

Business Beat

Welcome to the Chamber's Newsletter!



Procurement Workshop

The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) recognises the need to support businesses and companies to better understand Government's procurement process as the private sector plays a vital role in goods and services delivery to the Government and the people of Solomon Islands. Pictured here is SICCI member Mr Leslie Tolomaea from Solomon Security Services Ltd at this year's Procurement Workshop the Chamber hosted in September and attended by more than 40 business representatives. **See full article on Page 13.** Photo: SICCI Media.



Compliance, Business Confidence & Govt Revenue



National Building Code is a must for SI



Pandemic causes 'Uncertainty' for businesses



Private Sector, Govt consultation on IMB



Welcome

This is the official Newsletter of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SICCI), published and distributed to members and stakeholders after every two months.

It contains updates on all Chamber activities, news, members' feature, interviews, upcoming events and department updates from the Secretariat.

This publication is produced by the SICCI Media & Communications Department.

CONTACT US:

Suite 223, Hyundai Mall, Central Honiara
PO Box 650, Honiara,
Solomon Islands
Tel: (677) 39542

www.solomonchamber.com.sb

FOLLOW US ON:



Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Supported by:



Manufacturing Sector

SICCI facilitates round-table focusing on the Manufacturing Sector

p12



Courtesy Visit

Maintaining engagement with all our development partners

p14

RSIPF Meeting

SICCI & RSIPF holds 4th Executive Group meeting for 2020

p14



ENNOVATIO BLO IUMI

INNOVATING IN UNCERTAINTY

LOADING.....

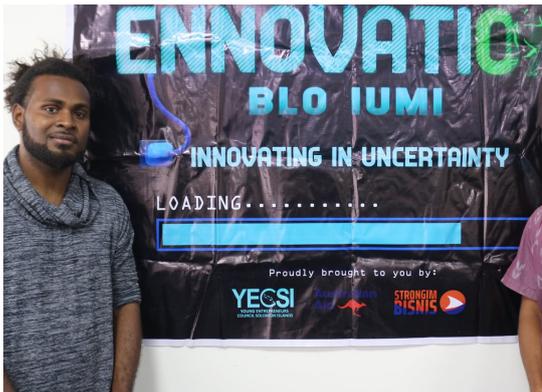
Proudly brought to you by:



YESCI's EBI

Aims to create, facilitate resilient & sustainable businesses in times of uncertainty

p17



Let's welcome our new CEO



SICCI CEO, Ms Natalina Hong.

Monday 7 September, Honiara – SICCI has brought on board another young emerging woman leader to the helm of the peak body representing private sector in the country.

Ms Natalina Hong began her job as SICCI's new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on September 14.

Ms Hong is an economic, governance and human development specialist with more than five years of experience in aid program management and seven years of experience in public administration with the Solomon Islands Government.

She graduated with a Masters of Public Policy in Development policy at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University in 2014. She had completed her undergrad in Sociology and History/Politics from the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 2005.

After USP she worked with ministries of provincial government, and then with National Parliament from 2012. She joined Australian High Commission in 2015 and up until her SICCI appointment, managed programs within the health, education and democratic governance sectors.

SICCI Board Chairman, Jay Bartlett made the announcement at a Business After 5 (BA5) networking event the Chamber hosted on Friday 4th September for members to have an opportunity to meet the new CEO.

"After a competitive interview process, the SICCI Board is confident that we have selected the right leader at a time when the Chamber is in a very strong position.

"It is encouraging to see another woman take up this leadership role and I believe Ms Hong will add great value to the work of the Chamber," Mr Bartlett said.

"Building on the Chamber growth over the past years, we're focused on providing more value to our members with greater access to information and services, ongoing advocacy on their behalf, and more support and opportunities to expand our efforts for a vibrant private sector leading to better lives for our people. Ms Hong's leadership and her experience will be integral in supporting the Chamber to achieve this vision," the SICCI Board Chair added.

SICCI CEO designate, Ms Natalina Hong is excited to join the Chamber and to get

out into the business community and hear from SICCI members.

"Having worked for eight years in public service, and for five years in development work with the Australian High Commission as a program manager where I developed my leadership skills, I intend to share my expertise at every opportunity to help and support our members' business goals and be their voice on issues that concern them," she said.

"My focus over the past 10 years when building my experience and skill is to contribute as much as I can to improving the development outcome of Solomon Islands, in whichever sector.

"I am looking forward to working with the members closely to build healthy relationships with our government and communities so there is an enabling environment for businesses and the private sector to drive our growing economy," she added.

Ms Hong replaces Ms Atenasi Ata, who will complete her contract this month after serving as SICCI's CEO for two (2) years.

Lack of Compliance affects business confidence and reduces Gov't revenue



Chairman of SICCI's Manufacturing Industry Working Group (MIWG) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of South Pacific Oil (SPO), Mr Carson Korowa says the oil industry welcomes competition, but also calls for a level playing field to operate in. *Photo: SICCI Media.*

Tuesday 22 September, Honiara – The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), as the peak body representing the private sector, aims to promote an environment where business confidence can increase through high levels of compliance with Government laws and regulations by all companies and businesses.

Following a round-table meeting in June hosted by SICCI for its members and Government representatives, a review was conducted which estimated a loss to Government revenue of between \$200-\$400 million due to lack of compliance to current laws and regulations.

SICCI believes the Solomon Islands Government should improve on its enforcement processes to make sure all companies, both local and foreign, follow all laws, regulations, standards and ethical practices that apply to each company and industry.

This would ensure that consumers are guaranteed safe quality products, employees are guaranteed a safe and healthy working environment while Government sees a boost in their revenue from a broader, equitable collection base.

The SICCI Media and Communications Department has been talking to the heads of some of the biggest companies and

major employers in the country to find out more about their compliance practices and how the lack of compliance from some companies is jeopardising business and reducing Government revenue.

"In Solomon Islands, the legislation is very strong. However, its effectiveness needs to be improved through better enforcement initiatives. One solution to drive stronger enforcement would be through public-private partnerships," Solomon Islands Tobacco Company Limited (SITCO) General Manager, Mr Kazi Mushfiqur Rahman, said.

