleys, and foothills north and south. The rivers Sepik and Ramu drain the foothills to the north, and the rivers Fly, Kikori and Purari those in the south. Though fast-flowing, many rivers are navigable. There are active volcanoes along the north coast, and some volcanoes and warm pools in the south-east islands.

Climate: Tropical monsoon type, hot and humid all year, though somewhat cooler in the highlands. Rainfall is chiefly from December to March. High mountains receive occasional frost, even snow.

did you know?

This country hosts a national chapter of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council.

The country comprises about 600 small islands and has some 5,150km of coastline; only 13% of people live in urban areas, the lowest proportion in the Commonwealth.

Papua New Guinea has more than 800 indigenous languages, thought to be more than any other country in the world.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are rainforest deforestation as a result of growing commercial demand for tropical timber; pollution from mining projects; and severe drought.

Vegetation: Rich and very varied: five kinds of lowland, and 13 kinds of mountain rainforest, five kinds of palm and swamp forests, three differing mangrove forests, and the world's greatest variety of orchid species. Forest covers 64% of the land area, having declined at 0.5% p.a. 2000–07. Arable land comprises 0.6% and permanent cropland 1.3% of the total land area.

Wildlife: There are no large mammals but a rich variety of marsupials, reptiles and some 700 species of birds, including 38 species of the spectacular bird of paradise and related bower-birds. Papua New Guinea also has many thousands of unusual species of insect including the world's largest butterfly, the Queen Alexandra birdwing, and brilliant green scarab beetles which are used for jewellery. Indigenous marsupials include tree kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, cuscus and spiny anteaters. Dugong live in the waters near the coast. The creation of national parks was a slow process, the government being reluctant to interfere with traditional methods of land tenure, but there are now four national parks, and protection measures have been introduced, banning the export of birds of paradise.

Transport: Construction of roads is hampered by the rugged mountainous environment and the total national road network extends to 19,600km, 3.5% paved. Port Moresby is perhaps the only capital city that is not linked by road with the rest of the country. There is no railway.

Principal ports are Alotau (on the southern tip of New Guinea), Port Moresby (on the south coast), and Lae, Madang and Wewak (on the north coast), Rabaul (in New Britain), Kieta (Bougainville) and Momote (Manus Island). As there are relatively few roads, river transport is important, for both freight and passengers, and particularly on the River Sepik.

The international airport is Port Moresby at Jackson Field, 11km from the city. Domestic air services run to all centres of population and industry.

Society

KEY FACTS 2009

Population per sq km: 15
Life expectancy: 61 years

History

Melanesian people inhabited the area from 3000 or 2000 BC, living in groups isolated by dense forest. In consequence, no larger social order developed, and even today, more than 700 languages are spoken. Spanish and Portuguese sailors sighted the land in the early 16th century. There was some limited exploration in the 19th century, and a few settlements made. In 1884, Germany annexed the northern parts and Britain proclaimed a protectorate over the southern parts (which were formally annexed by Britain in 1888 and became British New Guinea). In 1906, Australia took over British New Guinea, renamed a year earlier as the Territory of Papua. The Australian army occupied German New Guinea in the First World War and in 1920 Australia received from the League of Nations a mandate for the government of New Guinea, as it was then called.

In 1942 the Japanese army occupied parts of New Guinea and Papua; the Australian military administered the rest. Under the Papua and New Guinea Act of 1949, the two parts were united for administration as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea and put under United Nations International Trusteeship.

The Act also set up a legislative council, under an administrator, with 28 members, of whom three were elected, nine appointed and 16 official. There had to be at least three Papua New Guineans among the appointed members. Under the Papua and New Guinea Act of 1963, the council became a house of assembly, with 64 members, ten of them nominated official members.

Consequently, at its opening in June 1964, the Assembly had a majority of elected Papua New Guineans. The following year, the House set up a Select Committee on Constitutional Development, whose recommendations were put into effect in 1967, when the number of elected seats in the House was increased to 84, and in

1968, when a new ministerial system was adopted and an administrator's executive council set up.

In 1970 an appointed spokesman for this council was recognised as the House's leader for government business. In 1971 the Select Committee recommended that the Territory prepare for self-government. Elections were held in April 1972. The House had 100 elected members, with an additional three appointed and four official members, and Michael Somare became chief minister of a coalition government. Self-government was granted at the end of 1973 and in the spring of 1975 Australia gave up certain remaining powers over defence and foreign affairs.

