

2003-2017

# Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)



*Understanding the legacy  
and lessons of the  
Regional Assistance  
Mission to Solomon  
Islands (RAMSI)*

High-Level Symposium  
Honiara, Solomon Islands  
28 June 2017

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Front cover image: This design, created by Lawrence Tela (of Apple Signage), was an element of the shirt that was worn by Pacific Leaders during the RAMSI Farewell celebrations in June 2017.

# Objective

Between 2003 and 2017, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) helped Solomon Islands to step away and recover from lawlessness, economic collapse and a government under siege.

RAMSI was a stabilisation and state-building intervention comprised of 15 Pacific nations led and largely financed by Australia. It put an end to a grim humanitarian situation, helped rebuild the nation, and created the conditions for Solomon Islanders to resume control of their country, lives and future.

After a decade of support in partnership with successive Solomon Islands governments, RAMSI bequeathed in 2013 a stable economy and strengthened democratic and government systems.

Four years later, following the limited rearmament of the police, RAMSI transferred the final elements of responsibility for policing and national security to a well-trained police force that was already supporting other police forces in the region.

A High-Level Symposium was held in Honiara days before RAMSI's conclusion to test and understand why Pacific Islands Forum Leaders declared RAMSI to be a 'regional success story' and Forum Foreign Ministers described RAMSI as a 'shining example of Pacific diplomacy and cooperation'.

The Symposium also sought to determine what lessons could be drawn upon if there was ever a need for another regional intervention to stabilise and rebuild a nation.

More than 200 members of the Solomon Islands Government, RAMSI, civil society, churches, academia and the community participated in the symposium. Emeritus Professor Clive Moore was the moderator and rapporteur.

This e-book includes the opening remarks, keynote address, some panellist contributions and the rapporteur's summary of the Symposium's findings. RAMSI thanks the presenters for making their speaking notes available for publication. In some cases, the speaking notes have been edited or converted to prose.

# Symposium Program

## **RAMSI: Understanding its legacy and lessons**

Wednesday 28 June 2017  
Heritage Park Hotel  
Honiara, Solomon Islands

- 0855 Opening prayer
- 0900 **Welcome** by Symposium moderator and rapporteur, Professor Clive Moore
- 0905 **Opening remarks** by RAMSI Special Coordinator Quinton Devlin
- 0915 **Opening remarks** by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Director Sione Tekiteki on behalf of Secretary-General Dame Meg Taylor
- 0925 **Keynote speech** by Prime Minister Hon. Manasseh Sogavare
- 0940 **Group photo**, including participants
- 0950 Morning tea
- 1000 **The collaborative partnership between RAMSI and the Government: how did RAMSI's mandate, decision-making and delivery methods serve Solomon Islands?**
- Sir Allan Kemakeza, Prime Minister to Solomon Islands (2001-06) on the early years, including sovereignty concerns
- Tim George, RAMSI Special Coordinator (2006-09), including on re-energising the partnership and the law and justice program
- Harry Kuma, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Treasury, including on strengthening economic governance and the machinery of government.
- 1100 **Reinstating the rule of law: what worked?**
- Nick Warner, RAMSI Special Coordinator (2003-04), including on a police-led, military-backed stabilisation force
- Sir Paul Tovua, former Peace Monitoring Council Co-chair and National Peace Council Chair, including on a gun-free Solomon Islands
- H.E Lady Joy Kere, former National Peace Council member (2000-04), Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (2006-12), including on community perspectives.

- 1145 **Lessons for future international stabilisation and state-building interventions**
- Hon Milner Tozaka, High Commissioner to Australia (2000-05), Minister of Public Service (2007-10) and Foreign Minister (2014-present)
- James Batley, Australian National University Distinguished Policy Fellow, RAMSI Special Coordinator (2004-06) and Australian High Commissioner to Solomon Islands (1997-99)
- Reverend Philemon Riti, former Secretary-General of the Solomon Islands Christian Association and United Church Moderator, including on community leadership in peacebuilding
- 1245 **Lunch**
- 1340 **Policing assistance and development: outcomes and lessons from the final four years of RAMSI**
- John Tanti, Commander of the RAMSI Participating Police Force, including on the capability development lessons
- Matt Varley, Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), including on the readiness of the RSIPF
- 1420 **RAMSI's legacy: what has the region and Solomon Islands learnt from RAMSI?**
- Ruth Liloqula, Chair of Transparency Solomon Islands and former Secretary to Cabinet (2007-09)
- Sir Albert Palmer, Solomon Islands Chief Justice (2003-present)
- 1510 **Wrap-up** summary by Symposium moderator
- 1525 **Closing remarks** by Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Peter Kenilorea Junior
- 1530 Closing prayer

