



FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S DESK

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Solomon Islands - Australia Partnership

Australia's support for democratic elections in Solomon Islands



Australia's High Commissioner with the Acting Governor General and Solomon Islands Electoral Commissioners at the proclamation of the National General Elections on 20 February 2024 (Photo credit: Solomon Islands Electoral Commission)



Australian High Commissioner, Rod Hilton, with Chief Electoral Officer, Jasper Highwood Anisi, at the opening of the Solomon Islands Electoral Operations Centre (Solomon Islands Electoral Commission)

The countdown is on!

In just over a month, Solomon Islanders across the country will cast their votes in the 2024 national and provincial elections. This will be a historic moment for Solomon Islands – the first time Solomon Islands will conduct elections for national parliament, provincial assemblies and Honiara City Council on the same day.

Australia and Solomon Islands share a commitment to democracy. Our countries understand the importance of all citizens having an opportunity to elect their leaders and have a say in decisions that affect them.

This is why Australia is providing comprehensive assistance to Solomon Islands for the 17 April elections.

As announced by Australia's Deputy Prime Minister in June last year, we are providing SBD137 million in direct funding support to the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC). Some of this funding supported the nationwide voter registration update last year; the remainder will be used for SIEC's elections preparations and conduct.

We are also providing technical assistance and operational support for the elections. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and SIEC share a trusted partnership dating back to 2001. The AEC has been working closely with SIEC during the elections preparation period and will continue to provide support in the lead up to 17 April. Australia's Deputy Electoral Commissioner visited Honiara earlier this week to work closely with the SIEC team.

Australia funds technical advisers to SIEC through the Australia-Solomon Islands Partnership for Governance (ASIP-Gov). These advisers are providing critical support for legislative and policy reform, financial management, human resources and communications.

Through the Australia Assists program, we have deployed three short-term operations specialists from RedR to provide support



Australia Assists/RedR employees with Solomon Islands Electoral Commission officials



Australian High Commission observer at the 2019 National General Elections

for logistics and warehousing and provincial coordination. With SIEC conducting simultaneous national and provincial elections this year, these tasks will be larger and more complex than for previous elections.

Australia has funded UNDP's Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in Solomon Islands Project (SECSIP) since 2013. To support the upcoming elections, SECSIP has procured election materials, upgraded

election facilities, provided technical support for electoral procedures, and supported SIEC training, communications and voter outreach activities.

Improvements in technology and digital connectivity can provide many benefits for election processes but can also present new challenges. Australia is supporting the International Foundation for Electoral Systems to work with youth organisations to build media literacy skills of young Solomon Islanders and counter online disinformation and harmful speech.

It is important that Solomon Islanders can trust the election processes and results. Australia is funding a team from the Australian National University (ANU) to observe the elections, as we did in 2019. In 2024, the ANU will partner with the Solomon Islands National University to monitor the elections across the country. Voters can also expect to see Australian High Commission staff at polling stations – we are planning for around 30 members of my team to observe election day.

The Australian Federal Police and Australian Defence Force are providing support to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF)-led security operations for the elections

Elections are an exciting time. They are an opportunity for people to discuss the issues that affect their families and communities, and to decide on the direction and future of their country. I look forward to sharing more about Australia's support as we head towards polling day.

I'm so excited to be able to witness democracy in action on 17 April. Good luck to all the candidates contesting the elections!

Lukim iu neks taem!