Sullivans and Nambawan Meat Limited, from the Wholesale/Retail and meat industries, has also expressed similar sentiments.

"Enforcement would be in my opinion the biggest hindrance to ensuring all companies are compliant. Our laws are already in place; however, there can be stronger effort in enforcing them," their Director and Marketing Manager, Mr Neil Constantine, said.

Inland Revenue Division (IRD) and Customs Division under the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the Bio-security and Quarantine Divisions, the Solomon Islands Ports Authority (SIPA) and Honiara City Council (HCC) are key Government

organisations with which companies and businesses usually deal to ensure compliance.

SITCO General Manager, Mr Rahman said: "Currently the Government system relies on disclosures by operators for tax assessments but there is a lack of validation as to accuracy of these disclosures and no systematic reconciliation programs to audit disclosures.

"We recognize that Government has limited resources so we would like to see how SICCI can work with Government to introduce capabilities and programs that could support enforcement. Random physical stock takes in factories and reconciliation of imported inputs versus production declarations are some simple examples of added controls that can help with enforcement as practiced in other countries," he said.

SICCI as the private sector representative covering more than 50% of the Solomon Islands workforce encourages all businesses to comply with their tax responsibilities while at the same time urges Government to ensure that all businesses operate on the same level.

The tobacco industry is one of the highest

continue next page

from previous page

taxed and regulated industry in Solomon Islands with strict laws and regulations.

"To give you an idea, the manufacturing license regime requires every tobacco operator to pay a \$2.55 million licensing fee every year for import of raw materials, manufacturing of tobacco products and distribution of finished goods," said Mr Rahman.

Meanwhile, the IRD Commissioner, Mr Joseph Dokekana said his division has developed a number of strategies that supports their compliance risk management governance document, targeting more specific industries.

"Currently we are developing seven compliance improvement strategies (CIS). The CIS will outline which industries, sectors or subject that we will be focusing on to improve compliance," the Commissioner said.

Control of 'Non-Compliant' or 'Potentially Unsafe' products

Unsafe low quality and cheap products sold by non-compliant businesses can be risky and hazardous for the average Solomon Islander.

Solomon Islands as a country must be concerned about guaranteeing consumers with high quality products by controlling processes so as to deter non-compliant products.

Kokonut Pacific Solomon Islands Ltd (KPSI) produces Certified Organic & Fair-Trade Virgin Coconut Oil from a growing network of more than fifty (50) village producers across the Solomon Islands. But Managing Director, Mr Bob Pollard is concerned with the fact that there remains a substantial amount of cheap imported oil in the market which is unhealthy for the population.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of South Pacific Oil (SPO), Mr Carson Korowa says the oil industry welcomes competition, but also calls for a level playing field to operate in.

"In terms of the current market landscape in the oil industry, other companies that operate from floating oil storage are not paying the port dues because they operate outside the ports restricted zone, they are not investing in land-based assets for storage and distribution of fuel products, they are not employing Solomon Islanders in the storage and distribution of fuel in Solomon Islands and not carrying oil spill equipment to protect our environment in

the event of an oil spill," Mr Korowa said.

In the building industry, the Solomon Islands Government spends a substantial portion of its annual budget on infrastructure and construction.

However, General Manager of Tongs Cooperation, Mr Joe Sika said a lot of what the Government procures does not conform to standards resulting in beneficiaries not receiving the expected benefits.

"There is a need for a watchdog to maintain and ensure that quality products are sold at a fair price and laws are enforced on those who do not comply with these standards," he said.

Solomon Island law mandates that all operators in the tobacco industry must provide annual ingredients disclosures." In New Zealand these same reports are made available for public viewing on Government websites and we would support the Government mandating a similar practice in Solomon Island for transparency," said Mr Rahman

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

"We implement and comply to high Australian health and safety food practices and strictly follow HACCP laws," Mr Constantine, from Sullivans and Nambawan Meat, said.

Market Share

Safe to say, the Solomon Islands business environment lacks a strong enforcement culture. As a result, compliant companies lose significant market share to companies who do not comply with the laws.

In competing with cheaper products on the market, compliant companies lose their market share as consumers will choose the cheaper product over the standards-stringent, and quality product.

This means that Government loses millions of dollars of revenue from compliant companies, revenue which can be used to provide needed basic services for ordinary Solomon Islanders.

Sullivans and Nambawan Meat Limited is Solomon Islands' largest importers of Beer, Wine, Spirits, Non-Alcoholic Beverages, Meats and General Goods who have been providing Solomon Islanders with

a wide variety of products at affordable prices while still maintaining high quality, healthy products across all ranges since 1970.

But they too are feeling the pinch, losing a significant market share due to the increasing number of cheaper products directly linked to non-compliance by other companies in the same industry.

"I would say an approximate 65% of our business have been lost due to non-compliance of Government laws by other companies within the same industry. And this figure is not COVID-19 related," Mr Constantine, Director and Marketing Manager, said.

For the economy, in a worst-case scenario, a surge in unemployment could lead to rising social problems. This can happen when businesses have to cut costs through reducing labour.

Looking at it another way, for the average Solomon Islander, unsafe low quality and cheap products sold by noncompliant businesses can be risky and hazardous as well.

Company Social Obligation

In addition, also important to note is the requirement by Government for large investors to fulfil what is called the Company Social Obligation (CSO) which provides assistance for local communities through projects such as building of local schools, clinics, community church houses, improvement of feeder roads and so forth.

Unfortunately, many non-compliant companies are also not fulfilling their CSO responsibilities as required by law, which further jeopardize those compliant companies in the same industry.

For over the 30 years, Tongs Corporation has been the leading supplier of Building Materials, General Hardware, Steel and Plumbing Materials in Solomon Islands.

