

NATION BUILDERS

A SPECIAL REPORT

TRAILBLAZERS

PICTURES: ISTOCK (MAIN); SUPPLIED BY PNG FOREST PRODUCTS & TE PNG

In this special report, *Paradise* celebrates the stories of some of the companies and individuals who have shaped both PNG and the wider region.



Nation building (from top): a Junkers aircraft involved in the development of Bulolo; PNG Forest Products bridge building; TE PNG techs at work; an early plywood mill.



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PICTURES: SUPPLIED BY AIR NIUGINI



Air Niugini's latest Airbus A220-300 aircraft (this picture); a Fokker F27 Friendship (below right); Air Niugini tail logos (below left).

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Initially inheriting DC3 and Fokker 27 aircraft from Australian airlines Ansett and TAA, Air Niugini entered the jet age with its first Boeing B707 in 1975.

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WINGS OVER PNG

Air Niugini has been connecting the country for more than 50 years.

Founded in 1973, two years ahead of Papua New Guinea's independence, Air Niugini has now been serving the air travel needs of Papua New Guineans at home and abroad for over 50 years. Its bird of paradise logo is arguably the country's most recognised brand.

The state-owned airline is widely considered the Peoples' Airline, providing vital connections across all the country's provinces and regions in a country where flying is often the only travel option.

Initially inheriting DC3 and Fokker 27 aircraft from Australian airlines Ansett and TAA, Air Niugini entered the jet age with its first Boeing B707 in 1975, with which it launched international services.

Flying conditions in PNG are widely considered some of the most challenging in the world and the airline's flight and ground crews have developed a strong reputation over the years,



with several Air Niugini-trained pilots moving on to distinguished international careers in aviation.

The airline has also pioneered the recruitment and training of female pilots, with its first flight with an all-female crew flying from Port Moresby to Tabubil in May 2015.

Today, Air Niugini provides international flights across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. This includes regular direct flights to Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Brisbane, Sydney, Cairns, Port Vila in Vanuatu, Honiara in Solomon Islands and Nadi in Fiji. In July this year, the airline added Japan to its schedule, with the commencement of regular flights to Narita.

It also provides connections beyond these ports through an extensive network of codeshare partners, allowing its customers to travel the world on a single ticket. At the same time, the airline's freight and charter services facilitate vital economic activity for businesses large and small.



Air Niugini pioneered the introduction of loyalty programs in PNG and, today, its Destinations program enables thousands of frequent travellers to obtain extensive discounts and other benefits from a wide range of trusted partners, including retailers and service providers.

Recently, with the support of PNG's government, the airline has embarked on a major program to modernise its fleet of aircraft. The first of three new Airbus A220-300 aircraft arrived in Port Moresby during PNG's 50th birthday celebrations in September 2025, and more new aircraft are scheduled for 2027 and beyond.

The new aircraft are already enabling Air Niugini not only to provide more flexible, reliable and fuel-efficient services across its domestic and international routes but, most importantly, a higher quality of service in the air. ■





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75 YEARS BUSINESS IN PNG

TE PNG has transformed from a simple trading operation into a diversified company providing vital technical and communications services.

Established in Port Moresby in 1955, TE PNG has grown alongside Papua New Guinea for more than seven decades. What started as a small trading operation has evolved into a diversified business supporting some of the country's most important sectors through

communications, IT systems, electronic and security solutions, electrical and hardware supply, professional audio and broadcast, and hospitality equipment.

Over time, the company has moved beyond simple product distribution to become a service-led business focused on technical advice, installation, maintenance and long-term support. In a country where operating conditions can be complex, remote and unpredictable, that local capability has become one of TE PNG's most important contributions.

TE PNG's strength lies in its ability to bring together global technology and local experience. The company has built longstanding relationships with leading international manufacturers, while ensuring that customers are supported by people on the ground who understand PNG's environment, logistics and practical realities. This has allowed TE PNG to support a wide range of industries, including energy, resources, government, commercial



PICTURE: SUPPLIED BY TE PNG

TE PNG has trained a generation of local technicians.

operations, hospitality, marine and community infrastructure.