## Opening remarks



**Quinton Devlin**  
**Special Coordinator**  
**Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon**  
**Islands (RAMSI)**

We are closing the book on an unprecedented regional experiment: one of the largest, longest and most ambitious multilateral security and state-building initiative ever mounted in the Pacific region.

RAMSI was a unique gathering of 15 regional countries, under Australia's leadership, to help a neighbour in need. Never before had the region stepped in on such a scale to rebuild a neighbour so completely.

RAMSI's departure is a momentous occasion and point of transition in the history of Solomon Islands. It is therefore fitting to reflect on what has been achieved, how we achieved it as a region, and what we have learnt from this grand exercise.

For these reasons, RAMSI chose to host this Symposium as one of its final acts. We hope that our region, and potentially other regions, can benefit from a better understanding of the legacy and lessons of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

Many have commented in-depth on the progress of Solomon Islands and the performance of RAMSI, but before this moment, none had the opportunity to look at the complete picture – from start to finish. It is also only now that we can look holistically at the lessons that RAMSI offers to future security cooperation in the Pacific.

In September last year, Pacific Island Forum Leaders declared RAMSI a 'regional success story' and Forum Foreign Ministers characterised the Mission as 'a shining example of Pacific diplomacy and cooperation'. This week, Prime Minister Sogavare likened RAMSI to a 'divine intervention', and yesterday, Members of Parliament were, without fail, very complementary.

I agree. RAMSI has been a success – particularly in terms of its capacity to quickly restore law and order, but also in the much slower and more complex task of resetting the nation's institutions.

There were hiccups along the way and missed opportunities. It took some time for RAMSI to learn how to work with Solomon Islands, and visa versa.

Overall, however, I would argue that RAMSI has helped Solomon Islands to build strong institutional foundations from which it can continue to tackle its development challenges and to write its own history. It also provided the time and space for Solomon Islanders to start the slow processes of healing and nation-building.

Just as importantly, I strongly believe it is time for regional support to Solomon Islands to normalise. The need for an operational 15-nation foreign police force is over. As RAMSI's support to the prisons, courts, parliament and ministries shifted to bilateral donors in 2013, so it is time for the RSIPF to stand tall and maintain law and order with the ongoing help of bilateral donors.

RAMSI has been solely a police assistance mission over the last four years. We have watched with pride the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force mature into a professional and disciplined police force that has the skills, training and infrastructure to address the security challenges likely to face this country and to resume full responsibility for policing and national security.

After 14 years of training from RAMSI, the RSIPF is a very capable force that deserves the trust of the people they serve. It is ready.

Some people have asked me how can a farewell be a celebration? I respond that we are celebrating RAMSI's completion of its mandate, but more importantly, that we are celebrating the enormous progress made by Solomon Islands that allows things to return to normal

RAMSI's departure is a good news story. It is a vote of confidence by the Pacific region in Solomon Islands. It draws a line under the Tensions. It also underlines that Solomon Islands is open for business, investment and tourism.

Of course, the peace building process and the nation-building process do not end when RAMSI leaves. There is more work to be done, but now Solomon Islands has the systems and tools that it needs to continue the process.

*Mr Quinton Devlin was the seventh and final RAMSI Special Coordinator. The Special Coordinator, and his office, was responsible for the overall policy coordination, oversight and strategic direction of all aspects of RAMSI. Mr Devlin is a career officer with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with extensive experience in international affairs and security issues.*



**Sione Tekiteki**  
**Director Political Governance and Security**  
**Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat**  
— **for Secretary-General Dame Meg Taylor**

Pacific regionalism is defined by our common sense of identity and purpose and a desire to work together to overcome our common constraints and build the safe, prosperous and inclusive communities and nations.