The company has come behind various community projects in the last few years as part of its social obligation. These include a Kiwi house for Doctors and Pikinini playground at the National Referral Hospital (NRH) in Honiara, supporting the improvement of the surface at the rugby stadium at Town Ground and completion of the rugby gym, other sponsorships to community groups and sporting clubs in the country and

continue next page

from previous page

more recently, the company provided warehousing space for Government in the fight against COVID-19.

Sullivans and Nambawan Meat has also been a consistent supporter of sports with assistance to golf, football and archery activities within the country to name a few.

"We support church outreach programs in the communities in which we are operating. Also, we ensure upskilling and training of our staff to gain specialized skills within the workforce," Mr Constantine said.

SITCO has demonstrated its support for the advancement of local communities. "Our core community projects include 'cash crop seedlings' distribution to rural agrarian communities.

"Just last year, in 2019 we donated 100,000 seedlings for cash crops like cabbages, eggplants and tomatoes. On top of that, we have started to establish water filtration plants for remote geographies that lack access to clean water." General Manager, Mr Rahman, said.

SICCI views on a fair competing business environment

SICCI member companies have been complying with all tax payments to Government including relevant licensing fees and permits as well as meeting high health and safety standards. However,

SICCI has noted that in the last five years, tax paid to Government has dropped significantly.

As a partner of Government and advocator for private sector growth, SICCI is concerned that when the country is losing such substantial amounts of revenue, there will be adverse social impacts due to reductions to budgets for critical sectors including health, education and infrastructure.

As such, SICCI hosted a roundtable meeting on Wednesday 3 June 2020 to discuss ways in which the Solomon Islands Government can maximize its opportunities for revenue collection from businesses.

The meeting was attended by heads of some of the biggest companies in the country, who are part of the SICCI membership, and Government representatives led by Director of the Economic Reform Unit (ERU).

Together, these companies employ a large number of Solomon Islanders as well as support families' livelihoods through their supply chains throughout the country. On top of that, they invest millions of dollars into the local economy.

Notwithstanding structural and institutional challenges faced by business and industry in the country, these businesses are prepared to invest in the productive capacity of the country and create and sustain local jobs.

Taxes collected by Government benefit

local individual Solomon Islanders who can access basic Government services such as health care, education, sanitation and hygiene, employment and so forth.

"We are a reputable local company that has been in the Solomon Islands for 42 years. We invest locally and have a lot to lose if we do not follow the laws," Joe Sika from Tongs Cooperation, said.

SICCI recommends that the same requirements or obligations and level of commitment apply to all that do business in Solomon Islands.

Lack of enforcement across all business operators in different industries continues to be a SICCI concern, as it is important that businesses coexist in a spirit of competition while complying with Government legal frameworks.

From the round table SICCI hosted in June, it was agreed that a taskforce would be formed to ensure that compliance is monitored with regular review and reporting.

The mechanism for this reporting will be through the quarterly Government-Private Sector Advisory Group platform mandated under the signed MOU between SICCI and the Government represented by the Ministries of Commerce, of Finance, of National Planning, and the Prime Minister's Office.

SICCI welcomes this opportunity to work with Government on the challenges facing businesses and the wider economy in the Solomon Islands.

National Building Code is a must for SI

Wednesday 14 October, Honiara – SICCI through its Building and Construction Working Group (BCWG) is committed to working in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) and relevant stakeholders to ensure Solomon Islands has a National Building Code (NBC) that is enforced.

The enforcement of a National Building Code under the proposed Infrastructure Management Bill (IMB) safeguards proper building construction and safety standard.

As part of this effort, the BCWG, on behalf of SICCI, hosted a consultation meeting on the IMB for members of the private sector on Tuesday 13 October with the Deputy Secretary of MID, Mr.

Jimmy Nuake and the Commissioner of Lands, Mr. Alan McNeil.

Mr. Nuake highlighted that the IMB will provide for the creation of Building Regulations, the adoption of the existing National Building Code (NBC) and the creation of powers necessary for the application and enforcement of the National Building Code.

"These are new concepts as there was nothing to this effect in the old law.

"This law (the proposed IMB) will improve the safety and suitability of buildings constructed, in line with the safety regulations in other countries," he said.

Contributing to discussions,

Commissioner of Lands, Mr. McNeil said while it is good the National Building Code will become law through the IMB, it is also important to have it linked to an application process which the draft IMB lacks at this stage.

"Currently there is no check against the building code, there is no check against the IMB as there is nothing about an application or compliance process in the IMB or the NBC for that matter.

"We have to link this to an application process, and rather than linking it to a whole new process, we have the Planning and Development Act and this is where the Ministry of Lands

continue next page

from previous page

comes in," he said.

The Lands Commissioner said the Ministry of Lands has the Physical Planning Division that looks after town planning in the country, and there is already a process of applying for and getting approval for developments through the Planning and Development Act.

"We can amend the Planning and Development Act to have small amendments to say that whatever is approved through the Planning and Development Board must also comply with the National Building Code as provided for under the IMB," he said.

Mr. McNeil explained that Honiara and all the provinces each have their own Planning and Development Boards which make decisions on applications.



BCWG Chairman and SICCI Board Member, Mr Daniel Tucker, a local engineer and MID Deputy Secretary, Jimmy Nuake discussing following the consultation. Photo: SICCI Media.

"We need to think about bringing the National Building Code into this process to ensure that anything that is approved by these respective boards must be in compliance with the National Building Code," he said.

Mr McNeil also raised the fact that Honiara City including some provinces

like Western, Choiseul and Malaita Province already have their own building ordinances.

"The recommendation is to remove these building ordinances because they will clash with the National Building Codes as they are old ordinances," the Commissioner said.



Not a member?
Want to join?
It just got easier.

Sign up online by visiting our newly re-launched website on www.solomonchamber.com.sb

New looks, better feel ...awesome features!

Check our news updates, newsletter subscription, about us info, members portal, downloads section, and search for tenders function!



Visit our office located at the Hyndai Mall, First Floor, Suit 223 to collect an application form.

For Membership enquiries contact Naomi Mara on phone 39542 or email services@solomonchamber.com.sb

Global pandemic causes ‘uncertainty’ for businesses

Wednesday 2 September, Honiara – One of the biggest challenge businesses face during this COVID-19 global pandemic is ‘uncertainty’, SICCI, Mr Jay Bartlett.

