



Planting Prosperity towards Independence: The Story of NBPOL and Papua New Guinea

Rooted Before the Flag Was Raised

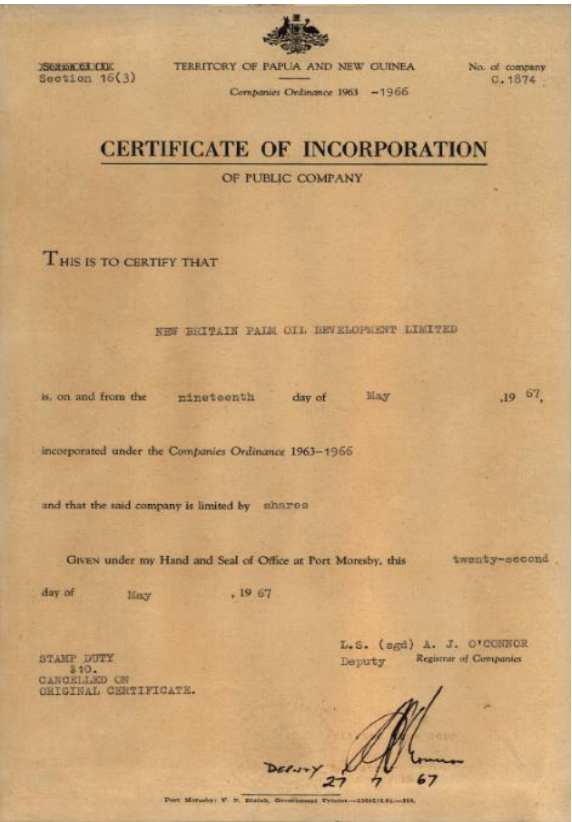
Before Papua New Guinea gained independence in 1975, the seeds of national development were already being planted in the fertile soils of West New Britain. In 1967, under Australian administration and with support from the Commonwealth of Australia and Great Britain, and the World Bank, British trading firm Harrison & Crosfield partnered with the colonial government to establish the Hoskins Oil Palm Project.

This joint venture was formalised with the signing of the Hoskins Project Agreement that led to the creation of New Britain Palm Oil Development Company Limited (now NBPOL). It was a bold investment in agriculture at a nascent stage for the country’s formation , laying the foundation for what would later become a key pillar of PNG’s economy.

Building an Economy from the Ground Up

NBPOL pioneered a new model of development: combining international investment, local landowner partnerships, and agriculture. It introduced the nucleus estate-smallholder concept, which became a blueprint for rural development. From the beginning, NBPOL cultivated oil palm alongside investing in development of roads, clinics, schools, and housing, employing hundreds of Papua New Guineans, and preparing the infrastructure for a functioning, independent economy.

By 1972, a year before PNG’s self-government, NBPOL completed its first palm oil mill and made its first crude palm oil exports by 1973, generating foreign exchange earnings critical to national economic sovereignty.



Beginning of Mosa (First Mosa Camp), Cooper's Camp, July 1968

Supporting a Nation’s Independence

By Independence Day on 16 September 1975, NBPOL was already proof that PNG had the potential to develop a robust agriculture sector, unlocking value from its own land and labour. The palm oil industry, led by NBPOL, quickly became the country’s third-largest export earner, behind gold and copper, and a major contributor to GDP and rural employment.

NBPOL’s success inspired government-backed expansion into Higaturu, Poliamba, Hargy and Milne Bay, further embedding agriculture into PNG’s economic strategy. Through its Dami Research Station, NBPOL also led agricultural innovation, improving yields and resilience; not only for itself but also for surrounding communities and smallholders.

A Lasting Legacy

NBPOL's greatest legacy is in its partnerships, with landowners, communities, and the nation. Unlike extractive industries, agriculture remained and grew with the people. Traditional landowners transformed their land into sustainable livelihoods. Thousands found employment and opportunity through NBPOL’s operations, marking a unique, people-centred path to national development.

As Papua New Guinea celebrates its 50th year of Independence, we honour the visionaries who believed in this land and its potential. NBPOL remains proud to be part of the nation’s journey, from the first seedlings planted in 1967, to a lasting contributor to economic growth and unity.

We celebrate this milestone in solidarity with all Papua New Guineans.



The Kapore Community Centre 1968 with water tanks ready for distribution to each smallholder block in the oil palm subdivision



Department of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries (DASF) Nahavio Extension Centre for Smallholder Services, May 1967