The concept of “*helpem fren*” (help a friend) exists across our communities. It is an innate feeling of relationship and responsibility – a sense of belonging – that makes us unique as a region, and as “Pacific people”.

When facing an issue that is simply too big to be dealt alone, we know that we can rely on our neighbours for help. This is the essence of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which comes to an official end very shortly, is a perfect example of the benefit of regionalism, embodying more than a decade of partnership and cooperation amongst the members of the Pacific Islands Forum in the true Pacific spirit of “*helpem fren*”.

A defining element of RAMSI has been its Pacific regional character.

RAMSI was mobilised under the *Biketawa Declaration* – a regional instrument endorsed by Forum Leaders that enables and sanctions regional responses. And of course, Forum countries contributed openly and generously once the Mission was established.

RAMSI has been, without a doubt, a true regional exercise in solidarity and a shining example of Pacific cooperation. We must acknowledge the people of Solomon Islands themselves for their widespread support for RAMSI, which was essential for the successful operation of the mission.

The effectiveness of any armed intervention, particularly in a civilian landscape, relies heavily on the conduct of its personnel. We must, as a region, thank and acknowledge the thousands of women and men from across this region who served under RAMSI over the years, and whose service personified and honoured the commitment made to the Solomon Islands by all Forum countries under the *Biketawa Declaration*. The particularly regional dimension of this support is without doubt one of the contributing factors to its success.

The two broad elements of RAMSI – the security component and the civilian component – worked together toward RAMSI’s objective of stabilising Solomon Islands and rebuilding the essential machinery of government.

We applaud the early achievements of RAMSI, which enabled the successive reforms and programmes: the swift and peaceful restoration of law and order; recovery and destruction of the bulk of illegal weapons; surrender of militants; and the arrest and prosecution of human rights offenders.

These achievements not only restored stability, but also contributed toward restoring a sense of peace amongst Solomon Islanders.

The early accomplishments of RAMSI were closely followed by significant reforms under the three pillars of economic reform, law and justice, and machinery of government, resulting in the gradual shift in focus from its security component to the civilian component.

The subsequent recovery journey of Solomon Islands has included the successful hosting of several large and important events in the last few years, including the:

- highly successful Pacific Arts Festival in 2012;
- visit by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in 2012;
- visit by United States Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014;
- Melanesian Spearhead Group Summits in 2015 and 2016; and
- conduct of the 2006, 2010 and 2014 national elections.

These are significant achievements by any standard, but more so for a country that only fourteen years ago was faced by considerable challenges to the effective functioning of government as well as the overall law and order situation.

Although it was the embodiment of Pacific solidarity and cooperation, it is important to remember that RAMSI also required considerable resourcing: Australia and New Zealand stepped forward with both financial and personnel contributions, complemented by Pacific nations' personnel.

Solomon Islands as a nation must be acknowledged for hosting RAMSI for the last fourteen years. Hosting a large foreign mission for an extended period is not without challenges, and we commend and thank the people of this nation for the hospitality and continued support for the Mission over the years.

Moving ahead, the Solomon Islands will continue to require assistance and we are very pleased that the United Nations through the Peacebuilding Commission, has been on hand to help with addressing some of the challenges that await down the road.

We also note that Solomon Islands' enduring partners such as Australia will remain closely engaged, and of course, the Pacific Islands Forum more broadly, as always, stands by to assist where needed.

The Forum’s Secretary-General, Dame Meg Taylor, respectfully encourages the Solomon Islands Government and its people to make the most of “regionalism” – to capitalise on its membership of the Pacific Islands Forum and the broader regional architecture, to address those tangible and actual development challenges that Solomon Islands face, but which are also common to the region as a whole.

RAMSI has been a clear demonstration that together, our “Blue Continent” has the capacity to consider and address socio-economic and cultural issues at national and regional level. RAMSI is Pacific regionalism manifested. We are a region where the concept of “*helpem fren*” is core to our existence, and tugs at our communal heartstrings and sense of belonging.

At its heart RAMSI is about people and we again acknowledge and thank the resilient people of the Solomon Islands for the lessons RAMSI has given us. Your resilience, diversity, and strength will serve you in good stead.

Quoting the Secretary-General:

“Let us continue to navigate the global space, with the confidence of peoples – who still have the gift of placing people in the centre of their development.”