“Uncertainty is one area that is quite challenging as we do not know how long this pandemic will be around for, we do not know what will happen with a vaccine and we do not know what will happen to our economy,” Mr Bartlett said during the special one-hour session before the Government’s Umi Tugeda against COVID-19 talk-back show on SIBC, on Sunday 30 August.

Measures imposed in the efforts to keep the country COVID-19 free, plus global impacts, has had a significant economic impact domestically.

What’s more challenging is the fact that businesses do not know what to anticipate in the coming weeks and months to determine whether they will be able to stay afloat and more importantly keep their workers employed.

“To cut down on staff is very difficult to do when they have been with you for many years and they depend on their employment to support their families and meet responsibilities like paying for their children’s school fees,” Mr Bartlett said.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Chamber, businesses are struggling to maintain their customers and their cash flow while close to forty percent reported that more than 500 workers are adversely impacted.

Mr Bartlett emphasized that a collaborative approach is needed and sees the SIG-Private Sector Advisory Group as the platform to promote this.

“We all depend on the economy even for our health. For Government to be able to respond adequately to health challenges, it needs the economy to be healthy as well.

“That is why at the Chamber we believe all stakeholders including Government will need to work together to find a good path to follow where we can find the right balance between managing the health challenges while also addressing the economic hits,” Mr Bartlett said.



SICCI Board Chairman, Jay Bartlett. Photo: SICCI Media.

SICCI reiterates its stand on the large pipeline of infrastructure projects as being a key factor in the country’s economic recovery.

There are currently more than SBD7 billion worth of infrastructure projects that are earmarked for Solomon Islands which SICCI sees as vital to driving the recovery of the country’s economy.

“The Stimulus Package will help us for the short to medium term at this time when we are experiencing a drop in our economy, but it cannot sustain us.

“What we need is more stimulus into the economy and one of the conversations the Chamber is having with Government is the need for this infrastructure spend to happen. It will create jobs and get money flowing into the economy,” Mr Bartlett said.

SICCI Vice Chairman, Mr Ricky Fuoo

shared similar sentiments maintaining that if these infrastructure projects are fast tracked, people will be able to get money into their pockets through employment opportunities that will have positive ripple effects.

“As we understand it, Government is focusing on agriculture which is good as this sector has the potential for economic sustainability going into the near future while infrastructure developments can help how well the economy recovers,” Mr Fuoo said.

“But how do we get these projects of the ground without compromising the health of our citizens? Obviously, this is something that needs a lot of careful thought to plan. We need to take calculated risks, put systems in place to protect our citizens and we need to trust those systems.”

Need to prepare our economy for post-COVID 19

Wednesday 2 September, Honiara – Instead of treating COVID-19 as a stand-alone crisis, it should also be a wake-up call for Solomon Islands as a country to rethink on how we want our economy to perform post COVID-19 and into the future.

Speaking during a special one-hour session before the Lumi Tugeda Against COVID-19 Talk-back show on Sunday 30 August, Chairman of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), Mr Jay Bartlett highlighted that the global pandemic has exposed some of the country's areas of weakness in regards to health infrastructure and a narrow economy that depends so much on the forestry sector (logging).

"Solomon Islands is very fortunate as a small nation with ample labour, fertile land and so opportunities are plenty. So, this is the time for us as a country to work together and rethink how our future will look.

"What decisions will we make today to ensure that in the future we have a better economy that is more sustainable and one that can even be resilient against this and other global shocks," Mr Bartlett said.

He said Government including its stakeholders must work together to come up with a clear vision for the next five or so years and how we are going to work through the current global pandemic.

"For businesses, we can try to weather the storm but we need to know on the other side [when the pandemic ends]

what's going to happen when we come through."

"This is why regular conversations and collaboration with Government is needed," Mr Bartlett said.

SICCI is always open to partnership representing the views and concerns of more than two hundred businesses who are members of the Chamber, 70% of which are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

"Our decision making is driven by our members. Moving forward, we are always willing to work closely with Government and have constructive dialogue.

"It is easy for us to criticize each other but that rarely gives us solutions to progress. So as a Chamber our thinking is that we need to work together with all our stakeholders including our development partners, our decision-makers and especially our members.

"We will not always agree with the decisions Government makes and they'll be times when we have different positions but we still value and maintain that engagement.

"Constructive, positive dialogue and finding the best way forward that protects citizens from COVID-19 and the way we can keep our economy afloat moving forward, that is important," SICCI Chairman, Mr Bartlett, said.

The Chairman concluded by making an open call to registered businesses who are not yet a member to join the Chamber and come behind the work it does.

Ask Naomi



EVENTS & TRAININGS?

SICCI offers a professional events management service using a wide network of businesses. We bring you popular SICCI events such as the Business Breakfasts, Business After 5 and our renowned annual Business Excellence Awards.

Members can benefit from accessing our trainings on certain business topics such as leadership, planning, productivity, management and marketing.

SERVICES TO MEMBERS?

Service to our members and stakeholders is our priority as a private sector organization. The strength of SICCI lies in its membership, not only in its numbers, but more so in what the numbers represent - a wealth of private entrepreneurial expertise in business.

Have a question about the Chamber?
Send Naomi a message: services@solomonchamber.com.sb



Private Sector consulted on Infrastructure Management Bill (IMB)



Infrastructure such as this bridge in Makira/Ulawa Province supports economic activities in our provinces along with other vital infrastructure needs for the capital, Honiara . *Photo: Supplied.*

Wednesday 14 October, Honiara – The proposed Infrastructure Management Bill (IMB) will provide a more relevant legal basis for the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID) to better manage, plan, operate and maintain land transport infrastructure in Solomon Islands.

MID's Deputy Secretary, Jimmy Nuake highlighted this at a private sector consultation on the IMB on Tuesday 13 October organized and hosted by the Building Construction Working Group (BCWG) established by the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI).

