

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia
Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Solomon Islands and Samoa
31 July–11 August 2011

July 2012

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Membership of the Delegation

Leader**Mr Kelvin Thomson MP**

Member for Wills

Victoria

Australian Labor Party

*Accompanied by Ms Kerry Gordon***Deputy Leader****The Hon Peter Slipper MP**

Member for Fisher

Queensland

Liberal-National Party of Australia

Members**Senator The Hon Ian Macdonald**

Senator for Queensland

Liberal Party of Australia

*Accompanied by Mrs Leslie Macdonald***Ms Deborah O'Neill**

Member for Robertson

New South Wales

Australian Labor Party

*Accompanied to Samoa by Mr Paul Macinante***Senator Claire Moore**

Senator for Queensland

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Delegation Secretary**Ms Nina Markovic**

Senior Researcher, Parliamentary Library

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PREFACE

The delegation visited Solomon Islands between 31 July and 5 August 2011, and Samoa between 6 and 11 August 2011. The visit provided an opportunity to find out more about Australia's relationship with these two South Pacific neighbours, who are also significant recipients of Australia's official development assistance. Australia's partnership with Solomon Islands and Samoa aims to support their governments to meet and move beyond the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets and achieve a better quality of life for all.

The delegation was warmly received in both countries, and on behalf of the delegation I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for the generosity shown by our hosts at all of the meetings, ceremonies and informal gatherings. The delegation was pleased to be able to formally invite the Speakers of both Parliaments we attended to undertake a return visit to Australia.

The delegation returned to Australia with an enhanced understanding of how the relationship between Australia and Solomon Islands and Samoa is developing. The delegation also learned about how Australia's aid program is being delivered in both countries, and what local demands there are for further assistance. The challenges which Solomon Islands and Samoa are facing today are common challenges for our shared future in the Asia Pacific region. The delegation urges the Australian Government to provide further support to both governments and the non-government (NGO) sector in the areas of most critical need.

The delegation's visit to Solomon Islands commenced with a bilateral briefing by Australia's High Commissioner, HE Mr Matt Anderson, and a dinner with Australian Volunteers at the High Commissioner's Residence. From this meeting, and subsequent discussions with Solomon Islands' officials, the delegation learned about vital work which the volunteers, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and AusAID staff are undertaking in very challenging circumstances.

The delegation received a comprehensive briefing from the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) officials about the security situation in Solomon Islands, and toured the RAMSI base. The Government of Solomon Islands invited the Regional Assistance force in 2003 to help restore law and order after a period of protracted communal violence and the breakdown of security. The delegation was impressed with the scope of activities in which RAMSI has taken part over the last few years, and would like to publicly express gratitude to the remaining Australian troops which contribute to the Combined Taskforce. The delegation was touched by the still visible signs of rioting, which occurred after the April 2006 general elections. The delegation was made aware that some sectors of Solomon Islands society fear what will happen to the maintenance of law and order after RAMSI mission is completed over the coming years.

The delegation called on the Solomon Islands Prime Minister the Hon Danny Philip MP and Speaker of the Solomon Islands Parliament Sir Allan Kemakeza. The visit included meetings with other government ministers, a provincial governor, the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition and Foreign Relations

Committee, as well as women leaders. The delegation learned about key resource projects in Solomon Islands, such as the country's largest industrial forestry project Kolombangara and the Gold Ridge mine, which is managed by an Australian company, both of which the delegation visited.

The delegation's visit to Samoa commenced with a trip to Savai'i, where a number of Australian aid projects are located, including the Don Bosco Technical School which has received Australian assistance and volunteers. This was followed by a visit to the main island of Upolu, where the delegation visited villages that were severely affected by a devastating tsunami in 2009 that killed 143 people, including five Australians. The delegation called on the Samoan Prime Minister HE Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, Deputy Prime Minister the Hon Fonotoe Pierre Lauofo, and the Speaker of the Parliament the Hon Laauli Leuatea Polataivao. The visit included meetings with other government and parliamentary officials, business leaders and women leaders. A visit was also made to an inclusive education school, which warmly received the delegation.

Australian interests in Solomon Islands and Samoa are very well served by Australian officers who are posted from various departments and agencies and Australian volunteers, and I thank them all on behalf of the delegation. I would like to extend our special thanks to HE Matthew Anderson (High Commissioner to Solomon Islands) and HE Dr Stephen Henningham (High Commissioner to Samoa) and their staff whose liaison with host institutions and support during our delegation's visit ensured its success.

I would also like to thank all members of the Delegation and accompanying spouses, officers from the DFAT, AusAID, Department of Defence, RAMSI and Combined Taskforce, Australian Federal Police, staff from the Australian Parliament's International and Community Relations Office and the Parliamentary Library, for their cooperation and support throughout the preparation for, during and following the delegation.

Kelvin Thomson

Member for Wills and Leader of the Delegation

Chapter 1

Introduction

This report provides details of the meetings and activities in which the Australian parliamentary delegation to Solomon Islands and Samoa participated.

The delegation undertook a series of meetings to promote Australia as a key economic, political and strategic partner to Solomon Islands and Samoa. The delegation's visit was an opportunity for members to learn more about the challenges and opportunities faced by these two South Pacific nations. The aim of the visit was to deepen the Australian Parliament's awareness of cultural, political, economic, and ecological issues facing these countries.

In Solomon Islands, the delegation met with Prime Minister the Hon Danny Philip MP; Speaker of Parliament Sir Allan Kemakeza; Opposition Leader, Dr Derek Sikua MP, and other Ministers and MPs. The delegation attended programs which are financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and RAMSI, including with Australian aid, to increase women's participation in administrative and representative government.

A delegation meeting with women leaders confirmed that women in Solomon Islands continue to face economic and social barriers towards full societal participation, including in national politics. The delegation expressed concerns about a very high maternal death rate in Solomon Islands, especially outside the capital Honiara, where it is one of the highest in the region.