This is what defines, and continues to motivate us as “Pacific people”.

|| *Mr Sione Tekiteki is the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat’s Director for Political Governance and Security.*

## Keynote address



**Honourable Manasseh Sogavare MP**  
**Prime Minister**  
**Solomon Islands**

Topping the agenda of this Symposium is a session that analyses RAMSI's decision-making and delivery methods, and how these served Solomon Islands. This is a very relevant topic, and the answer depends very much on how RAMSI is viewed.

The interesting thing is that the views held by RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government initially differed but eventually came together.

We need to accept that RAMSI was an interventionist force designed to address a given situation in Solomon Islands. There was a complete breakdown of law and order. The Government was under siege and unable to take full control of the running of the affairs of the nation.

You had to be Prime Minister of the country during this dark period of our history, as I was, to appreciate how it felt to be in Government. We did not enjoy it.

This is made worse by the perception entertained in many quarters, including in academia, that what happened in Solomon Islands at that time may have been designed by some Members of Parliament to take over government.

Personally, I am insulted by this view because it questions my integrity as a person and a leader who happened to find myself in a leadership position during that time. I was a very easy target because I was the Prime Minister of the country at that time and all arrows were pointing at me. I came out very clean amidst all the unfounded allegations. This makes some of the academic work out of date and requiring review. Our future generations should be fed the right information about what happened during that period of our history.

Whether it is fair to say that the situation was designed by other Members of Parliament remains to be seen and is the subject of ongoing academic debate.

There may have been some element of that at play. If there was, it does not sit well with the various analyses of the underlying courses of the Ethnic Tension.

Getting back to the point, the rule of the jungle reigned in Solomon Islands. RAMSI's militaristic approach was therefore fully justified.

RAMSI also faced a situation where the real power to run the Government of Solomon Islands did not rest with the elected government. The power to implement the approved budget, for example, was controlled elsewhere.

The first task of the Mission was to wrestle that power from the hands of the people who should not have had it. RAMSI did exactly that – stepping on a lot of toes in the process – including my toes.

The ideal of a partnership with Solomon Islands was very blurry in the beginning, especially during the initial phase to restore civil order and stabilise government finances. Yes, there was a partnership with the 15 member-countries, but Solomon Islands was treated primarily as the beneficiary of the intervention. It therefore had very little say in the way things were happening in those days.

Did this approach serve the needs of Solomon Islands during that time? I would answer that question in the affirmative. The question, however, as to whether this approach would have evolved over time without the protests of the Solomon Islands Government is unclear.

There was much resentment within the Solomon Islands Government that Solomon Islands was not being treated as an important partner. The Government was struggling to be in control of things. Indeed, the differences in approaches and views led to a near collapse of Solomon Islands' relationship with Australia and, to a certain extent, New Zealand.

Looking back, after 14 years, we can appreciate the reason why RAMSI's decision-making processes were designed that way. The power to run the affairs of the nation was not in the hands of the elected government. The Mission therefore did not have to negotiate with the elected government of Solomon Islands, although, in theory, it should have. There would have been no other way. What happened at that time was the right thing to do.

The spirit of partnership with the Solomon Islands Government was more visible during the longer-term economic recovery and rebuilding of the 'machinery of government' phases of the intervention. The intervention had no choice but to do that in compliance with Solomon Islands' laws. This was

in keeping with RAMSI's mandate, and of course, securing the cooperation of the Government was important to achieving the desired results.

Again, the question is whether this approach served the needs of Solomon Islands? Fourteen years down, we can now comfortably say "yes", with a big "thank you".

There are a number of outstanding issues still to be addressed to complete the pillars of effective governance and nation-building. We are still struggling to establish a regime to address corruption and an election system that will achieve a result that is considered inclusive and satisfies the basic principles of democracy. We must also design and implement: a land reform program that is sensitive to the intricacies of our customary land tenure system; an investment attraction strategy that will lead to genuine and high-quality investors targeting the nation's areas of strength; and, a government system that will guarantee stability and fair distribution of the country's wealth.

It is for this reason that some people believe that an Iraq style of intervention would have been the more appropriate model for Solomon Islands, where the country is totally ceded for a period [to a provincial authority] and returned after all the appropriate laws and systems are established. We do not have the benefit of hindsight and, even if we did, going down that path may have created more problems for us.