He said improved transport infrastructure will provide solid foundations for the spread of economic development throughout the country.

The proposed IMB will replace the old Roads Act enacted in 1955 which is now obsolete and not practical to the current needs of the transport sector in general.

Mr. Nuake said the main reasons for updating the old Roads Act is to ensure that the safety of road users and buildings by allowing MID to be more responsive to infrastructure failures.

"The proposed IMB will also ensure that

“MID now urgently need this long overdue update to this important transport infrastructure law.

- MID Deputy Secretary, Jimmy Nuake

road assets remain safe and effective and minimise the cost of maintaining road assets and time delays when maintaining roads assets," he said.

"A step change improvement will require an infrastructure management system that is robust, timely, efficient and practical, responding to today's needs but importantly being able to change with time.

"MID now urgently need this long overdue update to this important transport infrastructure law," Mr. Nuake added.

BCWG Chairman and SICCI Board Member, Daniel Tucker said the outcome of the consultation was a success taking into consideration the feedbacks shared

by private sector representatives with particular focus on concerns raised by State Owned-Enterprises (SOEs) and utility providers in the country.

"The general emphasis was there are still areas for improvements in this Bill, as such, we acknowledge MID for reaching out to the private sector and for taking onboard points that were discussed during this consultation," Mr. Tucker said.

The BCWG was established by SICCI earlier this year to provide a platform for informed, expert discussions to formulate SICCI positions on measures that can be considered by Government and development partners relevant to the building and construction industry

continue next page

from previous page



Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MID), Mr Jimmy Nuake making a presentation on the proposed Infrastructure Management Bill (IMB) during the private sector consultation on Tuesday 13 October. *Photo: SICCI Media.*

in Solomon Islands.

The key focus for the BCWG are the Infrastructure Management Bill (IMB) and the National Building Code for Solomon Islands, which will be legislated under the IMB.

It is understood that the legal drafting team of the Attorney General Chambers is currently working on a re-draft of the IMB. After national consultations, the Bill is expected to be tabled in Parliament in the second quarter of 2021.

BOARD SPOTLIGHT



Name: Qila Tuhanuku

Title: Marketing & Corporate Affairs, Manager

Company: Solomon Breweries Ltd

Qila is the Marketing & Corporate Affairs Manager at Solomon Breweries - a current SICCI Platinum Sponsor and longtime member. Qila has been with SolBrew since 2013 first as a Marketing Executive. Prior to joining SolBrew in 2013 Qila worked in the RAMSI Public Affairs Unit under the Office of the Special Coordinator for 10 years. The Unit was responsible for overall strategic communications for RAMSI covering Development, Police and Military components of the mission.

Vision for the Chamber

“Solomon Breweries as a multinational business and a big contributor to the Solomon Islands economy, has a role to play in supporting broader private sector agenda that will enable sustainable growth for the sector. In this regard SICCI is the right platform to advocate for and drive these agendas.”

Other key aspects of the IMB is that it:

- Seeks to provide for the planning, development, maintenance, operation and management of infrastructure in accordance with best engineering and technical practice, and appropriate standards, specifications and procedures applied under this Act;
- Empowers a National Building Code and improves safety by requiring the proper construction of buildings and structures. Note that we currently don't have any real legal basis for the interim code we use;
- Ensures the appropriate regulatory controls are applied in relation to the protection, operation and use of public assets, and also to infrastructure constructed and maintained for the purposes of development areas;
- And clarifies the procedures for developing public assets, for the assessment of compensation payable in relation to the development and maintenance of public assets.

SICCI facilitates roundtable with Govt focusing on the manufacturing sector

Monday 7 September, Honiara – The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), as the peak body representing private sector, on Thursday 3 September facilitated a roundtable discussion with a high-level delegation from the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) which focused on 'Standards and Compliance' in the local manufacturing industry.

Targeted outcomes for the roundtable was to raise awareness for key SIG partners on issues faced by compliant companies in the manufacturing industry due to the absence and/or lack of enforcement of and non-compliance to Standards and policies and to discuss practical solutions that will enable a fair and competitive environment for businesses and companies in the manufacturing sector.

The private sector was represented by heads and senior representatives of some of the biggest companies in the manufacturing industry in Solomon Islands and members of SICCI's Manufacturing Industry Working Group (MIWG).

On the Government side, representing the Prime Minister's Office were Chief



Heads of companies in the manufacturing sector, Government representatives and SICCI representatives who attended the roundtable meeting on Thursday 3 September at the Heritage Park Hotel in Honiara. *Photo: SICCI Media.*

of Staff; Robson Djokovic and Deputy Secretary to PM; Dr Derek Mane including the Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Josiah Manehia; Director Price Control/Consumer Affairs, Mr Geoffrey Hou'ua; Director Foreign Investment, Lynnette Tuhanku from the Ministry of Commerce; and Dr Nemias Bainivalu, Undersecretary for Health Improvement from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. Also, in attendance was Honiara City Clerk, Mr Rence Sore.

The roundtable featured presentations on the standards in the manufacturing industry, enforcement of standards and policy gaps.

The discussions highlighted unfair trading behaviour, legislation breaches, lack of implementation and monitoring of legislation, uncompetitive cheap prices by competitors, illegal imports and counterfeit products as the main issues affecting the manufacturing industry.

Session on the Medium Term Development Plans (MTDP)

SICCI members attended an Information Session on Tuesday 27 October focusing on the country's Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDP).

A team from the Ministry of National Planning & Development Coordination (MNPDC) presented on the MTDP which is the implementing strategy for the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016 – 2035.

This was an opportunity for the private sector to be informed about Government's development plans and how it leads to economic development.

Programs and projects in the MTDP are included in the national budget for funding, hence, the importance of this session as SICCI continues to push for private sector involvement in the budget planning process.



Dan Lenny, Chief Planning Officer at MNPDC delivering his presentation. *Photo: SICCI Media.*

Procurement workshop for private sector

Thursday 24 September, Honiara – SICCI on Wednesday 24 September, organised another procurement training attended by more than 40 business representatives as part of an ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT).

