



FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S DESK

ROD HILTON

Solomon Islands - Australia

Australia's lasting legacy



Seghe Airfield opening with Australian High Commissioner HE Rod Hilton, Deputy Premier Western Province, Hon Carlick Runimetu, Prime Minister Hon Jeremiah Manele and New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters PC MP



Australia refurbished 100 school buildings across seven schools ahead of the Pacific Games, including this classroom at St Josephs Catholic Secondary School



Infrastructure is giving vendors like Lydia Kwaimani from Tulagi access to income so her family can grow and prosper

It has now been over nine months since Solomon Islands successfully hosted the 2023 Pacific Games; my wife Ewa and I enjoyed watching Team Solo winning 79 medals, including 12 gold, and covered the country in glory.

While the good memories will last a lifetime, a legacy of significant infrastructure, built to host athletes, officials and events, has also been left behind. This legacy should continue to provide enjoyment and service to the people of Solomon Islands well into the future.

Infrastructure assets are big-ticket items. They're expensive, and take time and effort to plan, design and build well – with ongoing maintenance required to ensure longevity. Low quality materials and workmanship, and designs that don't consider ongoing operational costs, might be a cheap and quick fix, but quality stands the test of time. Quality also makes assets cheaper for the government to operate and maintain, long after the ribbon is cut, the medals are awarded and Pacific athletes are gone. We need infrastructure that can be used by Solomon Islanders immediately after completion, and that drives social and economic growth for longer, in the face of wear and tear, rain and natural disasters.

the lumi Water Sports Park and 100 refurbished school buildings across seven schools. These upgrades, initially accommodating Pacific athletes and officials, created over 1,000 jobs during their construction, and now provide a service to the education of the next generation of Solomon Islanders.

Australia and Solomon Islands have recognised the importance of

clinics and community halls still serving their community around the country. No matter whether the project is big or small, the same principles apply. There are no short cuts to long lasting infrastructure.

So how can we extend the legacy of infrastructure, so that prosperity and enjoyment flows for longer and for more people?



Australia is proud to have supported the construction of the Water Sports Park east of Honiara for the Pacific Games



20 years on, Australia has refurbished the Tulagi Market using local workers and quality materials so that it can serve the community for another 20 years

These are some of the lessons Australia has learnt, working shoulder to shoulder with government and industry to help deliver the Games and other critical infrastructure, as Solomon Islands' largest and longest-standing infrastructure partner.

Last month, I was in Central Province for the handover of the refurbished Tulagi Market. The original structure was built by Australia 20 years ago and only needed minor works – that's a life well lived. Now, with a quality new roof, water tanks and other maintenance, as well as new access ramps for wheelchair users, it will serve Tulagi for 20 years more, with Central Province committing budget towards maintenance. And the best news - it was delivered by a local builder, using local labour, creating extra skills and jobs along the way!

quality infrastructure that includes ongoing maintenance, signing up this year to the Pacific Islands Forum's Pacific Quality Infrastructure Principles. Australia has applied these quality and sustainability principles to the nearly 500 separate infrastructure investments delivered under the Solomon Islands-Australia Partnership since 2019. Whether it's the sealing of runways in Seghe and Choiseul Bay, the technology attached to Our Telecom towers installed in remote communities, the undersea cable connecting Solomon Islands to the world, or the many markets, jetties, roads, schools,

One way is to make infrastructure more accessible and inclusive for the people using it – like taking into account the needs of the mothers and nurses who will ultimately use the new Birthing and Urban Health Centre, currently under construction in Naha. Another is designing for easier, cheaper maintenance by using high quality, climate-smart fittings and design. And finally, there are many advantages to upskilling and using Solomon Island workers and materials wherever possible - so there is a legacy of knowledge to undertake required maintenance

All around the country, I see the lasting legacy of Australia's red kangaroo, adorning infrastructure big and small. In every case, it stands proudly next to the green, gold and blue of Solomon Islands, an enduring legacy of our close ties, shared history and a culture of quality and respect under the Solomon Islands-Australia Partnership.

Lukim iu neks taem!



Seghe Airfield, a jointly funded project by the Australia and New Zealand governments

Australia provided nearly half a billion dollars to help deliver some of the critical facilities needed for the Games, including