The ball is now in our court. We must establish these important institutions. Thankfully, our development partners are willing to work with us on these issues.

There is also a regional perspective to the partnership with RAMSI. The genesis of RAMSI is the *Biketawa Declaration*, which is a framework for regional cooperation on security. When I reflect back, I realise the truth of the poetic line that 'no man is an island' even though this was a very challenging proposition for some of us in the beginning.

The region's geo-political landscape means that countries and territories in the Pacific region will, and must always, work together for the common good and for the security and safety of the region. The spirit of 'regional cooperation', which we commit ourselves to, also demands that we do not make national decisions that make some members of the region uncomfortable. We have that obligation to each other.

Coming back to the point, the success of RAMSI was the culmination of a strong partnership between the 15 participating countries and the Solomon

Islands Government and its people. The partnership was based on mutual trust and confidence that was built over time.

Yes, the leadership of Solomon Islands Government was slow to understand why things happened the way they did, but we can now put that behind us and enjoy a Solomon Islands that is free from the reign of terror.

Prior to the arrival of RAMSI, this nation was silent. Neither sounds of laughter nor whispers could be heard from our homes. Fear, threats, intimidation, confusion and pessimism blanketed our homes. Businesses closed their doors. Donors shied away.

When RAMSI arrived in July 2003, people began to look-out from their windows and started walking freely once more in the streets. The economy began to gain momentum, and schools and hospitals began functioning again. This sad episode of our history only confirms that conflict has no place in our society.

Are there lessons to be learnt from our experience with RAMSI for future stabilisation and state building interventions? Yes! Heaps!

Top amongst them is that strength of a RAMSI-style intervention lies in the partnership approach of the Mission. RAMSI was never designed to be an occupying force, like the intervention in Iraq, and it kept to that commitment. Of course, this was not clearly understood in the early days of the Mission but it became clearer during the course of the intervention.

Much of the misunderstanding could have been avoided if the nature of the intervention was made clearer to Leaders earlier. Understandably, this was not helped by the lack of trust in Solomon Islands leaders, which was based on the belief that the Ethnic Tension was engineered by Leaders to benefit themselves. Looking back, that perception and argument is becoming very weak.

The truth of the matter is, whether or not politicians were involved, the country was ripe for anarchy and revolt because of the perception that the national government was only interested in centralising power and ignoring the provincial governments. This argument has weight because since its creation in the early 1980s, the provincial government system had not been allowed to function as it should. The process of devolution came to a grinding halt. The central governments took more control of how national wealth should be distributed. Additionally, where powers were devolved, it was not accompanied with the appropriate logistics, financial resources and infrastructure.

That is a recipe for revolution, especially when there were already signs of dissatisfaction in certain provinces from the very beginning of the making of this nation.

That aside, the point to make is the RAMSI-style intervention was the right model to address the situation in which Solomon Islands found itself and it is a model that can be promoted to the international community.

Yes, there were a lot of rough edges to smooth in the beginning, but when ordinary Solomon Islanders and leadership at all levels appreciated why it was here, their love for RAMSI grew so that it become a household name.

The real fear about any intervention – whether it be the RAMSI-style or the Iraqi-style – is the danger that once it gains the support and confidence of the people it keeps it and leaves behind a vacuum when it leaves. This was the real fear of politician in the early periods of the intervention. It went to the heart of the situation created by the Tension – the loss of all trust and confidence in the Police Force and, by extension, the Government

That fear was proven to be misplaced. As it turned out, RAMSI was very careful in the way it handled that sensitive concern – whether by default or design is not clear, and it does not matter now.

RAMSI ensured that the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) regained the confidence of the people it served. This was crucial because the Force had betrayed the trust that our people had bestowed in them. Moreover, when they saw that the Government had lost control of the Force, it removed their confidence in the Government.

The RAMSI model did not leave any stones unturned in this matter. The people's confidence has returned to the Government under a transition program that commenced five years ago. We can now stand together – both the people and government of Solomon Islands – to farewell RAMSI in a spirit that is full of hope and confidence in our own ability to take the country forward.

Our challenge today, of course, is to maintain the people's trust in the police and the government. That is a solemn duty that must not be taken lightly.