In September 1975 Papua New Guinea proceeded to full independence, becoming an independent sovereign state as a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, represented by governor-general, Sir John Guise, a Papua New Guinean.

Sir Michael Somare, the prime minister at independence, was returned at the 1977 elections, but a parliamentary defeat in 1980 led to his replacement as prime minister by Sir Julius Chan, leader of the People's Progress Party, until 1982 when parliament re-elected Somare. The 1987 elections brought in another coalition government, headed by Paias Wingti. Somare resigned as leader of the Pangu Pati in May 1988 and a month later his successor, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, became prime minister, after Wingti had lost a vote of no confidence in the House.

Bougainville: The greatest threat to stability since independence has been the attempted secession of the island of Bougainville, the site of the Panguna copper mine and one of the underpinnings of Papua New Guinea's economy in the 1980s. In 1990, a group calling itself the Bougainville Revolutionary Army

Population: 6,732,000 (2009); 13% lives in urban areas; growth 2.8% p.a. 1990–2009; birth rate 31 per 1,000 people (42 in 1970); life expectancy is 61 years (43 in 1970).

The people are of mixed (mostly Melanesian) race, with small communities of Polynesians on outlying atolls. There is a declining non-indigenous population (several thousand Australians and a small Chinese population).

Language: The official language is English, but Tok Pisin (an English-based Creole) is more widely used, and Hiri Motu is spoken around Port Moresby; there are over 800 indigenous languages.

Religion: Christians 90% (predominantly Protestants), though Christian beliefs often coexist with traditional beliefs.

Media: Two daily papers, *The National* and *Post-Courier*, are published in English.

In such a large and sparsely populated country radio is the most important information source for most people. The National Broadcasting Corporation provides national and provincial radio stations; and there are several private radio stations.

The private TV service, EMTV, and public National Television Service are only received in and around Port Moresby and the provincial capitals.

Some 10% of households have TV sets (2006). There are 64 personal computers (2005) and 19 internet users (2009) per 1,000 people.

Education: There are eleven years of school education starting at age seven, comprising six years of primary, and five of secondary, with cycles of three and two years. The school year starts in January.

There are four public universities: University of Papua New Guinea (Lae); Papua New Guinea University of Technology (Lae); University of Goroka (Goroka), which trains teachers; and University of Natural Resources and Environment (Kerevat, East New Britain), which trains people for agriculture and natural resource management. Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 67% (2008).

Health: State- and church-run hospitals, dispensaries and clinics, with charges low and related to ability to pay. 40% of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 45% have adequate sanitation facilities (2009). Infant mortality was 52 per 1,000 live births in 2009 (143 in 1960). In 2009, 0.9% of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

Communications: Country code 675; internet domain '.pg'. Mobile coverage is limited. Internet access is generally slow.

➤ (BRA) led a movement for secession by the island from Papua New Guinea. This act followed a period of violent political upheaval centred on the copper mine, and then spread through the island's society. Initially, the revolt was focused on the environmental damage caused by the mine and the lack of royalties being paid to the Bougainvilleans.

Numerous attempts were made to solve the problem, which damaged Papua New Guinea's economy and destroyed Bougainville's, and led to years of violence with many atrocities and the destruction of the mine and other infrastructure.

By 1994 some secessionist leaders were becoming dissatisfied with the hard-line stance of the BRA. At a meeting with the prime minister in November 1994, after which the Mirigina Charter was established, they agreed to the setting up of a transitional administration for the North Solomons Province (the Bougainville Transitional Government), which would have a council of chiefs nominating members of the provincial assembly. This administration was established in early 1995, with Theodore Miriung as its premier and talks on increased autonomy continued.

In October 1996 Premier Miriung was assassinated. Miriung was replaced by Gerard Sinato, who immediately called for tripartite talks between the BTG, the BRA and the Papua New Guinea Government. The government, however, had decided on a military solution and in early 1997 it contracted a group of foreign mercenaries to impose a permanent resolution of the Bougainville crisis. However, Papua New Guinea's defence force immediately took to the streets and detained and then expelled the mercenaries.

In October 1997, following talks in Christchurch, New Zealand, a truce was signed between the new government and many of the Bougainville separatists, though not the BRA led by Francis Ona.

After further negotiations, in January 1998 a permanent peace and amnesty were agreed with all the secessionists, taking effect after an official signing ceremony at the end of April 1998, and ending a nine-year conflict which had claimed the lives of some 20,000 people.

A process of negotiation on greater autonomy was initiated: a Bougainville assembly was established in January 1999; the Bougainville Reconciliation Government (BRG) was elected in May 1999 and Joseph Kabui voted president at its first sitting; and he then appointed a team to conduct the negotiations.