The delegation learned about the UNDP's vital parliamentary reform program in Solomon Islands. The members also welcomed the parliamentary twinning project between the New South Wales Parliament and the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, which allows practical support through staff placements, training, secondments and hands-on knowledge transfer.

The delegation was impressed with the work by Australian officers from the Department of Defence and Australian Federal Police, as part of the RAMSI Participating Police Force and Combined Taskforce. The delegation noted the ongoing relevance of RAMSI's work for the maintenance of peace and security in Solomon Islands. The delegation learned that there are concerns within society at large regarding the scaling-down of RAMSI operations in Solomon Islands. The delegation urges the Australian Government to continue to support the stabilisation and peace building efforts in Solomon Islands after RAMSI's withdrawal.

The delegation met with Australian volunteers, alumni of Australian universities and Australian businesspeople in Solomon Islands. The work these individuals are undertaking strengthens people-to-people links and benefits commercial partnership between Australia and Solomon Islands. It also builds long-term bridges and trust, including with the more remote communities.

In Samoa, the delegation met with Prime Minister the Hon Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, Deputy Prime Minister the Hon Fonotoe Pierre Lauofo, Speaker Laauli Leuatea Polataivao, Deputy Speaker Agafili Patisela Eteuati Tolovaa, Legislative Assembly Select Committee Chairs, Associate Minister of Women, Community and Social Development Gatoloaifaana Amataga Alesana-Gidlow, and other MPs and parliamentary officers.

In Upolu, the main island, Australian aid focuses on improving health and education, the law and justice sector, governance, and private sector growth. Members of the delegation also visited the island of Savai'i where several AusAID projects are administered in the areas of health, education, and climate change.

The delegation met also with Surf Lifesaving Australian Youth Ambassadors Amelia Cole and Eldene O'Shea and wishes to express support for initiatives like these which are aimed at increasing the local capacity of Samoan people in the long-term.

The delegation recalled vital disaster relief efforts which the Australian High Commission undertook in collaboration with local authorities after a devastating tsunami in 2009, the scars of which are still present in the local communities.

Youth unemployment continues to be a key challenge in both Samoa and Solomon Islands. The delegation welcomed education initiatives supported by Australian aid, such as the Don Bosco Technical School in Savai'i, which are aimed at addressing skills shortages in the Samoan economy. More Australian-sponsored scholarships for students in both countries to study in Australia would be beneficial as a long-term strategy to stimulate skills and knowledge transfer to Samoa. The delegation considers it would be also important for the Australian overseas news service to be made more easily accessible to viewers in both Samoa and Solomon Islands.

The delegation was impressed by the vast scope of work by Australian officers and volunteers in Samoa, including in inclusive education. Members urge more Australian federal government funding towards health programs in Samoa, particularly in the areas of maternal and post-natal health, as well as initiatives aimed at tackling obesity and diabetes which are significant challenges facing Samoa today.

Acknowledgements

Before departure, the delegation received detailed briefings from staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID and the Parliamentary Library. The assistance provided by the officers who participated is acknowledged with thanks.

The delegation thanks the staff of the International and Community Relations Office, particularly Andrew Templeton, for their administrative assistance and HRG Australia Travel for flight arrangements.

The delegation records its appreciation for the hospitality and courtesy extended to it by the hosts and related bodies, in particular:

- Australia's High Commissioner to Solomon Islands, HE Matthew Anderson and DFAT officers who accompanied the delegation during the visit to Solomon Islands, in particular Ms Rachel Small, Mr Eric Wawra, Mr Wayne Smith and Mr William Ewing
- Speaker of Solomon Islands Parliament, Sir Allan Kemakeza, and Speaker of the Samoan Parliament, Laauli Leuatea Polataivao, and their staff
- Australia's High Commissioner to Samoa, HE Dr Stephen Henningham, his spouse Mrs Catherine Cregan, DFAT officers Mr Ian Gerard, Ms Ana Hall and Mr John Mahler
- RAMSI Principals, especially Mr Nicolas Coppel, Ms Mary Thurston, Mr Mataiasi Lomaloma, Dr Jane Lake, Mr Peter Bond and Lt Col Paul Landford, and accompanying officers
- Principal Committee Clerk, Mr Tiatia Graeme Tualaulelei, Senior Committee Clerk, Mr Muaimalae Uitime Tala, Clerk Assistant-Hansard & Translation Services, Mr Fuimaono Naoia Fereti Tupua, and Committee Clerk Mr Torrey Unoi, and
- Staff at the National Referral Hospital in Honiara and staff at the Education Department of Solomon Islands for their hospitality and welcome to the delegation.

The delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to members of both Parliaments with whom the delegation met and held talks. The delegation is grateful to the Parliament of Samoa for arranging accommodation and travel to Savai'i.

Finally, the delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the staff of the Australian High Commissions and all officers in Canberra who assisted with the visit and preparation of the program of meetings. The delegation was well served by the Australian posts in Solomon Islands and Samoa. Excellent briefings were provided on arrival and staff made the visit very pleasant and informative.

Chapter 2: Solomon Islands

Overview of bilateral relations

Solomon Islands is an archipelago country, which consists of more than 900 islands. The population in 2011 was about 552 000 people. Australia and Solomon Islands have a long-standing partnership, underpinned by growing commercial ties. Two Australian banks, ANZ and Westpac, operate in Solomon Islands and the delegation met with their representatives at a business lunch during the visit. DFAT data indicates that in 2011, Australia's merchandise trade with Solomon Islands stood at A\$195 million, of which A\$124 million was exports from Australia to Solomon Islands, and A\$71 million was imports from Solomon Islands into Australia. Investment by Solomon Islands into Australia amounted to A\$125 million, whilst Australian investment in Solomon Islands was A\$76 million. The delegation notes that further trade and investment linkages should be explored, including in the resources sector, in order to facilitate more trade between the two countries.