We are putting the confidence of the people at great risk, however, when Members of Parliament: threaten to walk away from the Government because they do not want to support the anti-corruption legislation; distribute their

constituency development funds unfairly; or benefit unfairly from the wealth of the country,

These kinds of actions encourage Solomon Islanders to ask whether we are ready, but I want to tell the gathering today that the Government and RSIPF are ready to take responsibility after RAMSI leaves.

The RSIPF is a new-look force that is working to deliver the best service possible to our people. I am optimistic about the RSIPF and our nation-building efforts.

In this regard, I wish to mention that post-RAMSI security arrangements are being prepared between Solomon Islands and Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in terms of police cooperation, as well as additional cooperation between Solomon Islands and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) members, and Solomon Islands and other Pacific Islands Forum members. These frameworks and mechanisms are important for our common purpose of ensuring peace and security exist in our region.

This is an ending not seen elsewhere in the world, not even in Iraq. If there were jubilations in Iraq at the withdrawal of the intervention it was in the spirit of "Get the hell out here". Not in Solomon Islands. We farewell RAMSI in the spirit of shared hope and satisfaction for work well done.

Finally, let's also reflect on the costs that crisis or war can inflict on a society. I say this because both crises and resolving crises have huge costs. It cost Australian and New Zealand taxpayers nearly AUD 3 billion to return this country to normalcy. That is a serious food for thought. The ethnic crisis inflicted wounds and a huge cost to Solomon Islands, but RAMSI was also very costly. Crises have no place in our society and we must resolve to avoid crises because they redirect financial, human and capital resources that can be better used to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Honourable Manasseh Sogavare MP is the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands and served previously as Prime Minister in 2006- 2007 and 2000-2001. He has extensive parliamentary and ministerial experience, including as Minister for Finance and Treasury (1997-1998), Minister for Commerce, Industries and Employment (2006) and Leader of the Opposition (2000, 2007-2010). Prior to entering Parliament, Hon Sogavare was Permanent Secretary, Ministry and Finance and Commissioner of Inland Revenue. He was also Director of Central Bank of Solomon Islands, Chairman of Solomon Islands National Provident Fund and a Magistrate.*

## The Collaborative Partnership

*Symposium topic:* The collaborative partnership between RAMSI and the Government: how did RAMSI's mandate, decision-making and delivery methods serve Solomon Islands, focusing on:

- the early years, including sovereignty concerns;
- re-energising the partnership and the law and justice program; and
- strengthening economic governance and the machinery of government.



**Sir Allan Kemakeza**  
**Former Prime Minister of Solomon Islands**  
**(2001-2006)**  
**Solomon Islands**

When invited to reflect on the collaborative partnership between RAMSI and the Government, the first thought that came to mind was: no regrets.

As a long-serving Member of Parliament and former Prime Minister, you become very used to people disagreeing with you. People not liking you or the decisions you make. You get used to having to make very difficult decisions that affect people's lives, and decisions that will be judged publicly.

As the Prime Minister in 2003 responsible for initiating RAMSI, I have absolutely no regrets. It was absolutely the right decision for Solomon Islands and it has been a hugely positive contribution to our country.

Many will remember the situation before RAMSI. It is something we should never forget and always remain vigilant to avoid.

We were basically in a lawless state, with armed criminal militia creating a feeling of fear throughout all layers of the community and impacting our day-to-day lives. The impact on the economy and the Government was crippling. We could not continue like that. Something had to change or there was no future for our country.

The period April to June 2003 was hectic and filled with uncertainty and unease. This was the birth period of RAMSI, following my initial outreach to Prime Minister John Howard. We were embarking on a unique and complex journey that had not been undertaken before. A journey that we really didn't know how it would work, or even really where to start.

As the elected leader of an independent nation, I had to formally ask for urgent assistance from another country, and then extend that request to all our Pacific neighbours.

Words such as embarrassing, shameful and of course, sovereignty, were constantly thrown at me. Yes, all those same thoughts crossed my mind as a Solomon Islander, but, as the Prime Minister, the decision was much clearer. There was no shame or embarrassment. What good is sovereignty if your people are suffering and there is little hope for improvement?

The decision to embark on RAMSI was not taken lightly and it was definitely not our first attempt at restoring peace.