This is the third procurement training the Chamber has hosted for its members since 2017 which delivers on the Public Private Partnership (PPP) MoU signed between SICCI and the Government.

In his opening remarks, Deputy Accountant General, Mr Douglas Sade emphasized that the government procurement process is where Governments and businesses establish their relationships to ensure Government service delivery, policy implementation and budget spending takes place.

Presenters included, Mr Leslie Penibanga, Assistant Accountant-General of MoFT and Ms Deborah Wargent, Procurement Adviser to both DFAT and MoFT.

Participants went through a series of presentations covering topics; Introduction to Procurement in Solomon Islands, Understanding what Government wants, Responding to Government tenders, Evaluation, Approval and Award and Contract Management.

Mr Penibanga said when it comes to Government procurement, it is important for members of the private sector to understand the process of securing tenders and submitting proper bids.

"I believe that there are many quality suppliers out there. These are businesses and companies who have the capacity to provide quality services and goods to Government but (who) miss out just because they do not understand the process.

"It is encouraging to note that SICCI through its membership have genuine businesses and we are looking forward to bringing them onboard to participate in all of Government procurement," Mr Penibanga said.

"That is the objective behind this workshop, to help businesses better understand the basics of what to do and what to expect from the government procurement process," he added.

It is understood that 60% of the Government budget is spent through the procurement system.

SICCI CEO, Ms Natalina Hong highlighted



Deputy Accountant General, Mr Douglas Sade delivering the opening remarks at the procurement workshop hosted by SICCI. *Photos: SICCI Media.*

that good procurement and contracting is important to Government, contractors and our people.

"The Government procurement process is an important relationship between government and businesses, which means more understanding and information sharing of each other's needs and systems is vital.

"The private sector through the procurement process are always looking for solutions and ways to improve their products and service delivery to the public and this training is an opportunity to better understand and apply the procurement process for both parties," Ms Hong said.

In his closing remarks, SICCI Vice Chairman, Mr Ricky Fuoo acknowledge

participants and Government through MoFT for their support.

"Your attendance signifies the importance of this workshop and continue to demonstrate the ongoing desire for greater collaboration between the Solomon Islands Government and the Private sector, through the Chamber of Commerce," he said.

Mr Fuoo reiterated the procurement process is very important when trying to secure jobs, especially during these tough times businesses need to be well informed.

The SICCI Vice Chairman, Mr Fuoo thanked MoFT for accepting the training invitation.

"We look forward to further training partnership of these kinds from relevant Government divisions," he concluded.



Workshop participants.

Courtesy visit to first Chinese Ambassador

Tuesday 27 October, Honiara – Representatives from SICCI led by Board Chairman Jay Bartlett on Wednesday 21 October paid a courtesy visit to the Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to Solomon Islands, His Excellency (H.E) Li Ming.

“As the peak body presenting private sector in the country the Chamber believes it is important that we maintain meaningful engagement and communication with all our development partners.

“Especially during this time when the impacts of COVID-19 are posing both a health and economic crisis, collaboration is the way to go in balancing risks and opportunities for our country. And this is the basis of the Chamber’s engagement going forward,” a SICCI statement said.

Mr Bartlett congratulates His Excellency Ambassador Li Ming on his appointment as the first Chinese Ambassador to Solomon Islands since the establishment of bilateral ties between the two countries in September 2019.

Accompanying the Chairman during the courtesy call were CEO, Ms Natalina Hong, Vice Chairman, Ricky Fuoo and Board Members Bob Pollard, Qila Tuhanuku, Hilda Lamani and Martin Beattie.



Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), H.E Li Ming and representative of the SICCI Board and CEO. *Photo: SICCI Media.*

SICCI looks forward to a video conference with our counterparts from the Chinese International Chamber of Commerce.

This is a good opportunity to look at how both Chambers can link business to business connections and how to manage these connections.

Ambassador Li Ming acknowledged SICCI for the interest expressed in developing relationships with counterparts from the Chinese International Chamber of

Commerce.

“I look forward to more cooperation and advice from SICCI on how we can further promote our relationship and happy to note that your Chamber is representative to a range of different groups in the private sectors.

“The practical and most important thing to do is find the cooperation and ways to benefit both our peoples,” the Ambassador said.

SICCI/RSIPF Executive Group meeting

SICCI and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) hosted their fourth Executive Group Meeting for 2020 on Thursday 29 October at the Police Headquarters at Rove.

Apart from the usual updates from both the Chamber and RSIPF, discussions also focused on establishing an essential services list for businesses and the process of better managing necessary exemptions for businesses during an event of a lockdown due to the current COVID-19 situation.

Police Commissioner, Mostyn Mangau also provided an update on the Traffic Working Group established under this SICCI/RSIPF Executive Group which focuses on improving and managing traffic issues in Honiara City.

SICCI was also updated on RSIPF’s Crime Prevention Strategy which aims to address what has been identified as



The Police Commissioner (front row left) and representatives from SICCI and RSIPF at the meeting. *PHOTO: SICCI Media.*

the five drivers of demand. (1) alcohol & drug abuse (2) family violence (3) issues affecting youths (4) resources & environment (5) emergency crimes.

Currently there are 60 major crime prevention set ups and 40 zones community set ups in and around the

whole of Honiara City settlements.

YECSI Chairlady, Millicent Barty also had the opportunity to discuss with Police counterparts a proposed social enterprise project been planned for youths in the Burns creek community, east Honiara.



Ronnie Golopitu
Export Industry Development Officer

Coconut & Cocoa IWGs on CEMA's revitalisation

Greetings from the Export Industry Development desk!!

Highlighted in this edition are some of the updates and activities involving my Department in the months leading up to the publication of this Newsletter.

Coconut & Cocoa Industry Working Group (IWGs) Meeting (10/08/2020)

Main Activity: Coconut and Cocoa IWGs/ Partners Consultation with CEMA Technical committee and PIMEU of the OPMC.