Equally important has been the company's investment in people. TE PNG has trained and developed generations of local technicians, helping to raise technical standards across the industry. Many have gone on to work in major mining, government and energy projects, creating a wider skills network that continues to benefit the country. ■

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EFTPOS ROLL-OUT ACROSS THE SOUTH PACIFIC

BSP's wave of payment innovation is bringing more people into the formal economy.

PICTURE: SUPPLIED BY BSP



Across the South Pacific, moments of everyday life are changing – a street food vendor is accepting his first cashless payment, a small business is growing beyond its village, a family is buying goods with greater ease and confidence.

At the heart of these moments is Bank South Pacific (BSP), which is rolling out 10,000 plus upgraded EFTPOS devices across the South Pacific.

Already underway in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands – with Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji to follow by the end of the year – this transformation is bringing modern, secure payment solutions closer to the people and businesses who need them most.

BSP Group CEO Mark Robinson (at right) and other executives with portable EFTPOS machines.

BSP Group CEO Mark Robinson says: "At BSP, every transaction is more than a payment – it's a step forward in empowering people, strengthening businesses, and connecting communities across the South Pacific."

BSP's upgraded EFTPOS technology places customer safety at its core, incorporating enhanced security features to protect merchants and cardholders. Whether it's a quick tap for groceries or a business transaction, customers can pay with confidence.

By expanding EFTPOS availability, particularly in underserved and rural areas, BSP says it is bringing more people into the formal economy – enabling participation, creating opportunity and fostering financial independence.

In PNG, customers are now able to make EFTPOS payments using their Wantok Wallet simply by dialling in. A one-time password is generated to a customer's mobile phone to confirm payment and complete the transaction. ■

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A Future of Endless Possibilities

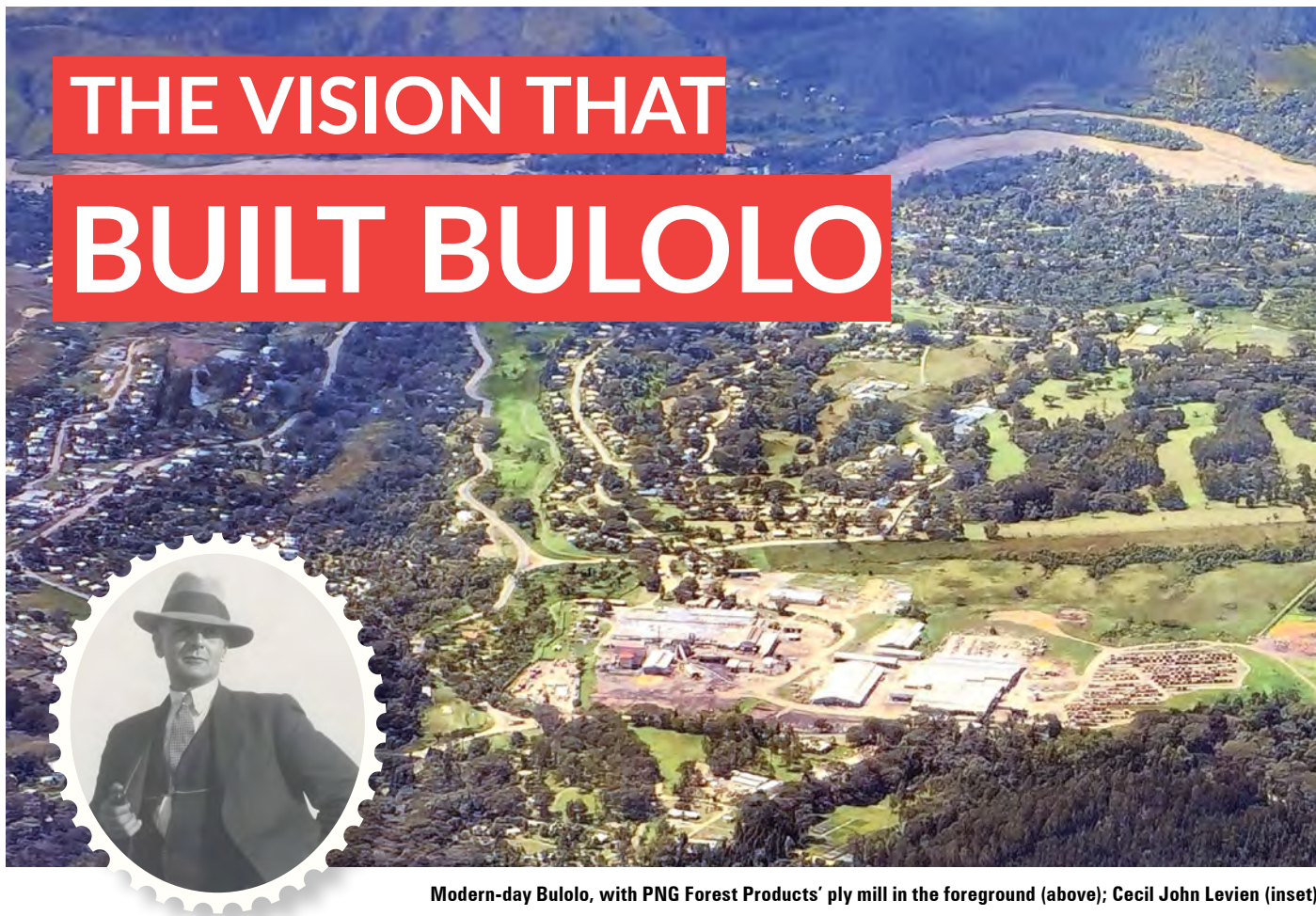
From our early beginnings to becoming a trusted professional services firm with a strong local presence, KPMG PNG has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of our clients and communities. Our journey has been defined by innovation, integrity, and a commitment to excellence - building lasting relationships and delivering meaningful impact across industries.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on driving growth, embracing digital transformation, and empowering our people to lead with purpose. Together, we are shaping the future, strengthening trust, unlocking opportunities, and creating sustainable value for generations to come.



