

OTML responds to MP James Donald as legal battle over Mine future intensifies

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Ok Tedi operations office at Mt Fubilan, Western Province.

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Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) has broken its silence regarding the environmental and legal future of the mine, following a scathing public address by North Fly MP James Donald. In a formal statement released yesterday, the mining giant acknowledged the growing public debate but maintained a firm stance that the matter is now a judicial concern.

“These issues are currently before the Court. OTML respects the legal process and will not comment on the merits while proceedings remain sub judice,” the company stated.

The response comes after Mr. Donald’s December 31 address, in which he accused OTML of a “dereliction of obligations” regarding the environmental health of the Fly River system. Voicing the frustrations of local landowners, Mr. Donald questioned the effectiveness of current mitigation efforts, citing the daily hardships faced by his constituents.

“Why is there sand build-up in a lot of areas along the Fly River despite OTML’s mitigation measures, [and] the level of persistent flooding which is causing die-back to trees and the sago staple?” Mr. Donald asked.

The core of the conflict lies in the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) and whether landowners provided “free and informed consent” for the mine to operate beyond its current 2025 expiration.

While Mr. Donald claims a November court injunction has halted legal arrangements for the extension, OTML insists that local support has already been formalized.

“We confirm that the CMCA EA 2025 endorsements by the nine CMCA regions occurred on 4 November 2025,” the company clarified.

However, Mr. Donald argues a significant “knowledge disparity” exists between the corporate entity and semi-literate landowners. He suggested that official environmental reporting fails to reflect the “physical see” of the affected communities.

“We seriously need to know the level of impurities in our river water and if these things are being assessed against World’s best practice,” he said, warning that any extension without genuine buy-in would be a “serious affront” to the rights of the people.

The future of the Ok Tedi mine now rests with the National Court. OTML has pledged to adhere to the rule of law throughout the proceedings, promising transparency without interfering in the active legal debate.

The company concluded its response by stating, “Any further legislative or regulatory steps will proceed consistently with the court’s orders and applicable law.”