



Surangel & Sons Co.

Import, Retail, Wholesale, Logistics
and Construction

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / DEFENDING PRIVACY AND ETHICS

AIRAI, 08th NOVEMBER 2024

Surangel and Sons Company, a cornerstone of Palau's business community for over 40 years, announces legal action against Island Times following the publication of confidential and apparently altered tax information along with unfounded insinuations that are damaging to the company's reputation.

While Surangel and Sons firmly believes in fundamental rights and constitutional freedoms, including the freedom of speech and press, these freedoms come with professional responsibilities. Last year, the Palau Media Council adopted a Code of Conduct specifically addressing these responsibilities. The legal action stems from Island Times' publication of illegally obtained and apparently altered tax documents, violating 40 PNC § 1803, which explicitly states: "Tax returns and other information required to be filed or furnished by any person shall not be divulged by employees of the Bureau or a state to any person other than employees of the Bureau of National Treasury or authorized tax officials of states as provided in section 1802."

The publication included false assertions about the Company's tax obligations under current versus previous tax laws, along with unfounded political insinuations. The unauthorized disclosure of sensitive business information not only violates our privacy rights but could possibly impact our competitive position in the market.

Despite the Company's immediate press release clarifying that the circulated documents contained false information, Island Times proceeded to publish an article perpetuating misleading insinuations about the Company's tax obligations. A responsible journalist would have:

- Contacted all affected parties for comment, including Surangel and Sons and the Bureau of Revenue and Taxation;
- Verified the accuracy of the information through independent research;
- Presented a balanced report with proper context; and

- Adhered to the Palau Media Council's Code of Conduct.

"Rather than seeking clarification or attempting to resolve this matter professionally, Island Times has sought support from the Palau Media Council (PMC) and Pacific Freedom Forum (PFF), Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) as well as regional and international support attempting to try these legal issues in the Court of Public Opinion," stated Surangel Whipps Sr., Owner of Surangel and Sons. "This approach undermines ethical journalism and threatens the privacy rights of businesses in Palau." These organizations seem to have readily sided with Islands Times without conducting independent research, such as reviewing the the lawsuit we filed.

Surangel & Sons has always strived to maintain high ethical standards and values its hard-earned reputation. This action is taken not only to protect the Company's interests but also to uphold professional journalistic standards that ensure accurate and fair reporting for all businesses and private persons in Palau.

About Surangel and Sons Company

Established over 40 years ago and solely-owned by Surangel Whipps Sr., Surangel and Sons has grown into one of Palau's leading businesses while maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct. The company's operations support hundreds of Palauan families and contribute significantly to the nation's economic development.

For More Information:

Full press release available at: <https://surangel.com/news/press/>

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