THE VISION THAT BUILT BULOLO

PICTURES: SUPPLIED BY PNG FOREST PRODUCTS



Modern-day Bulolo, with PNG Forest Products' ply mill in the foreground (above); Cecil John Levien (inset).

Marcus Brouggy traces the growth of Bulolo, a gold town that turned into a green town thanks to the vision of one man.

Few towns in Papua New Guinea can claim to have changed the course of aviation history, pioneered large-scale gold dredging, launched a forest industry and helped create one of the country's most successful manufacturing companies.

Bulolo did all those things.

Nestled deep in the mountains of Morobe Province, Bulolo today is well known as the

home of PNG Forest Products. The story of how that came to be began almost a century ago with one remarkable individual whose vision was so ambitious that many considered it impossible.

His name was Cecil John Levien.

In the mid-1920s, New Guinea remained one of the world's last great frontiers. Beyond the small coastal settlements lay rugged mountain ranges, dense rainforest and isolated river valleys.

Hidden within those mountains were rich alluvial gold deposits that had begun attracting prospectors and adventurers. Most saw gold. Levien saw something bigger.

A former district officer, entrepreneur and relentless optimist, Levien was not the sort of man who accepted conventional limitations. Those who knew him often remarked on his ability to see opportunities where others saw obstacles.

While many prospectors viewed New Guinea's interior simply as a source of gold, Levien imagined a thriving industrial centre powered by hydroelectricity, connected by aviation, supported by forestry and capable of sustaining permanent communities.

It was an extraordinary vision for the 1920s, particularly in a region that remained largely inaccessible and poorly mapped.

Most remarkably of all, Levien believed aviation was the key to it all.

Today that might seem obvious; in 1925 it was revolutionary. Aircraft were still regarded as fragile machines suited to mail runs and adventurous passengers.

But turning his ambitious vision into reality required more than imagination. It required capital.

