



# FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S DESK

ROD HILTON

Solomon Islands - Australia Partnership

## Transforming lives through sport in Solomon Islands



Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Rod Hilton was delighted to join the children in some fun football activities during the Team Up launch



All participants were given the chance to hold the Pacific Games baton during the Team Up launch

As the Australian High Commissioner to Solomon Islands, I've seen firsthand the close sporting bonds between our countries, and how much we've achieved, working together through sport.

During the Pacific Games we saw the power of sports to unite people from all walks of life. It was a real highlight to see Australians and Solomon Islanders collaborating to deliver one of the best Pacific Games ever.

There is still so much we can achieve together through sport and that's why last year we launched the Australian Government's Team Up program, supporting six sport-for-development partnerships in Solomon Islands designed to include more girls, women, and people with disability, giving them opportunities to play and succeed, and making sure no one is left behind.

The program launch at Barana Community in North-West Guadalcanal, was a memorable day, made even more special when the Pacific Games baton arrived unexpectedly. Everyone got a chance to hold it and this moment has stuck with me as a reminder that many great athletes start from humble beginnings, often through grassroots programs like Team Up. Since then, staff from these six sports programs have received training and are already delivering activities. I am delighted to share with you their progress and how they're making a real difference across the Solomon Islands.

### JUST PLAY

I've seen the passion Solomon Islanders have for football and I'm glad the Australian Futsalroos were able to visit and play against the Kurukuru earlier this year in the PacificAus Sports Series.

There is so much football talent in Solomon Islands, and under the Solomon Islands Football Federation's social responsibility

division I've seen Just Play program work wonders in improving the lives of children, especially girls, women, and people with disabilities.

Just Play recently hosted the first ever regional women's football symposium in Honiara on ending gender-based violence. Supported by Team Up and its partners, the event brought together leaders, coaches, trainers, and players from clubs and national teams across the region to showcase football's remarkable ability to drive positive change and create a safe and inclusive environment for all.



Participants of the first ever regional women's football symposium on ending gender-based violence

### HOOK IN4 HEALTH

Hosting the Pacific Games introduced Solomon Islanders to less familiar sports as well. Hockey, a favorite in Australia, has since been taken up by over 700 primary school students. Hockey has a unique appeal to children and the social messages embedded through the Hook in4 Health program also make it a powerful vehicle for change.

### BASKETBALL FOR GOOD

The Solomon Islands Basketball Federation under the Basketball for Good program organised an all-girls "Her World Her Rules" event in

February, attended by over fifty girls. Participants were able to connect with senior women players through games and discussions about fair play, the importance of respect, and how to develop confidence and encourage teamwork.

### WOMEN MAKE WAVES

Australia is known for great surf breaks. And Solomon Islands has some amazing surfing spots too. In Western Province the Western Solomons Surf Association in partnership with SurfAid, the Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association, and the Family Support Centre, has been educating communities about women's health, improving resilience among gender-based violence survivors, and fostering women's leadership roles in surfing.



Students of Norman Palmer Community High School (CHS) participate in the Hook in4 Health program



Staff of the Included Sport Program eager to start delivering their inclusive activities

### INCLUDED THROUGH SPORT

The Included Through Sport program utilises athletics to ensure people with visible and non-visible disabilities can participate equally in community

activities. Athletics Solomons, with support from Sport Inclusion Australia and Oceania Athletics, has trained coaches and volunteers to deliver sport in an inclusive way. This means more people with disabilities are identified, trained, and can participate in athletics.

### SMASH DOWN BARRIERS

The Smash Down Barriers program uses festivals to promote and celebrate table tennis for all, catering especially for people with disabilities, women and girls. Sessions also promote the importance of physical activity as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

These six programs not only benefit participants, they also change the lives of those who deliver them, offering valuable training and support. I'm especially proud that these efforts have created equal job opportunities, with more than half of the staff across these programs being women. And it is true what they say - when women succeed, everyone benefits.

Lukim iu neks taem!