Solomon Islands is an important recipient of Australia's official development assistance, which is underpinned by the Australia-Solomon Islands Partnership for Development. In 2011–12, AusAID provided A\$133.7 million to support development needs in Solomon Islands. Further support was given through Australia's participation in RAMSI. Since 2003, following a period of inter-ethnic tensions and civil disturbances, Australia has invested significant resources through RAMSI to restore peace and security. The delegation learned that whilst the current situation in Solomon Islands is relatively peaceful, some inter-ethnic tensions have remained and may be exacerbated in the future by socio-economic problems, such as high unemployment and crime. The delegation calls on the Australian Government to continue to lend support to peace-building initiatives in Solomon Islands, especially following RAMSI's withdrawal which is expected over the coming years.

Delegation members noted Australia's assistance to the health and education sectors in Solomon Islands. The delegation urges the Australian Government to increase the funding to these two critical areas. With reference to the health sector, Australian aid assisted in the creation of a national diabetes awareness program in the National Referral Hospital, which the delegation learned had already had some success. However, the conditions in this hospital warrant improvement. The delegation witnessed large waiting lines and lack of beds for some patients who were lying on the floor. In the remote communities, access to adequate health services remains a major challenge. Malaria continues to be a serious health risk, with dozens of children and adults dying each year as a consequence of this mosquito-borne disease.

With reference to education, the delegation met with teachers in a school in the Western Province, and learned from this meeting about the difficulties associated with the lack of availability of basic resources, such as stationery, books, clothing for children and running water. The delegation, therefore, believes that critical

development needs, which exist in the education sector in Solomon Islands, can be assisted with targeted Australian aid.

Details of meetings

The following section summarises the key meetings and visits undertaken by the delegation in Solomon Islands. Individual and optional visits conducted by members of the delegation are also included.

From a variety of bilateral meetings, the delegation gained a better understanding of the range of political, social and economic challenges facing Solomon Islands. The delegation learned that further Australian assistance would be welcomed in the areas of governance, parliamentary reform, justice, health, gender equality, land reform, and education. The delegation was concerned about widespread poverty and limited access to primary education and healthcare services, and to learn of the disturbingly high maternal death rate, particularly outside the capital Honiara.

The Parliament

Solomon Islands, a parliamentary democracy, has a unicameral National Parliament with 50 representatives. It is also a member of the Commonwealth. Spread over 900 islands, the country is divided into nine provinces and a capital territory.

During the visit to the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, the delegation called on the Solomon Islands Prime Minister the Hon Danny Philip MP and Speaker of the Solomon Islands Parliament Sir Allan Kemakeza, as well as a number of other MPs. The delegation toured parliamentary facilities, including the library and learned about the formation of a Young Women's Parliamentary Group (which was subsequently launched on 15 December 2011). The members expressed their support for this initiative.

Delegation members were also briefed by a UNDP representative about the twinning project between the NSW Parliament and the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. The UNDP also briefed the delegation about the progress of the National Parliamentary Strengthening project. The delegation urges the Australian Government to continue funding arrangements for parliamentary reform in Solomon Islands.



Pictured (from right): Ms Deborah O'Neill MP; the Hon Peter Slipper MP, Deputy Delegation Leader; Mr Kelvin Thomson MP, Leader of the Delegation; Solomon Islands Prime Minister the Hon Danny Philip; Senator Claire Moore; Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald; Delegation Secretary Ms Nina Markovic

RAMSI

RAMSI activities in Solomon Islands are conducted under Solomon Islands–RAMSI Partnership Framework, which envisages a gradual transition and an eventual withdrawal of the regional presence in Solomon Islands.

Australian military personnel have been present in Solomon Islands since July 2003, when the Government of Solomon Islands requested regional assistance to restore law and order following ethnic tensions and civil unrest. Over the past nine years, the scope of RAMSI's activities has expanded to include support for good governance programs; training for Solomon Islands Royal Police Force in public order management and improvements to correctional services; the conduct of search and rescue operations, and a range of other activities. Australians have provided critical support to RAMSI operations and facilities. In 2006, Australia sent additional military forces, police and civilian personnel to Honiara after a violent escalation in ethnic tensions. After a detailed briefing on the security situation in Solomon Islands by RAMSI principals the delegation toured RAMSI facilities, including medical centre.

Meetings in Honiara with parliamentarians and businesspeople highlighted some concerns about RAMSI's departure, including fears of a possible return to communal violence.

National Referral Hospital

Delegation members paid a visit to the National Referral Hospital, which they toured with the Minister for Health and Medical Services, the Hon Charles Sigoto. After talking to staff, the delegation gained an appreciation of the diversity of health issues in Solomon Islands, and the challenges of health service provision in the more remote provinces, many of which have underdeveloped road infrastructure.

In the National Referral Hospital the delegation also visited the Solomon Islands National Diabetes Centre and viewed facilities for children. In order to address even the most basic needs of its people, as well as to meet the MDGs, the Solomon Islands Government and provincial authorities need to receive ongoing international assistance in most critical areas. Therefore, members urge the Australian Government to provide more funding to Solomon Islands health programs to help our Pacific neighbour meet its developmental needs in the face of a growing population.

Maternal mortality, including in adolescents, is a serious health issue in Solomon Islands. Cultural and religious sensitivities can be a barrier for adolescents in accessing family planning and reproductive healthcare services. Australia continues to support local midwifery training programs in Solomon Islands, including some run by volunteer nurses.

Malaria-related deaths, especially in children under five, present another obstacle to the achievement of the MDGs in Solomon Islands. Delegation members urge the Australian Government to work in partnership with national and provincial authorities to make anti-malaria drugs more widely available to all affected patients.



Members of the delegation with the Solomon Islands Minister for Health and Medical Services at National Referral Hospital (from left: Senator Claire Moore; the Hon Peter Slipper MP; Mr Kelvin Thomson MP; Minister for Health and Medical Services, the Hon Charles Sigoto MP; Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald; Ms Deborah O'Neill MP)

Visit to Gizo (Western Province)

The delegation's visit to Gizo in the Western Province, several hours by plane from the capital Honiara, enhanced the members' awareness of the challenges in delivering services to remote communities. High transportation costs between provinces, usually by plane for urgent healthcare cases, put further pressure on the national authorities. The delegation recognises the pressing need to improve local health capacities and service delivery across Solomon Islands, where long-term donor commitments are vital.