In 1926, Levien joined forces with Australian accountant Charles Wells to establish Guinea Gold. While the company was formed to acquire



and develop mining leases in the Bulolo region, Levien viewed it as more than a mining venture.

Guinea Gold became the vehicle through which he pursued his broader vision for the region. It provided the financial backing needed to acquire leases, establish infrastructure and begin solving the challenge of access.

The man who would help turn Levien's vision into reality could hardly have been more different. Ernest 'Pard' Mustar was practical where Levien was visionary.

A veteran of Gallipoli and World War 1, Mustar had earned a reputation as one of Australia's most skilled and resourceful pilots.

In 1927, preparations began for an air service linking the coast with the emerging goldfields. Airstrips were established at Lae and Wau. Aircraft arrived in crates and were assembled on site. Pilots prepared to fly through some of the most challenging terrain anywhere in the world.

Weather forecasting was virtually non-existent. Maps were limited and mountain cloud frequently obscured landmarks. Turbulence, rain and sudden weather changes created constant hazards.

Despite the challenges, the flights succeeded. Their impact was immediate. Aircraft could transport people, supplies and equipment in hours rather than weeks.

What began as a bold experiment quickly proved that aviation offered the only practical means of opening the goldfields. The success of these early operations led to the formation of Guinea Airways, the country's first airline. Working closely with Guinea Gold, the airline became a critical part of Levien's development strategy. As mining activity expanded, so too did demand for transport services, creating a partnership that accelerated development throughout the region.

Levien's goal was the development of the vast alluvial gold deposits that lay beneath the Bulolo Valley. Prospecting had confirmed the richness of the deposits, but exploiting them required mining on an unprecedented scale. The answer lay in dredging.

International investment was secured and Bulolo Gold Dredging Limited (BGD) was established. The company would eventually become one of the most successful gold-dredging operations in the world.

There was only one problem. The machinery required to build the dredges weighed thousands of tonnes. Boilers, generators, steel structures, pumps, hydroelectric equipment and dredge components all had to be transported into a valley that remained isolated from the coast.

The solution arrived from Germany in the form of the Junkers aircraft. The rugged Junkers dramatically increased freight capacity and demonstrated the potential of large-scale air transport.

Massive machinery components were flown from Lae to Bulolo piece by piece. One tumbler shaft weighing 3.5 tonnes established a world record for the heaviest single load ever transported by aircraft. Cars were flown in, horses were flown in, entire communities were effectively flown in.



The first car to arrive in Bulolo, in 1931, being loaded onto an aircraft in Lae.

By the early 1930s, New Guinea was hosting what many regarded as the greatest air freight operation in the world. Lae became one of the busiest cargo airports on earth. Bulolo itself ranked second among the world's busiest air freight destinations.

BGD was now able to construct hydroelectric facilities, workshops, engineering plants, sawmills and supporting infrastructure. Bulolo was rapidly becoming much more than a mining camp. A permanent township emerged to support the growing workforce and their families.

Housing spread across the valley. Hospitals were established. Schools were built, recreation halls appeared; swimming pools, tennis courts, bowling greens and a golf course followed. A cinema brought the latest films to one of the most remote communities in the South Pacific.

The outbreak of World War 2 brought dramatic change. In January 1942, Japanese aircraft attacked Bulolo. The Junkers aircraft were destroyed and, as Japanese forces advanced, Bulolo was evacuated.

Much of the infrastructure was sabotaged to prevent it falling into enemy hands.

Following the war, BGD embarked on an enormous reconstruction program. By 1948, six of the company's eight dredges were once again operating and Bulolo had risen from the ashes.

Even as gold production continued, another industry was taking shape. The forests surrounding Bulolo contained valuable stands of klinkii and hoop pine. Forestry experts recognised that the region possessed ideal conditions for a sustainable plantation industry. Importantly, they understood that long-term success required reforestation.

Nurseries were established, seedlings were planted and plantation programs expanded. In many ways, this represented a return to Levien's original thinking. Decades earlier he had recognised the importance of timber alongside mining. Now, as the economics of gold gradually changed, forestry was emerging as Bulolo's next great opportunity.

