



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION HONIARA

MEDIA RELEASE

7 April 2020

Australia delivers communication equipment to help Seif Ples prepare for COVID

Australia has provided the Seif Ples Gender-Based Violence Crisis and Referral Centre with vital communication devices and additional drums of fuel to help it prepare for any COVID-19 lockdown.

Today (7 April) Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachie Strahan and RSIPF Gender Coordinator, Staff Sergeant Alice Roteku delivered mobile phones, power banks, solar panels, USB lights, transistor radios, and two drums of fuel to the Seif Ples Centre.

Dr Strahan said the assistance to Seif Ples was part of Australia's continuing efforts to assist Solomon Islands with COVID-19 preparedness and response.

"We will continue to work closely with the Solomon Islands Government, and our local development partners, to ensure our current and future assistance is coordinated and delivered where it is needed most," he said.

"This includes ensuring victims of domestic and family violence still have a place they can turn to for support in the event of a curfew or lockdown."

Seif Ples Deputy Centre Manager Ms Falu Maesugea thanked the Australian Government for its continuous support.

"Women are more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the fact that they are the primary caregivers and the last to get medical attention," she said.

"The COVID-19 policy of encouraging people to stay home, may lead to higher risk of domestic violence due to partners spending longer period of time at home under stressful circumstances.

"I would like to urge the general public, family members and friends to keep safe and to support each during the COVID-19 lockdown period. You can call the toll-free SAFENET Domestic Violence Helpline 132, which is operational 24-hours a day, 7 days a week."

Seif Ples has instituted measures to help prevent the spread of the virus. The centre has reduced its capacity in order to maintain social distancing. Referral and safety planning are now being conducted via the hotline or at the centre's front reception area.



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Staff have been equipped with personal protection equipment (i.e. masks, sanitizer and gloves) and advised to self-isolate at home if they have influenza-like symptoms.

In the event of a lockdown, the SAFENET Hotline number will be diverted to nurses' phones, who will continue to provide information on gender-based violence and COVID-19. Nurses will work closely with SAFENET on a referral pathway for victims and survivors to access essential services like the police and health facilities.

The centre also has its own generator to supply electricity for lighting and security purposes.

The communications accessories and fuel are funded through the Australian Government's Solomon Islands Justice Program (SIJP). Australia previously funded the renovation of the Seif Ples building to increase the accommodation available for survivors of domestic violence. Australia has also set up a database for improved data collection, and supported the development of a new Child Protection Policy.

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Handover of fuel drums and communication equipment to Seif Ples



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Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachie Strahan and RSIPF Gender Coordinator, Staff Sergeant Alice Roteku hand over equipment to Seif Ples Deputy Centre Manager Ms Falu Maesugea



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Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachie Strahan and RSIPF Gender Coordinator, Staff Sergeant Alice Roteku speak at Seif Ples