In March 2000, the 'Loloata Understanding' was concluded between the BRG and the Papua New Guinea Government, setting up the Bougainville Interim Provincial Government.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in Arawa in August 2001, providing for special autonomous status for Bougainville, with a gradual draw-down of substantial self-government powers from the Papua New Guinea Government, and the promise of a referendum on independence to be held between 2015 and 2020. These terms were enshrined in Bougainville's constitution which was approved by the Papua New Guinea Parliament in December 2004. The first Autonomous Bougainville Government was elected in May/June 2005, and a former leader of the pro-independence movement, Joseph Kabui, was elected president. James Tanis was elected president of Bougainville in a by-election held in December 2008, following the death of President Kabui in June that year.

The second Autonomous Bougainville Government elections were held in Bougainville in May 2010. Former provincial governor John Momis was elected president with 52.4% of the votes, while a large proportion of new members representing various political factions were elected to the House of Representatives.

There are 9 main telephone lines and 134 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people (2009).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Queen's Official Birthday (Monday in June), Remembrance Day (23 July), Independence and Constitution Day (16 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Regional festivals are held at various times during the year.

Religious festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday and Easter Monday.

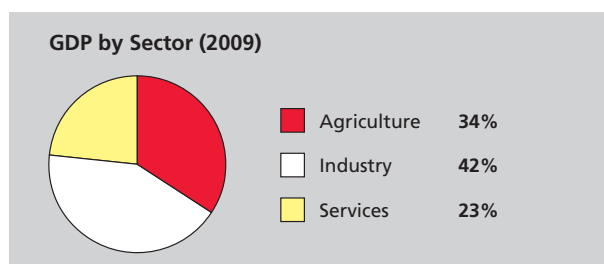
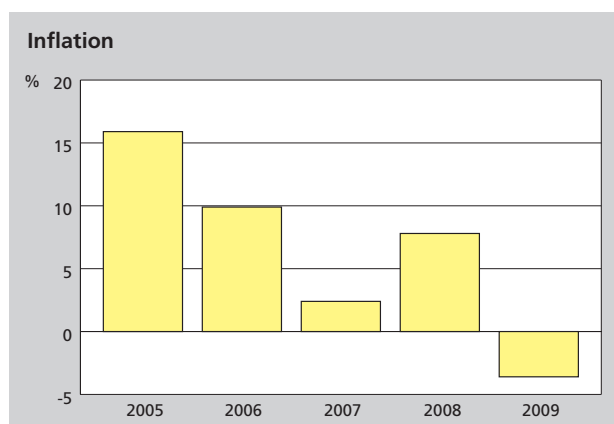
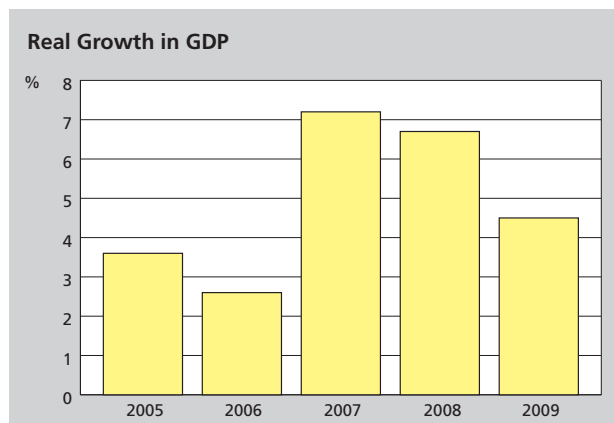
Economy

KEY FACTS 2009

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| GNI: | US\$7.9bn |
| GNI p.c.: | US\$1,180 |
| GDP growth: | 4.9% p.a. 2005–09 |
| Inflation: | 6.3% p.a. 2005–09 |

Overview: Though the country is rich in mineral, agricultural, forestry and fisheries resources, development is still in the early stages, and has been hampered by volatile prices for agricultural and mineral exports. In addition, the main population centres are separated by ocean or inhospitable terrain. GDP grew by 1.9% p.a. 1980–90.

Government policy has been to aim for steady, sustainable growth with an even sharing of the benefits throughout the country. To this end, it holds minority shareholdings in most major industrial and mining developments (up to a maximum of 30% in mineral projects and 22.5% in petroleum projects). However, this growth depends



on attracting new investment, especially in mining and energy, and the political situation has generally worked against this.