BGD began diversifying. In 1952, BGD partnered with the Australian government to establish Commonwealth New Guinea Timbers.

A state-of-the-art plywood mill was constructed in Bulolo. At the time, it was the largest plywood mill in the Southern Hemisphere.

Over the following decades, plantation forests matured and manufacturing expanded. New technologies were introduced. New products were developed. The company evolved, adapted and grew. Eventually, it became PNG Forest Products.

Today PNG Forest Products is one of PNG's largest and most successful manufacturers.

Its operations encompass plantation forestry, hydroelectric power generation, timber processing and engineered wood products. Its products are used in homes, bridges, schools, hospitals and infrastructure projects throughout PNG and beyond.

More than 1500 Papua New Guineans are employed across its operations. ■



PICTURE: SUPPLIED BY WESTPAC PNG



Westpac PNG's Sister City Program has delivered books to school children.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Westpac PNG embraces 'green' finance for the years ahead.

In Papua New Guinea, progress is increasingly shaped by the way institutions choose to invest, not just for growth today, but for resilience in the years ahead.

As the country develops, green finance is becoming more important, helping direct capital towards projects that can support long-term economic strength while also responding to environmental and social pressures.

For Westpac PNG, that means doing more than maintaining a presence. It means helping customers, industries and communities respond

to change in practical ways and supporting more sustainable business models.

That shift is becoming more visible across the Pacific through the growing focus on green finance (funding for projects with positive environmental outcomes). At the 2026 Green Finance Summit in PNG, leaders from banking, government and business explored how capital can be used to build more sustainable portfolios.

With this in mind, Westpac PNG is supporting a more forward-looking approach to banking, one that strengthens portfolio quality, helps

customers transition and creates long-term value. In PNG, that includes backing more resilient sectors and assets, supporting better stewardship of natural and community resources, and opening sustainable investment pathways.

Progress is also shaped by investment in people. The 2026 Westpac Outstanding Women Awards shine a light on women who are helping shape businesses, communities and the wider economy.

That same spirit of connection can be seen in Westpac PNG's Sister City Program, which links 14 branches in PNG with 14 branches in Australia.

What started as a connection between sister branches quickly grew into a broader community effort, with donated books and school supplies sent from Australia to PNG. From supporting students at Kil Primary School in Madang to delivering goods to a children's hospital ward in Lae and outreach at the correctional facility in Kavieng, the program shows how practical, partnership-led support can make a difference.

Together, these examples point to something bigger. Whether through green finance, leadership recognition or community partnership, long-term progress in PNG depends on a shared willingness to invest in resilience, build capability and create opportunities that last. ■

A COMMITMENT TO CLIENTS AND COMMUNITY

KPMG is set to celebrate 60 years of service in PNG.

KPMG PNG will mark a milestone in September when the company celebrates 60 years of serving organisations across Papua New Guinea with audit, tax and business advisory services.

Pieter Steyn, Managing Partner KPMG PNG says: "Celebrating 60 years in PNG reflects the deep relationships we have built across this remarkable country. We are proud of the positive role we have played – and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead."

Since opening September 23, 1966, KPMG PNG has grown significantly in capability and

scale. Today, the company employs more than 170 professional people and operates two offices in Port Moresby and a new project site in Lae.

Steyn says KPMG PNG is committed to its clients and community, as seen with Project Yumi and with its collaboration with Kumul Minerals Holdings.

For the second year running, KPMG PNG has partnered with Project Yumi, a grassroots initiative focused on boosting education in PNG. As part of the project, the company has provided the TaraChris Phonics Early Learning

Centre in Goroka with desks, chairs, books, and learning materials.

KPMG PNG and KPMG Australia are working together to help Kumul Minerals Holdings (KMHL) take big strides towards sustainability. The state-owned PNG mining company plays a key role in managing the country's mineral wealth. In 2025, KMHL asked KPMG to help develop a sustainability strategy and related sustainability policies to protect people's rights and the environment, and to manage mining waste safely. ■



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