



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION HONIARA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia delivers SBD71 million COVID-19 assistance package to Solomon Islands

Australia has officially delivered SBD71 million to the Solomon Islands Government to boost COVID-19 preparedness and response activities. The funding will help to sustain Solomon Islands' health response, and assist with managing the economic impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Today (7 May) Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan signed the funding agreement with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, the Honourable Jeremiah Manele.

High Commissioner Strahan said SBD27 million from the package will be allocated to priorities identified in the Solomon Islands Government's Economic Stimulus COVID-19 Response Plan, and SBD44 million will supplement the Government's COVID-19 Health Preparedness and Response Plan.

"This money is helping to establish COVID-19 testing capability, including laboratory upgrade works and equipment, and providing grants to provincial health services to step up their preparedness and response activities," he said.

"It will also assist Solomon Islands handle the serious adverse economic impact of the pandemic. At the same time it will help ensure key services such as water, electricity and critical transport links continue to operate. Keeping the economy running under difficult circumstances will better position the country to bounce back once the pandemic has passed.

"Australia faces its own immediate challenges in tackling COVID, but we are pleased to be delivering this funding package because it goes to the heart of our deep and enduring commitment to Solomon Islands. It builds on our long history of support for our friends here in good times and in bad."

Australia already makes a substantial contribution of around SBD63 million annually to the Solomon Islands Government for improved primary health services, including the training of the doctors, nurses and public health officials at the frontline of the COVID-19 response.

The Australian High Commission has been working closely with the Solomon Islands Government and local development partners to ensure our current and future assistance is coordinated and delivered where it is needed. This includes ensuring equipment like the COVID-19 qPCR testing machine comes supplied with appropriate technical expertise and support, making sure victims of domestic and



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family violence still have access to help in the event of a curfew or lockdown, and providing a 4WD ambulance to the St Johns Ambulance Service to improve response times in a medical emergency.

The Honourable Manele thanked the Australian Government for its generosity and support rendered towards the Solomon Islands Government's COVID-19 response and preparedness plan.

“The Government will be SBD44 million better off to prepare and respond on the health front. In addition, SBD27 million will support businesses under the Economic Stimulus Package recently launched by the government this week,” he said.

“Australia's SBD 71 million COVID-19 assistance package to Solomon Islands symbolises our two countries strong friendship and mutually beneficial relationship that both our two countries and peoples have enjoyed over the years.

“Though the support provided is specifically in response to COVID-19, I understand, Australia's ongoing support and commitment to assist us in meeting our national development goals under its bilateral programme remain. For this, I want to register my deep appreciation to Australia for its unwavering support.”

The Minister of Finance and Treasury, the Honourable Harry Kuma thanked the Government of Australia for generously lending a helping hand when the country is really in need to better handle the impact of the COVID 19.

“The Government will be SBD44 million better off to prepare and response on health front. In addition it is pleasing that an additional SBD27 million will be available to support businesses under the Economic Stimulus Package recently launched by the Government,” he said.

Honourable Kuma added that Australia has been a longtime friend and a key bilateral partner.

“Solomon Islands has benefited substantially from Australia under its bilateral support and also through regional assistance platform such as RAMSI. Solomon Islands economy was once at its knees during the early 2000 when through RAMSI, Australia played a key role in restoring normalcy and resuscitating the economy,” he said.

“The people of Solomon Islands, are again thankful to Australia for helping the Government to prepare and plan better for the ongoing fight against the virus, and to support the economic stimulus package and to reverse the current recession.”

The Minister for Health and Medical Services, the Honourable Dickson Mua also thanked the Government and people of Australia for the generous support.

“On the outset, I would like to convey my sincerest gratitude to the Government and people of Australia for this generous support. With the amount of SBD44 million to



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be injected to the Ministry of Health, this budgetary support will directly assist my Ministry's National and Provincial Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 that was issued in March," he said.

"This very timely assistance, along with support from other development partners, will enable Solomon Islands particularly in the Provinces to upgrade our health facilities as they relate to quarantine, isolation, laboratory, equipment and COVID supplies and consumables."

"This will also assist WASH, logistical support for the Ministry including all our 10 Provinces as well as churches to be better prepared to prevent and respond to any coronavirus cases entering our country."

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Photo caption: Foreign Minister the Hon Jeremiah Manele and the Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan sign the funding agreement documents



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Photo caption: Health Minister the Hon Dickson Mua, Finance and Treasury Minister the Hon Harry Kuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade the Hon Jeremiah Manele, Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan and Deputy Australian High Commissioner Sally-Anne Vincent





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Photo caption: Back row from left to right - Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr Jimmie Rodgers, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Dr Pauline McNeil, Permanent Secretary Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Collin Beck, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Dentana Makini. Front row left to right - Health and Medical Services Minister the Hon Dickson Mua, Finance and Treasury Minister the Hon Harry Kuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade the Hon Jeremiah Manele, Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan and Australian Deputy High Commissioner Sally Anne Vincent.