The delegation was made aware of the tourism potential of the Western Province, which has remained largely untapped. Australian businesses may benefit from exploring commercial opportunities in that region with local partners.

Kolombangara Forest Products Limited (KFPL)

The forestry industry in Solomon Islands consists of natural forests and plantation forests. Over the past decade deforestation has become a major ecological issue. The delegation learned that approximately 20 per cent of government revenue comes from unsustainable logging. Delegation members were also made aware that large Australian and European Union (EU) donor support for forestry reform has had a limited impact on the industry.

Industrial plantations are promoted as a means of strengthening the forestry industry. The delegation visited a KFPL plantation with eucalypt and teak, and learned about their practices to ensure sustainable timber harvesting. The delegation also learned about healthcare and training facilities that KFPL provides its employees.

Gold Ridge mine

The delegation visited the Gold Ridge mine on Guadalcanal, where it received briefings from senior management. The mine managed by Australian firm Allied Gold Mining PLC, had been refurbished and new management structures put in place. Allied Gold Mining advised they had applied for extra exploration rights on neighbouring islands. The delegation learned about the challenges associated with running mining operations in Solomon Islands, including the training needs of the workers, company's worker retention practices, and health and safety procedures.

The delegation was pleased to learn about the company's proposed future exploration activities. Delegation members would like to encourage more Australian investment into the Solomon Islands economy, particularly in the mineral resources sector which pro-actively contributes to the growth of local jobs. The delegation asked about ecological protection of the areas surrounding the mine site, and members were assured that the company uses the best standards which are available to ensure that the environment in the mine's vicinity and local villages are protected. The company has its own radio station, and the delegation visited the construction of a new housing complex for the employees.

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency

The delegation visited the regional Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency in Honiara. Delegation members were made aware of the challenges faced by authorities to ensure sustainable use of fishery resources in the Southwest Pacific. Illegal fishing continues to be an issue in Solomon Islands. The delegation asked about the fishery access agreement which Solomon Islands extends to Taiwanese vessels. Members felt that more cooperation between Australia and Solomon Islands would be beneficial in jointly tackling a number of regional issues, including sustainable use of fishery resources and marine life protection.

Education Department

The delegation appreciated the briefing given by Mr Joe Maeriuia Ririmae from the Ministry of Education who presented key statistics about the education sector's performance and its key challenges. The delegation learned that more than 50 per cent of the population of over 520 000 people is below 21 years of age and the annual population growth is 2.3 per cent. There are also 80 different ethnic languages and many more social groupings, which can present a barrier for the national curriculum. Education authorities in Solomon Islands are divided into provincial, church and private authorities. In order to meet the national strategic goals of universal and equitable access to education for all, improvements in the quality of education, and more efficient management of resources, Solomon Islands requires ongoing international assistance and knowledge-transfer.

According to the Ministry of Education's briefing, key challenges in the education sector include the lack of adequate infrastructure, classroom and other teaching facilities, sanitation, clean water sources, and a general lack of books. Absenteeism, both by teachers and students, remains an issue. The delegation learned that the curriculum does not adequately match the country's labour needs. Due to the particular geographical context of Solomon Islands, communication and transportation to education centres also present a challenge for provincial and national authorities. The delegation was pleased to learn about nine key strategies that are being developed as a focus for the medium-term program of reform. Further Australian assistance would be appreciated in the strengthening of technical and vocational education and training, as well as in providing school grants, scholarships and in helping the development of long-term infrastructure, especially in more remote areas.

Business leaders

The delegation learned how a precarious security situation in 2006 restricted economic and business activities in Solomon Islands. Members were briefed about the challenges associated with doing business there. Business leaders have also expressed their concern about the withdrawal of RAMSI, cautioning against swift withdrawal and advocating a longer regional security presence in the country.

Women leaders

The delegation met with women leaders over a lunchtime meeting, which enabled members to directly engage with female NGO representatives and learn about their activities across Solomon Islands. Certain challenges became evident, namely the obstacles associated with distance, communication issues, the lack of physical infrastructure and affordable transportation, as well as cultural issues. The delegation learned about the high rate of domestic violence, which is being tackled by programs supported by, amongst other countries, Australia. Crime was also singled out as a challenge, as more vulnerable social groups, such as women and children, were directly affected. The delegation calls for long-term funding to women's groups in Solomon Islands to help Australia's neighbour achieve the MDGs, to secure more equitable access to resources and stimulate local employment in Solomon Islands.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

A delegation member, Senator Ian Macdonald, highlighted the following:

Because of its central position in the Second World War the Solomon Islands and its waters are littered with unexploded ordnance. There is organised criminal activity in locating these explosive devices which are then sawn in half with the explosives removed for manufacturing into bombs which are used to catch easily large quantities of fish. The "fish bombs" are a problem in that they destroy the fish stock for about 2 years and are used by the criminals in villages and locations other than their own. It is also a very dangerous activity and there have been injuries and deaths caused by dealing with these unexploded devices.

The delegation considers that Australia needs to increase its efforts to assist the Solomon Islands Government in dealing more effectively with IEDs in the long-term.

Other visits

Members also undertook individual visits to:

- a church service in Honiara
- U.S. War Memorial in Honiara (Guadalcanal American Memorial)
- Australia-sponsored Pacific Boat Patrol Program, and
- a school.

Chapter 3: Samoa

Overview of bilateral relations

Independent State of Samoa is a parliamentary democracy, and one of the most stable countries in the South Pacific. It has a unicameral Legislative Assembly with 49 seats. It was the first nation in the Southwest Pacific to achieve independence (from New Zealand) in 1962. Its population in 2011 was around 183 000. Many Samoans reside in New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America. Samoa is predominantly Christian, but other denominations include the Mormons and members of the Baha'i faith.

