



FROM THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER'S DESK
ROD HILTON



Central to Democracy: Australia supports the media sector



Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Rod Hilton, presenting awards at the Media Association of Solomon Islands Media Excellence Awards in 2024. Australia was a Silver Sponsor - celebrating all that MASI has achieved this year.



Australia's Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, answering questions from Solomon Islands media during his visit in 2023. Where possible, Australian Ministers make themselves available to local media. Such people-to-people links are key to the closeness of the Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership.

24-31 October is **Global Media and Information Literacy Week** which raises awareness and celebrates progress towards 'media and information literacy for all'. So this week I wanted to discuss what the Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership is achieving in the media sector.

Australia's support is long standing. Not only do we work with every media organisation in Solomon Islands, we're also the largest financial partner.

This month, Australia announced a major new initiative: the **Solomon Islands – Australia Media Sector Partnership**. This partnership will provide support through **SBD 11 million** over 4 years to support a free and vibrant media sector – the lifeblood of democracy.

ABC International Development will deliver the program in partnership with the Media Association of Solomon Islands (MASI). This will ensure Solomon Islanders have a big say in how

training (to make the best online content), office space, production and recording facilities, equipment. and more.

This program builds on our support to MASI to date. In 2023-2024, Australia has supported MASI's operating, governance and service delivery functions. As a result, MASI has been able to increase the services it provides

to access, use and contribute to information and media content.

The new **Australia-funded telecommunication towers**, built by Solomon Islanders in the country's most remote locations, use Ericsson's highly advanced and secure communication technology. They will close communication gaps and increase internet coverage

prestigious University of New South Wales' Australian Graduate School of Management General Manager Program. Another three will go in November. This executive level program is designed for General Managers and business owners and focuses on refining leadership and business skills.

Australia and the UK recently supported the launch of **Solomon Islands National Museum's virtual collection**. This creative use of digital technology will make Solomon Islands' rich and vibrant culture and history accessible to the world. The importance of capturing and sharing this history for current and future generations cannot be overstated. I am proud of the work Australia has done to support this important initiative through our Digital Pasifik project, alongside the Solomon Islands National Museum and the British High Commission.



Solomon Islands media leaders have completed the highly prestigious University of New South Wales' Australian Graduate School of Management General Manager Program. Pictured here, Ms Ruthina Koroa (L), Station Manager of ZFM, receives her graduation certificate from the Australian Graduate School of Management's Mr Matthew Byrne (R).

for the benefit of all its members.

In addition to the Solomon Islands – Australia Media Sector Partnership, Australia's regional media programs – **the Pacific Media Association Scheme and the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy** – will continue to provide training, equipment and funding, with the combined impact of these programs making a meaningful and significant contribution to the local media sector.

Global Media and Information Literacy Week is also about closing the 'digital divide' which means helping everyone

giving remote communities a reliable and fast way to access news and services, like internet banking, and stay connected to family and friends, especially during natural disasters.

These towers will help to build media access amongst Solomon Islands' most remote populations to make sure the country is connected and informed.

Strong media executives will lead a strong, independent, free media sector, which is a central pillar of democracy. This is why, in 2024, Australia supported six leaders from the Solomon Islands media sector to complete the

The Solomon Islands media sector is alive with talent, creativity, and motivation which is evident in the news and stories produced every day that contribute to an informed community. Australia is **proud and privileged** to support this important work through our contributions to equipment, funding, and domestic and international training, helping to ensure the good work continues.

So, during Global Media and Information Literacy Week, we reflect on our comprehensive assistance to the media sector, our unwavering commitment to media freedom, and we celebrate the success of Solomon Islands – Australia Partnership.

Lukim iu neks taem!



Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Rod Hilton, and staff from the Australian High Commission with the Media Association of Solomon Islands Board after a dinner in 2023.

this money is spent and that it meets local needs. Every news outlet in Solomon Islands will see tangible benefit from the Solomon Islands – Australia Media Sector Partnership, which will have flow on benefits for all Solomon Islanders.

The partnership will deliver practical support for Solomon Islands media organisations, including mobile journalism kits, digital storytelling