Presentation Focus Areas:

- The meeting was to inform Coconut and Cocoa IWGs on the proposed CEMA revitalisation plan to fulfil Government's Priority Policy Objectives in import substitution and strengthening the rural economy particularly to reach out to the majority of farmers in rural settings that cannot access markets.
- How can our industry members be involved with CEMA to achieve positive outcomes?
- Also, to enlighten all members on how best CEMA can facilitate the challenges faced by the industry and what is the activities of CEMA in the short term.

CEMA Key Points:

- New CEMA Board and Management to be effective by the end of 2020 before

a full CEMA report is disseminated for public use and awareness.

- Government want CEMA to reach out to the remote areas to identify gaps and provide support by buying their produces.
- The idea behind CEMA's revitalization is that Government want to see CEMA get back to trading services and support will go as far as reaching vulnerable farmers in the remote areas.
- It was proposed that CEMA will also buy copra and cocoa from farmers that do not have access to financial support from local buyers.
- \$2 million from the Economic Stimulus Package has already been transferred to CEMA. \$1 million is purposely to improve marketing and \$1 million to improve CEMA's Lab and other facilities.
- Government intervention where there is market distortion.

Private Sector Point of view:

- CEMA should concentrate on the regulatory role and not trading.
- If CEMA goes into trading then at least minimise interruption with Private Sector – on cocoa and copra value chain.
- CEMA should focus on other growing export commodities like noni, kava, ginger, cassava, taro, livestock etc. and

leave cocoa/coconut trading to the private sectors.

CEMA & Private Sector Partnership-Policy Frame Work

- Private sector is the main engine on trade, as such, CEMA encourages Private Sector to meet and come up with some detail information to put forward to the Policy Frame Work before it is amended.
- Active traders from the Coconut and Cocoa IWGs held a meeting and put forward some detailed information that will go into the Framework. Areas of concern was how effective the framework would be in safeguarding the private sector.

Background

- The cocoa sector is estimated to support approximately 22% or 20-25,000 rural households in Solomon Islands. Annual exports of 5,000MT of dry cocoa beans³ represents less than 1% of the world's supply.
- The coconut sector supports approximately 44% or 40,000 rural households. Copra, a coconut product, comprises 2.6% of total exports, and while Solomon Islands only hosts around 0.5% of the world's coconut trees it is one of the world's top exporters of copra.



Philip Lilomo
Media & Communications Officer

Hello Members!!

Hope you've enjoyed the September & October edition of our Newsletter so far, which is produced by the Department.

Just wanted to highlight here two events the Department hosted in this reporting period as part of our continuous efforts to strengthen partnerships with the local media and better their understanding of the work SICCI does in representing the private sector.

Business reporting workshop for Media

The Department successfully hosted a one-day Business and Economic Reporting Workshop on Friday 18 September, 2020.

The training workshop targeted young journalists from key media organizations. It is part of the Chamber's strategy to build a critical and meaningful partnership with the mainstream media with the aim to support capacity building of local journalists to report on business and economic development issues.

The workshop covered the basics of business reporting and why Business Journalism is relevant for media professionals, the relevance of economic reporting and the need for high standards.

Chief Economics Statistician from the National Statistics Office (NSO), Mr Andrew Kakate was guest speaker during the workshop who presented on important economic statistics and data sources and its relevance as reliable sources of information for media workers.

SICCI Media & Communications Officer, Mr Philip Lilomo said the Chamber recognizes the value of building the capacity of the country's media workers to report well on



Local Journalists, MASI President, guest speaker from NSO and SICCI Media & Communications Officer who were all present at the workshop.

the business sector.

Especially given the fact the sector affects livelihoods and to understand how the current state of the country's economy can impact important decisions to be made.

"The need for informed business and economic reporting has taken on increasing importance over the years together with changes to the economy and it will become even more important as Solomon Islands along with the rest of the world continue to face the business and economic impact of the current global pandemic," he said.

As such, the workshop also had a session on covering the economic implications of COVID-19 for a local audience.

Mr Lilomo noted that now more than ever, people need objective and accurate information and the role played by the media is more crucial than before.

Information & Networking Session with the Media

The Media & Communication Department on Friday 11 September hosted its annual Information and Networking Session with key media professionals from the local mainstream media, Government and other stakeholders.

SICCI has been hosting Media Information

and Networking Sessions annually since 2016 aimed at bolstering the relationship with local Journalists, Media and Public Relations Officers from Government and Non-government institutions whilst at the same time provide a platform to better understand the Chamber's role in the private sector.

It is also an opportunity to explore how SICCI can effectively communicate to its stakeholders.

SICCI Media and Communications Officer, Mr Philip Lilomo highlighted that an important part of the Chamber is to build critical and meaningful partnerships with other important institutions and stakeholders.

"As part of the media plan – we are always looking at creating relationship and better understand how other stakeholders work – at the same time using the opportunity to inform others of what we do and how we can work together," he said.

The highlight of the evening was a team presentation from SICCI's different departments from the Media and Communications Officer, Advocacy Officer, Membership and Services Officer, Export Industry Development Officer (EIDO) and from the Young Entrepreneurs Council Solomon Islands (YECSI).



Emmanuel Pitakaka
YECSI Coordinator

In October YECSI hosted 15 Ennovation Blo lumi (EBI) participants at the Heritage Park Hote. The participants pitched their business ideas in front of eight judges, marking the end of phase 2 of YECSI's 3-phase innovation program.

Coordinator, Emmanuel Pitakaka said: "It has been 12 weeks of hard work and to get this far since launching on July 20th reflects the commitment, dedication and persistence from Phases 1 and 2."

Mr Pitakaka also expressed his appreciation towards the judges for accepting the invitation to judge at the event.

The concept behind the Pilot Program EBI is asking – how can YECSI's initiatives to address Youth Unemployment be more tangible? The Coordinator believes that EBI is the experimental solution to contribute a formal business into our economy and is grateful that Strongim Bisnis has supported YECSI to do so towards its success.

The EBI program aims to create, facilitate and launch resilient and sustainable businesses in times of uncertainty.