Australia and Samoa enjoy close relations underpinned by defence and police cooperation, aid, people-to-people links, and trade. The delegation learned about Samoa's active participation in regional forums. These include, in particular, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Apia-based Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. The Samoa–Australia Partnership for Development has been the basis for Australia's official development assistance to Samoa. According to the DFAT country brief for Samoa:

Australia is Samoa's significant development partner and the largest aid donor, providing approximately 30 per cent of direct bilateral aid. The aid relationship between Australia and Samoa is robust, assisted by strong Samoan Government commitment to development and public sector reform and the past achievements of Australian aid.

The total aid budget for 2011-12 is estimated at \$43.7 million, with \$26 million programmed bilaterally and \$17.7 million allocated from regional funds. In support of Samoa's development strategy, the Australian aid program contributes to improvements in: effective and accountable public sector administration; opportunities for employment and investment; enhancing law and justice; education outcomes and opportunities; health outcomes with a focus on primary and preventative health; and management of natural resources. In 2009-10, an additional \$12 million was provided to help the Government of Samoa respond to the devastating September 2009 tsunami.

Australia is Samoa's principal export destination. In 2011, Australia exported A\$29 million in merchandise trade to Samoa, and imported A\$32 million. Australian investment in Samoa in 2011 was A\$235 million. The balance of trade in 2011, however, suffered losses. The delegation learned that the global economic recession impacted on income-generating activity in Samoa. The delegation was made aware that further investment from Australia in the Samoan economy would be welcomed. Members also learned about growing Chinese investment in Samoa, particularly in the infrastructure and construction industry. The delegation welcomes more cooperation

between Australia and Samoa in tackling key challenges affecting the region as a whole, and in helping Samoa achieve the MDGs in the near future.

Details of meetings

The following section summarises key meetings and visits undertaken by the delegation in Samoa. Individual and optional visits conducted by members of the delegation are also listed.

The Parliament

The delegation attended one parliamentary session, during which members observed the proceedings in the Samoan Legislative Assembly. The delegation met with Samoan parliamentarians. Individual delegation members were given an opportunity to discuss issues of mutual concern with their counterparts.

The delegation subsequently met with the Speaker, Laauli Leuatea Polataivao, and the selected chairs of legislative committees with whom frank and open discussions took place, followed by the exchange of gifts. Members of the delegation were briefed about a twinning parliamentary project between Tasmania and Samoa.

The delegation also learned about the declining number of female parliamentarians in Samoa. Delegation members urge the Australian Government to continue to support programs aimed at increasing women's participation in national politics in Samoa.

Prime Minister

The delegation held an open discussion with the Prime Minister of Samoa, the Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, who provided delegation members with an excellent overview of Samoa's political history. The Samoan Prime Minister has been in power since 1998. The delegation was also briefed about the parliamentary opposition in Samoa. Issues of mutual concern were discussed. The delegation explored avenues for further partnership and trade between the two countries. The delegation encourages the Australian Government to provide further funding to the Samoan education sector in particular in order to help the Samoan people acquire the skills required to adapt to a changing labour market.

Visit to Savai'i

The delegation appreciated the opportunity to visit Savai'i. This visit was hosted by the Samoan Legislative Assembly. In Savai'i the delegation undertook a cultural tour on which they learned about traditional village structure in Samoa. This visit enhanced the delegation's awareness about the importance of village life and identity to every Samoan citizen. Only village chiefs, the matai, can be elected to Parliament. They have particular obligations towards their fellow villagers, including in wealth redistribution. They also might play a role in justice and correctional behaviour mechanisms. Delegation members learned about the work of Samoan police with

village chiefs in addressing crime. Healthcare services, particularly primary care, remain limited in Savai'i, including access to obstetrics and neonatal facilities—areas in which further assistance from Australia could be beneficial.

Tour of tsunami-affected areas

The delegation visited tsunami-affected areas on the main island of Upolu. In particular, the delegation visited villages severely affected by a devastating tsunami in 2009 that killed 143 people, including five Australians. The delegation learned that the Samoan people greatly appreciated the assistance provided by Australia after the tsunami. The Australian High Commission to Samoa subsequently received important recognition for their crucial work in disaster relief and management, and in helping to rebuild Samoan villages and facilities. The psychological consequences of the tsunami tragedy continue to affect all victims, including Samoan and Australian families who lost their loved ones.

The delegation visited Clea's library which was reconstructed with Australian assistance. During a working lunch, the delegation was briefed by an Australian couple living in Samoa who are tsunami survivors. Australians Chris and Wendy Booth told their story of the morning when the tsunami struck on 29 September 2009 and completely destroyed their cherished *Seebreeze* resort. Minutes before the waves came through the resort, the couple managed to safely evacuate all guests but were themselves left behind in one of the villas hanging on the door frames when the waves ravaged Paradise Cove. It took two years to rebuild the resort, which is a potent testament to the partnership of strength and courage between the two nations.

Don Bosco Technical College

The delegation toured facilities of the Don Bosco Technical School. Members had an opportunity to talk to teachers and students, and take part in a kava welcoming ceremony. The school kindly presented the delegation with a kava bowl and talking stick as official gifts to the Australian Parliament. The delegation also met Australian volunteers who were working at the college.

Inclusive education: visit to a SENESE school

Staff from the Australian High Commission briefed the delegation about Australia's extensive education support programs in Samoa. They are guided by the Samoa-Australia Partnership for Development, which was signed in August 2008. These programs include inclusive education, which assists students with disabilities to access education services. The delegation was especially delighted to visit the Special Needs Education Society in English (SENESE) inclusive education school, where members met with teachers, students as well as Australian volunteers. During this visit, the delegation met athletes who had returned with medals from the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Greece. The delegation urges the Australian Government to continue with funding of inclusive education initiatives in Samoa.

The delegation also calls for the strengthening of scholarship programs for all Samoans.

The Royal Australian College of Surgeons, Plastic/Reconstructive team

The delegation met with members of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons, Plastic/Reconstructive team at the national hospital. The delegation witnessed the voluntary humanitarian work in Samoa which was done by Australian surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses, and which is much appreciated by the Samoan people.