GDP growth was uneven during the 1990s, registering 15% in 1993 as new mining investment came on stream, but falling to -3.6% in 1995, -3.9% in 1997 and -3.8% in 1998. By 1998 the country was in the most serious financial crisis since independence due to a prolonged drought, the continuing Bougainville crisis, the Asian economic downturn and the falling value of the kina. With the support of the World Bank and IMF, the government embarked on economic reforms including a programme of privatisation.

The economy recovered strongly during 1999, growing by 7.5%, but then stalled, with good growth returning from 2003, as new mining and hydrocarbon projects came on stream; recording 4.9% p.a. over 2005–09, with the strongest growth in 2007 (7.2%) and 2008 (6.7%). In 2008–09, however, growth moderated in response to the global downturn and collapse of world demand, to 4.5% in 2009, recovering to over 6% in 2010.

Trade: Exports of goods and services account for 72% of GDP (2008). The main exports are gold, crude oil, copper, palm oil, coffee and forest products.

Mining and energy: The country is richly endowed with mineral and hydrocarbon resources. Since commercial gold-mining began in 1989, mining and oil and gas production have made a significant contribution to GDP. Oil production started in 1992. There are two oil refineries: one in Gulf of Papua; and one at Port Moresby. A liquefied natural gas project in the Southern Highlands and Western Province was expected to begin operating by 2014.

The principal copper mine at Ok Tedi in Western Province was developed and operated by an Australian company and then abandoned. Another important mine on the island of Bougainville closed in 1989 at the outbreak of political instability and, after political resolution in Bougainville, rehabilitation needed huge investment. There are substantial reserves of nickel/cobalt at Ramu in Madang Province. Nickel exports – from the new plant at Ramu – were scheduled to start in 2011.

Constitution

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| Status: | Monarchy under Queen Elizabeth II |
| Legislature: | National Parliament |
| Independence: | 16 September 1975 |

Papua New Guinea is a constitutional monarchy recognising Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, represented by a governor-general who is nominated by parliament and serves for a term of six years.

Government is by parliamentary democracy, with a unicameral National Parliament of 109 members. Elections are held every five years, with universal adult suffrage. Each elector has two votes.

One vote is used in the 89 'open' constituencies (from 2007, voting on the basis of proportional representation), the other in one of the 19 provincial constituencies or the capital district, from each of which a representative is elected who acts as governor in the province or capital district. After a general election parliament elects a prime minister who heads the national government. Parliament can only hold votes of no-confidence in the prime minister when more than 18 months has elapsed since an election and at least 12 months before a new election is due.

Government is structured at two levels: national and provincial. The 19 provincial governments can levy taxes and are responsible for local education, industry and business development, while national government is responsible for national finance, infrastructure, defence, foreign relations, trade, schools and hospitals.

In 2003 Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare proposed to increase the period following an election in which there can be no votes of confidence in parliament from 18 to 36 months.

Since 2003 senior civil servants are appointed by the Public Service Commission.

Politics

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| Last elections: | June/July 2007 |
| Next elections: | 2012 |
| Head of state: | Queen Elizabeth II, represented by governor-general, Sir Michael Ogio (2011–) |
| Head of government: | Prime Minister Peter O'Neill |
| Ruling party: | coalition led by People's National Congress |

The political life of Papua New Guinea is one of diversity and is characterised by a tradition of fluid coalitions. A large number of candidates (more than 2,000 in 1997) contest the 109 seats at general elections, and the consequent low number of votes required to win seats means there is a high turnover of MPs. Allegiances are fragile and MPs often change parties more than once during the life of a parliament. Prime ministers have tended not to serve out a full term between elections, though they have often returned to power later.

Paiaf Wingti was returned at the elections of 1992. The law was amended as from June 1992 to extend the period between no-confidence motions to 18 months in an attempt to increase political stability. Sir Julius Chan again became prime minister in 1994, following a leadership challenge and Supreme Court ruling.

In early 1997 the government dispatched foreign mercenaries to Bougainville. The defence force rounded up and expelled the mercenaries and called for the prime minister's resignation. Chan dismissed the defence force chief, but the army refused to recognise his successor and Chan himself resigned in March 1997. The cabinet appointed a caretaker government headed by the minister for mining and petroleum, John Giheno.

In the elections held in June 1997, 16 ministers (including Chan) lost their seats and Bill Skate, the governor of Port Moresby, was elected prime minister by parliament after a month of negotiations. He headed a four-party coalition comprising his People's National

Congress (PNC), the People's Democratic Congress and the two constituents of the previous ruling coalition, the People's Progress Party (PPP) and the Pangu Pati.