The program in its third month saw 40 participants took part in a 6-week online course as part of its first phase. From the 40, only 21 participants successfully made it into phase 2 whereby they received a live-in experience of the Lean Start-up accelerator training.

Her Excellency New Zealand's High Commissioner, Georgina Roberts, who was also part of the judging panel, thanked the participants for being confident to express themselves. "It was a great experience to witness the passion and drive that each participant displayed. No one can judge your vision and passion; it is up to each and every one of you to make it come true" she said.

Successful EBI Pitching Event hosted



Two participants of the Ennovation Blo lumi (EBI) program.



Her Excellency New Zealand's High Commissioner, Georgina Roberts had the opportunity to meet YECSI members during the event.

From business concepts addressing issues surrounding access to education, filling gaps in the supply/value chain and trade markets, providing employment to Youth to improving healthcare systems, the pitching event from the inaugural cohort of EBI demonstrated the great passion; vision, drive and potential young people have to tackle social and economic issues through the lens of entrepreneurship and innovation.

The winning business idea(s) identified from the Pitching Event will continue on

to Phase 3: the Incubation phase where an incredible start-up package inclusive of funding, coaching and mentorship opportunities will be appropriately awarded to support the growth of these business models in preparation to formally launch.

Mr Pitakaka concluded that while there are lessons to be learnt from the pilot program, YECSI looks forward to implementing and continue develop this program in 2021.

Know Your Board

SICCI Board Members for 2020/2021



CHAIR

Jay Bartlett
Director
Hatanga Ltd



VICE CHAIR

Ricky Fuo'o
General Manager
TGA



Belinda Botha
Owner Operator
Dive Munda



Bob Pollard
Managing Director
Kokonut Pacific Solomon Islands (KPSI)



Craig Gibsone
General Manager
GPPOL



Hilda Lamani
Manager
Star Supplies Company



Daniel Tucker
Country Manager
Kramer Ausenco (SI) Ltd



Frank Wickham
General Manager
NFD



Qila Tuhanuku
Marketing & Corporate Manager
Solomon Breweries Ltd

Meet the SICCI Team



Natalina Hong
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



Shaun Konaga
Administrative Manager &
Assistant Finance Officer



John Ta'amora
Advocacy Officer



Naomi Mara
Membership & Services Officer



Philip Lilomo
Media & Communications Officer



Ronnie Galopitu
Export Industry Development
Officer (EIDO)



Emmanuel Pitakaka
YECSI Coordinator

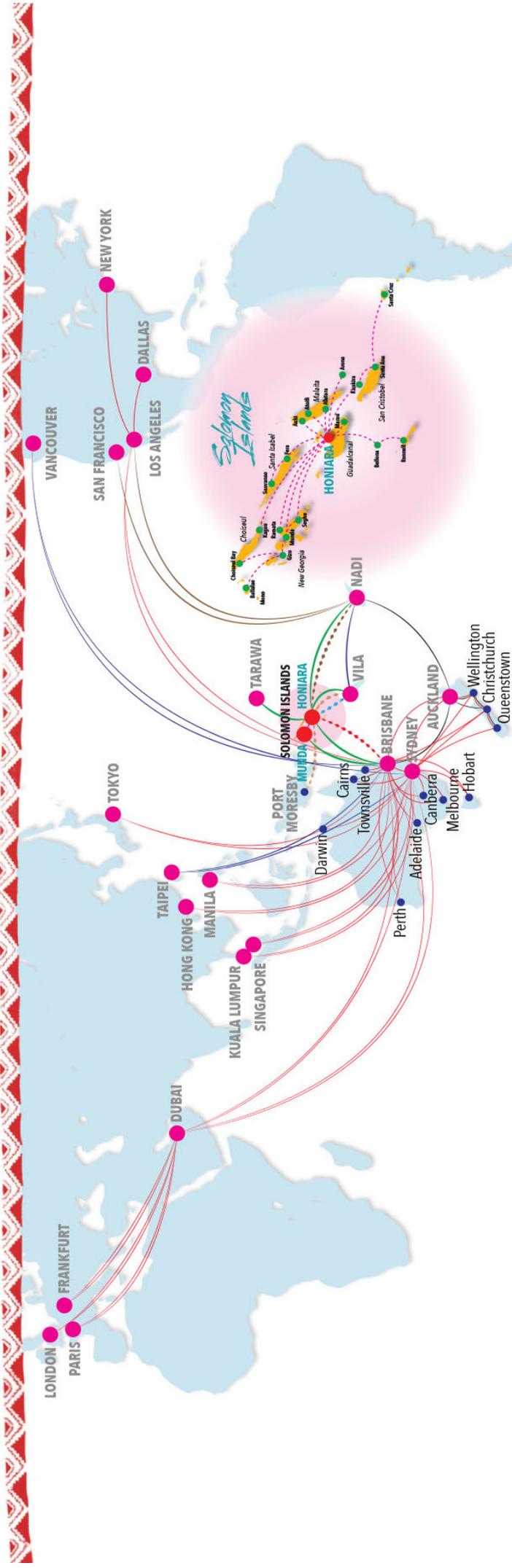


Rosslyn Ramoifua
YECSI Membership & Partnerships
Officer



Chantelle Lincoln
YECSI Organisational
Development Adviser





CONNECTING OUR ISLANDS WITH ASIA AND THE WORLD

Legend

- Codeshare with Qantas
- Qantas Domestic/International Interline
- International Partner Airline
- Interline with Air New Zealand
- Codeshare with Fiji Airlines
- Interline with Fiji Airlines
- Codeshare with Air Niugini
- Domestic island connections
- Fly Solomons International services

Flying to the Solomon Islands is easy with five weekly flights from Brisbane and twice weekly from Nadi. And now we fly direct from Brisbane to Munda in our Western Province – one of the world’s most beautiful dive sites. Dive at Munda or other pristine locations for amazing corals and WWII wrecks. Take a trekking or fishing adventure. Discover our friendly island culture soon. Visit flysolomons.com

A THEME PARK DESIGNED BY NATURE



Solomon Is.