There is, in general, a shortage of trained health care professionals in Samoa, particularly in more specialised fields, and some concerns exist in relation to staff training and retention. The delegation urges the Australian Government to provide more funding and to support reforms of the health sector in Samoa, as well as to facilitate further volunteer opportunities for Australians wishing to undertake humanitarian work in the medical field in Samoa.

Non-communicable diseases remain prevalent throughout the country. The delegation also learned that obesity and diabetes present serious health obstacles for Samoans. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle and nutritious foods has been the focus of some of Australia's development assistance to Samoa, and it should be further encouraged.

Australian business community representatives in Samoa

The delegation had a working lunch at the Australian High Commission with business community representatives. The delegation learned about the challenges and opportunities for Australian businesses in Samoa. Delegation members urge the Australian Government to continue to support reforms in the Samoan business sector.

Other visits

Delegation members also undertook individual visits to:

- the Baha'i House of Worship in Samoa
- giant turtle conservation area
- church services in Savai'i, including Salelologa Catholic Church and the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Sapa'ali'i, which is the landing site of the first British Missionary (John Williams) in Samoa
- Salealua Lava Fields and Virgin's Grave, and
- had a dinner with Samoan women leaders.



Pictured (from left): The Hon Peter Slipper MP, Deputy Delegation Leader; Senator Claire Moore; Mr Kelvin Thomson MP, Leader of the Delegation; Samoan Prime Minister, the Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, Ms Deborah O'Neill MP; Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald; HE High Commissioner to Samoa Dr Stephen Henningham; Delegation Secretary Ms Nina Markovic



Samoa

Appendix One: Delegation Program

Australian Parliamentary Delegation

Visit to Solomon Islands and Samoa

31 July–11 August 2011

PROGRAM FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS

SUNDAY 31 JULY

- 1345** Arrive Henderson International Airport
- 1430** Depart Henderson Airport for Heritage Park Hotel
- 1500** Arrive Heritage Park Hotel
- 1650** Depart Heritage Park Hotel for High Commissioner's Residence
- 1700** Bilateral briefing by High Commissioner, HE Mr Matthew Anderson
- 1800** Dinner with Australian Volunteers hosted by High Commissioner
- 2000** Depart Residence for Heritage Park Hotel
- 2010** Arrive Heritage Park Hotel
- End of official engagements for the day

MONDAY 1 AUGUST

- 0850** Depart Heritage Hotel for Office of the Special Coordinator, Leilei
- 0900** Briefing by RAMSI Principals
- 1000** Depart Leilei for Office of the Prime Minister
- 1015** Call on Prime Minister, Hon Danny Philip MP
- 1115** Depart Office of the Prime Minister for Parliament House
- 1130** Meeting with Speaker of Parliament, Sir Allan Kemakeza
- 1230** Depart Parliament House for lunch with members of the Participating Police Force and Combined Task Force
- 1400** Tour of RAMSI base
- 1420** Depart for Henderson Domestic Airport
- 1500** Depart Honiara for Gizo, Western Province
- 1640** Arrive Nusatupe Airport, Gizo
- 1700** Depart Nusatupe Airport for Gizo Hotel by boat
- 1720** Arrive Gizo Hotel
- 1755** Depart Gizo Hotel for Gizo Primary School
- 1800** Meeting with Gizo Primary School Principal

Tour of School

- 1830** Depart Gizo Primary School for Gizo Hotel
- 1835** Arrive Gizo Hotel
- 1900** Dinner with Western Province Premier, Hon George Solingi Lilo.
Local dance performance
End of official engagements for the day

TUESDAY 2 AUGUST

- 0700** Depart Gizo wharf by boat for Kolombangara
- 0745** Arrive Kolombangara
- 0750** Visit AusAID South Pacific Regional Initiative Genetic Resources (SPRIG) and Kolombangara Forest Products Limited (KFPL)
- 1045** Depart Kolombangara by boat for Naru Island
- 1125** Tour, briefing and lunch at Naru Island
- 1320** Depart Naru Island by boat for Nusatupe Airport
- 1400** Depart Nusatupe Airport for Honiara
- 1500** Arrive Honiara
End of official engagements for the day

WEDNESDAY 3 AUGUST

- 0900** Depart Heritage Park Hotel for Gold Ridge mine
- 1000** Arrive Gold Ridge mine
Briefing and tour of mine facilities
- 1145** Depart Gold Ridge mine for working lunch with Australian businesspeople
- 1350** Depart for National Referral Hospital
- 1415** Tour of National Referral Hospital with the Hon Charles Sigoto MP, Minister for Health and Medical Services
- 1515** Depart National Referral Hospital for Parliament House
- 1530** Meeting with Opposition Leader, Hon Dr Derek Sikua MP
- 1630** Depart Parliament House for Heritage Park Hotel
Time for Canberra-based business
- 1750** Depart Heritage Park Hotel for High Commissioner's Residence
- 1800** Reception hosted by High Commissioner with Alumni of Australian Universities
- 2000** Depart High Commissioner's residence for Heritage Park Hotel
End of official engagements for the day

THURSDAY 4 AUGUST

- 0815** Depart Heritage Park Hotel for National Parliament
- 0830** Parliament program
- 1100** Depart National Parliament for meetings
- 1110** Meeting with Minister for Education and Human Resources, Hon Dick Ha'amori MP
- 1210** Depart for working lunch hosted by the Deputy High Commissioner with Women Leaders
- 1400** Depart for Secretariat of the Pacific Community
- 1430** Meeting with Dr Shane Tutu, Ag Manager and Land Resources Division
- 1530** Depart for briefing by Forum Fisheries Agency
- 1645** Depart Forum Fisheries Agency for Heritage Park Hotel
- 1745** Depart hotel for dinner hosted by Speaker Sir Allan Kemakeza
- End of official engagements for the day

