

# Giant logger linked to Posai's housing

**COMMENDED:** Dominic Kakas, editor of *The Independent*. Disgraced PNG Forests Minister Andrew Posai was found guilty by a Leadership Tribunal on 26 counts of misconduct in office as Minister of Home Affairs and Youth in 1992 and 1993. This report was published shortly after.



By **DOMINIC KAKAS**

SUSPENDED Forests Minister Andrew Posai is occupying a K335,000 house in Port Moresby which is owned by a catering company called Trinco Number 10 Pty Ltd. The directors of the company are husband and wife, Ramonchito and Serah Gatdula. Mrs Gatdula, who is listed as the shareholder of the company, is employed with a travel agency called Travel Planners. The Boroko-based firm's shareholders are Henry Peni and Dios Dado Gatdula. Peni was among those who were vocal against new forestry guidelines when they were introduced by the former Forests Minister Tim Neville in the Wingti Government in 1992.

Trinco Number 10 Pty Ltd's telephone number, 255513, and postal address, Box 6399, Boroko, is the same as that of logging company Niugini Lumber Merchants Pty Ltd. Niugini Lumber Merchants Pty Ltd is a subsidiary of Malaysian logging giant Rimbunan Hijau. The detail of telephone number and address was listed in Trinco No. 10 Pty Ltd's application for electricity supply to the PNG Electricity Commission.

The application was lodged by Doods Gatdula, who is employed with Niugini Lumber Merchants. The electricity bills for the property are being sent to Niugini Lumber Merchants. The property in question is Allotment 2, Section 12, Granville, and is situated along Port Rd, downtown, above Champion Pde.

The property was formerly owned by an electronics firm. The contract for the sale of the property was signed on December 26, 1994, and Trinco No.10 Pty



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Ltd made the final payment in February 1995. Documents with the Department of Lands and Physical Planning show the transfer of title on March 11, 1995.

Mrs Gatdula confirmed that she was the owner of Trinco Number 10 which was a catering firm. She refused to make any further comment and referred *The Independent* to her husband. Her husband was sick and referred *The Independent* to his brother, Doods Gatdula.

**'Not involved':** Doods Gatdula said Trinco was 'not involved in business at the moment' and that Posai was renting the property. Gatdula

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The giant logger's brother, Peter Harold, is seen in a photo taken for the Independent by Peter Harold.

The suspension was...  
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**The Independent story on 22 July 1995.**

would not state what his involvement or that of Niugini Lumber Merchants was. He refused to make any further comments and asked *The Independent* to speak to his lawyer.

Two people are known to have been involved in negotiations for the purchase of the property prior to the conclusion of the sale to Trinco No. 10 Pty Ltd. One of them was Peter Harold, the brother of Posai and managing director of Sare Resources Pty Ltd, a timber landowner company from West New Britain province. Harold and Peni held a series of public meetings in 1992 in which the media was present, along with representatives of Rimbunan Hijau, with a view to stopping the guidelines going through Parliament.

Posai was recently found guilty by a Leadership Tribunal comprising Justice Sir Kubalan Los, Senior Provincial Magistrate Mandik Kapin and Senior Provincial Magistrate Raphael Appa, of 26 counts of misconduct in office during his term as Minister for Home Affairs and Youth in 1992 and 1993. The tribunal recommended that he be dismissed from office. The tribunal also recommended to the Governor-General, Sir Wiwa Korowi, that Posai be dismissed from office as an MP.



## DOMINIC KAKAS

**Controversy:** Posai was appointed Minister for Forests in the Chan Government when former Minister Neville moved to the Opposition benches after the change of government in September 1994. Posai became the centre of controversy when he announced moves to suspend controls on logging which Neville had introduced with a view to limiting the export of logs and to require downstream processing of timber and greater control of the resources by local landowners.

On March 15, 1995, Posai announced in Parliament moves to amend Sections 8 and 9 of the Forest Act to give him more power to issue, suspend, transfer, amend and extend licences or permits. He also moved to relieve Jean Kekedo of her post as managing director of the PNG Forest Authority.

Posai was referred to the Public Prosecutor on January 23 on 30 counts of misconduct in office. The Public Prosecutor's office referred him to the Leadership Tribunal in early April. He was suspended from the office of Forests Minister. Posai applied unsuccessfully to the tribunal to declare that all 30 counts were null and void for non-compliance with the Organic Law on the Ombudsman Commission and the organic Law on Duties and Responsibilities of Leaders.

Posai owns about 4000 ha of forest. When he was appointed Minister for Forests, he was chairman of the local landowner groups that held concessions in the Kandrian district.

□ *Published in The Independent on July 22, 1995.*