Beset by corruption scandals and an acute financial crisis, by mid-1999 Skate found his political support, which had at best been fragile, dwindling rapidly. In June 1999 he could no longer count on a majority in parliament, he resigned as prime minister in July shortly before parliament started its new session, and Sir Mekere Morauta emerged as his successor.

The general election that commenced in mid-June 2002 was chaotic and violent, with the loss of at least 25 lives, and had to be extended for four weeks beyond the scheduled two-week voting period. Even then six Southern Highlands constituencies could not be declared because of missing ballot boxes. The National Alliance Party (NAP) won 19 of the declared seats, Morauta's People's Democratic Movement 13, People's Progress Party eight, and Pangu Pati six, giving the National Alliance and its multiparty coalition a parliamentary majority and Alliance leader Sir Michael Somare once again became prime minister.

In September 2003, Sir Albert Kipalan was elected by parliament to succeed Sir Silas Atopare as governor-general on the expiry of his six-year term in November. However, in November the Supreme Court ruled that the election procedures had not met constitutional requirements and there was then a hiatus during which first Bill Skate and then Jeffery Nape was acting governor-general, until following another election in June 2004 Sir Paulias Matane was finally confirmed in the post.

Following the parliamentary elections held in June/July 2007, in which NAP won 27 seats, Somare secured the agreement of a further 59 MPs to join his coalition, and in mid-August was duly re-elected as prime minister by parliament.

In December 2010 the Supreme Court ruled Governor-General Sir Paulias Matane's re-election in June 2010 had been unconstitutional. At the National Parliament's next session in January 2011 Michael Ogio was elected as governor-general, defeating the opposition candidate, Sir Pato Kakaraya, by 65 votes to 23.

In December 2010, Sir Michael Somare stepped aside in order to face a Leadership Tribunal hearing on allegations of financial mismanagement, and his newly appointed deputy, Samuel Abal, became acting prime minister. Following a two-week suspension from office by the Tribunal in April 2011, Somare began a long period of medical treatment in Singapore. In August 2011, amid increasing concerns that Somare would never be able to resume office, a parliamentary vote declared the office of prime minister vacant, and the PNC leader and transport and works minister, Peter O'Neill, was elected prime minister, receiving 70 of the 94 votes cast, with support from both government and opposition members. Several parties filed a challenge against parliament's actions in the Supreme Court that month; these were joined by Somare following his return to Papua New Guinea in September.

International relations

Papua New Guinea is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Non-

Aligned Movement, Pacific Community, Pacific Islands Forum, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Traveller information

Local laws and conventions: There are conservative standards of dress and behaviour in some regions. Permission should be sought before taking photographs of individuals and cultural sites (for example, spirit houses).

The country has very strict laws relating to the possession and sale of pornographic material and penalties include imprisonment. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are severe, and can result in long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Handshaking is the usual form of greeting. Dress is generally casual. Business meetings tend to be informal and are always conducted in English. Business cards are expected. Men should wear a lightweight suit and businesswomen are advised to dress conservatively. Office hours are Mon–Fri 0800–1630.

Immigration and customs: All travellers need a visa to enter the country, and passports must be valid for at least six months beyond the intended length of stay. A return or onward ticket is also required.

There are strict quarantine controls on entering Papua New Guinea with fruit, vegetables and animal products.

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers arriving from an infected area.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left and car hire is available in the main towns. A national driving licence may be used for up to one month. Visitors should keep their driving licence on them at all times.

Taxis are available in the major centres and fares should be agreed in advance. There are also public buses, known locally as PMVs. There are no public transport operators on the rivers, but it is possible to hire motorised canoes in order to use these routes.

Travellers to Bougainville should be registered with the Provincial Administration on the island.

Travel health: Comprehensive health insurance is essential and should include evacuation facilities.

Visitors will need protection against malaria, together with insect repellent and suitable clothing to prevent bites. Dengue fever is common in coastal areas and is spread by day-biting mosquitoes.

All water should be boiled or sterilised before use.

Money: Local currency is the kina and the toea (1 kina = 100 toea). American Express is the most widely accepted credit card. Travellers cheques are accepted in most shops and hotels, and to avoid additional exchange rates should be taken in pounds sterling, US dollars or Australian dollars. Banking hours are Mon–Thur 0845–1500, Fri 0845–1600.

There were 126,000 tourist arrivals in 2009.

Further information

Papua New Guinea Government: www.pngonline.gov.pg

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

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