FRIDAY 5 AUGUST

- 0900** Time for follow-up appointments
- 1315** Depart Heritage Park Hotel for Henderson International Airport
- 1400** Arrive Henderson International Airport
- 1445** Depart Honiara for Brisbane
- End of official engagements for the day

PROGRAM FOR SAMOA

SATURDAY 6 AUGUST

- 1645 Depart Brisbane (cross international dateline)
0015 Arrive Apia
0045 Depart Airport for Tanoa Tusitala Hotel
0145 Arrive Tanoa Tusitala Hotel
1200 Checkout and depart hotel for Savai'i
1300 Lunch at Le Vasa Resort
1500 Arrive ferry terminal
1600 Depart Upolu for Savai'i on Lady Samoa II
1730 Arrive Jet Over Hotel
1900 Dinner at Jet Over Hotel
End of official engagements for the day

SUNDAY 7 AUGUST

- 0900 Church service (optional) to attend a Congressional Christian Church of Samoa church service in Sapapali'I – the landing site of the first British Missionary, John Williams, in Samoa, and Salelologa Catholic Church Mass.
1030 Return to hotel
1145 Depart hotel
1200 Working lunch at Savaiian Hotel with Associate Minister of Women, Community and Social Development Gatoloaifaana Amataga Alesana-Gidlow
1330 Cultural tour of Savai'i
1900 Dinner at Stevenson's Resort with Surf Lifesaving Australian Youth Ambassadors Amelia Cole and Eldene O'Shea
End of official engagements for the day

MONDAY 8 AUGUST

- 0900 Check out and depart hotel
0915 Visit to Don Bosco Technical School
1000 Depart Don Bosco Technical School
1015 Visit to Salelavalu Primary School, an AusAID supported school project
1130 Lunch at Siufaga Beach Resort
1245 Depart Siufaga

- 1300** Arrive Salelologa ferry terminal
- 1400** Depart Savai'i for Upolu on Lady Samoa II
- 1515** Arrive Upolu
- 1615** Arrive Tanoa Tusitala Hotel
- 1800** Speaker's Welcome Function at Parliament House
- End of official engagements for the day

TUESDAY 9 AUGUST

- 0915** Depart hotel for Australian High Commission
- 0930** Briefing by HOM and senior staff on work of Australian High Commission About Australia's engagement with Samoa
- 1015** Depart for Parliament House
- 1030** Official welcome to Parliament, morning tea with members
- 1130** Return to hotel
- 1200** Depart hotel
- 1215** Working lunch at the Australian High Commission with Australian business representatives in Samoa
- 1345** Depart Australian High Commission
- 1400** Meeting with Legislative Assembly Select Committee Chairs and Speaker Laauli Leuatea Polataivao
- 1530** Call on Prime Minister Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Silele Malielegaoi
- 1600** Call on Deputy Prime Minister Fonotoe Pierre Lauofo
- 1630** Return to hotel
- End of official engagements for the day

WEDNESDAY 10 AUGUST

- 0845** Depart hotel
- 0900** Visit to Senese Inclusive Education School
- 1020** Depart Senese Inclusive Education School
- 1030** Visit to Royal Australian College of Surgeons Plastic / Reconstructive team at the national hospital
- 1100** Depart hospital
- 1200** Lunch at Sea Breeze with briefing by Australian tsunami survivors
- 1330** Saleapaga – Lalomanu Tsunami reconstruction tour and visit to the Clea Salavert Library
- 1515** Depart Lalomanu
- 1645** Arrive hotel

1730 **Farewell function hosted by the High Commissioner**
End of official engagements for the day

THURSDAY 11 AUGUST

1000 **Check-out and depart hotel**
1100 **Arrive Faleolo International Airport**
1225 **Depart Samoa**
1535 **Arrive Auckland**
1715 **Depart Auckland**
1900 **Arrive Brisbane**

Appendix Two: DFAT Economic Fact sheet



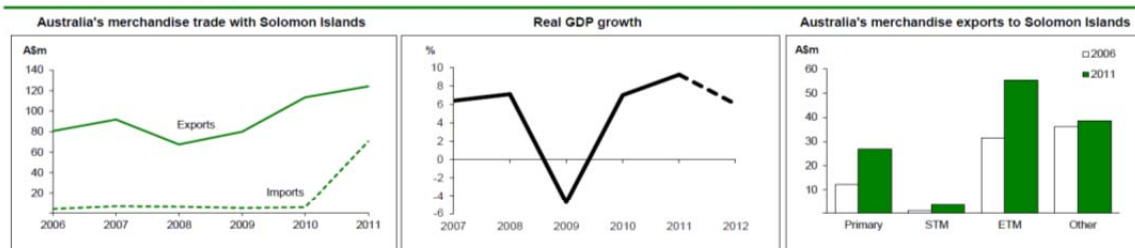
SOLOMON ISLANDS *Fact Sheet*

General information:

Fact sheets are updated biannually: June and December

Capital:	Honiara	Head of State:	HM Queen Elizabeth II, represented by
Surface area:	28.9 thousand sq km		Governor-General, HE Sir Frank Ofagioro Kabui
Official language:	English	Head of Government:	Prime Minister The Hon Gordon Darcy Lilo
Population:	540,000 (2011)		
Exchange rate:	A\$1 = S\$7.6098 (Apr 2012)		

<i>Recent economic indicators:</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (a)	2012 (b)
GDP (US\$m) (current prices):	516	608	598	676	840	979
GDP PPP (US\$m) (c):	1,355	1,483	1,428	1,546	1,725	1,852
GDP per capita (US\$):	1,048	1,207	1,159	1,280	1,554	1,769
GDP per capita PPP (US\$) (c):	2,751	2,943	2,768	2,927	3,192	3,348
Real GDP growth (% change yoy):	6.4	7.1	-4.7	7.0	9.3	6.0
Current account balance (US\$m):	-81	-124	-128	-204	-98	-124
Current account balance (% GDP):	-15.7	-20.5	-21.4	-30.3	-11.6	-12.7
Merchandise exports (% GDP):	31.9	34.6	27.6	33.5	na	na
Inflation (% change yoy):	7.7	17.4	7.1	1.0	6.7	5.3



Australia's trade and investment relationship with Solomon Islands (d):

Australian merchandise trade with Solomon Islands, 2011:	Total share:	Rank:	Growth (yoy):
Exports to Solomon Islands (A\$m):	0.0%	57th	9.5%
Imports from Solomon Islands (A\$m):	0.0%	66th	..
Total trade (exports + imports) (A\$m):	0.0%	68th	64.0%

Major Australian exports, 2011* (A\$m):		Major Australian imports, 2011 (A\$m):	
Specialised machinery & parts	8	Gold	65
Wheat	5	Wood, simply worked	3
Manufactures of base metal	4	Silver & platinum	1
Civil engineering equipment & parts	3		

*Includes A\$38m of special transactions and confidential items, 31% of total exports.

Australia's trade in services with Solomon Islands, 2011:	Total share:
Exports of services to Solomon Islands (A\$m):	na
Imports of services from Solomon Islands (A\$m):	na

Australia's investment relationship with Solomon Islands, 2011 (e):	Total:	FDI:
Australia's investment in Solomon Islands (A\$m):	76	np
Solomon Islands' investment in Australia (A\$m):	125	np

Solomon Islands' global merchandise trade relationships:

Solomon Islands' principal export destinations, 2010:			Solomon Islands' principal import sources, 2010:		
1	China	59.6%	1	Australia	28.7%
2	Thailand	3.4%	2	Singapore	21.4%
3	Republic of Korea	3.4%	3	China	7.8%
11	Australia	1.1%	4	New Zealand	6.0%

Compiled by the Market Information and Research Section, DFAT, using the latest data from the ABS, the IMF and various international sources.

(a) All recent data subject to revision; (b) IMF forecast; (c) PPP is purchasing power parity; (d) Total may not add due to rounding; (e) Stock, as at 31 December. Released annually by the ABS. na Data not available. np Data not published. .. Data not meaningful.



SAMOA

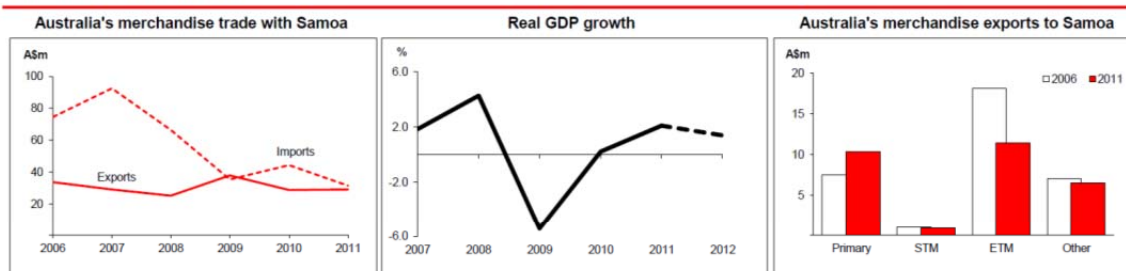
Fact Sheet

General information:

Fact sheets are updated biannually; June and December

Capital:	Apia	Head of State:	HH Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi
Surface area:	2,944 sq km	Head of Government:	Prime Minister The Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi
Official languages:	Samoan, English		
Population:	183,000 (2011)		
Exchange rate:	A\$1 = 2.3611 Tala (Apr 2012)		

Recent economic indicators:	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (a)	2012 (b)
GDP (US\$m) (current prices):	520	502	570	620	630	687
GDP PPP (US\$m) (c):	1,012	1,078	1,031	1,045	1,090	1,119
GDP per capita (US\$):	2,890	2,779	3,143	3,405	3,451	3,748
GDP per capita PPP (US\$) (c):	5,621	5,965	5,682	5,740	5,965	6,105
Real GDP growth (% change yoy):	1.8	4.3	-5.4	0.2	2.1	1.4
Current account balance (US\$m):	-83	-33	-18	-50	-95	-98
Current account balance (% GDP):	-16.0	-6.5	-3.2	-8.1	-15.1	-14.2
Goods and services exports (% GDP):	35.2	34.5	30.5	31.3	na	na
Inflation (% change yoy):	4.7	6.3	14.6	-0.2	2.9	7.5



Australia's trade and investment relationship with Samoa (d):

Australian merchandise trade with Samoa, 2011:		Total share:	Rank:	Growth (yoy):
Exports to Samoa (A\$m):	29	0.0%	83rd	1.0%
Imports from Samoa (A\$m):	32	0.0%	79th	-29.0%
Total trade (exports + imports) (A\$m):	61	0.0%	87th	-17.2%

Major Australian exports, 2011* (A\$m):		Major Australian imports, 2011 (A\$m):	
Sugars, molasses & honey	3	Electrical distributing equipment	31
Milk, cream, whey & yoghurt	2		
Gold coin & legal tender coin	2		
Measuring & analysing instruments	1		

*Includes A\$4.9m of special transactions, 17% of total exports.

Australia's trade in services with Samoa, 2011:		Total share:
Exports of services to Samoa (A\$m):	na	na
Imports of services from Samoa (A\$m):	na	na

Australia's investment relationship with Samoa, 2011 (e):	Total:	FDI:
Australia's investment in Samoa (A\$m):	235	np
Samoa's investment in Australia (A\$m):	np	nil

Samoa's global merchandise trade relationships:

Samoa's principal export destinations, 2011:			Samoa's principal import sources, 2011:		
1	Australia	61.1%	1	New Zealand	27.9%
2	New Zealand	18.9%	2	Singapore	21.2%
3	American Samoa	6.4%	3	United States	11.3%
			4	Australia	9.9%

Compiled by the Market Information and Research Section, DFAT, using the latest data from the ABS, the IMF and various international sources.

(a) All recent data subject to revision; (b) IMF forecast; (c) PPP is purchasing power parity; (d) Total may not add due to rounding; (e) Stock, as at 31 December. Released annually by the ABS. na Data not available. np Data not published. .. Data not meaningful.