The critics forget the long list of so-called Peace Accords in the years before RAMSI. There was the Honiara Peace Accord in 1999, Panatina Agreement, Marau Peace Agreement, Auki Communique, Buala Communique and the admirable attempt by our women leaders with the Women's Peace Communique.

We reached a breakthrough with the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) in October 2000. Under the TPA, we had the unarmed Australian and New Zealand Peace Monitoring Council oversee a 30-day gun amnesty.

The result? A lot of guns collected but not many from the militiamen. Within a year, the situation was worse than ever. The power of the gun was enjoyed too much by the militia and stronger action was needed.

It became clear to me that when the carrot does not work, a stick is needed. All our talk and efforts with peace-keepers had been a tasty carrot, but still just a carrot. For the militia, their gun was better than the carrot.

RAMSI definitely looked like a very large stick compared to all the previous carrots. And RAMSI was a stick. It was not a case of all guns blasting. RAMSI was controlled and professional. Indeed, there were no fatalities during the disarmament period. The stick worked.

Let me return to the question of sovereignty. Personally, I hold Solomon Islands sovereignty of the utmost importance. It is fundamental to our status as an independent nation. But sovereignty is not absolute. It is not black and white.

Where does RAMSI fit in that? Well, it is in the shades of grey along the sovereignty plane. I have no problem with that. I must also stress that RAMSI was invited. It was not some sort of invasion against our sovereign rights. We are a small country with limited economic resources and we were suffering a crisis that impacted every element of our day to day lives. A crisis far greater that we could overcome by ourselves.

Thankfully, Australia, New Zealand and our Pacific Islands friends equalled our resolve to look beyond labels, like sovereignty. So RAMSI was born: a unique and complex mission involving an unheard of combination of joint regional participation.

To be totally open and honest, those early days of RAMSI were incredibly difficult. The speed of the initial influx of police and military personnel, establishment of RAMSI's authority and the sheer physical logistics was equally inspiring and intimidating.

Every day there were new challenges and changes happening at a pace that we were definitely not used to. In the first 100 days of RAMSI, we saw a firearm amnesty, Harold Keke's surrender, the Eagle Force surrender weapons, 340 arrests, and the Central Prison re-opened, as well as the stabilisation of Government finances and restoring the public sector payroll.

The behind-the-scenes cooperation and collaboration between RAMSI and the Government that enabled that immediate impact was admirable. It was also vitally important to very quickly establish RAMSI as a mission of action that was seeking results, not just more talk.

The August 2003 peace rally through the streets of Honiara is an event that stands out for me as a turning point for the relationship between RAMSI and Solomon Islanders. I don't mean the Government, but the people.

Concerns about loss of sovereignty were put to the side once people witnessed RAMSI at work. By that I don't just mean the quick success in disarmament but also the humanity shown by RAMSI personnel. On the streets, RAMSI became known as Operation *Helpem Fren*, and this gave a human face to what up until then many saw as just a Government exercise.

It would be wrong of me to mention the start of RAMSI or the collaborative partnership without highlighting the contribution of two individuals: Nick Warner, the first RAMSI Special Coordinator, and Commander Ben McDevitt. In those early days I spent more time with these two men than my only family. The level of commitment and professionalism they displayed was extraordinary. I always had to remember they were guests in my country as I could not have imagined any native-born Solomon Islander being more dedicated toward improving our nation than Nick.

RAMSI's has been analysed in Australia in detail, almost as an instruction manual for future regional missions. There will always be many points of view on such a complex mission. From my personal point of view, there are a few key lessons.

Firstly, when in trouble, you have to ask for help. I am proud to have approached Prime Minister Howard regardless of any sovereignty concerns. That was the first step and, without it, RAMSI would not have happened.

Secondly, regional or multi-national co-operation is essential. If RAMSI had been an Australia-only mission, it would not have received the same level of acceptance either in Solomon Islands or internationally, and that would ultimately have impacted its ability to be effective.

I would like to recognise the role of the Pacific Islands Forum and its foresight in the *Biketawa Declaration* that allowed the seamless regional mission. The late Greg Urwin, Secretary of the Pacific Islands Forum deserves much credit for that.

Thirdly, ensure the leadership team can work together or the mission will be doomed. I have mentioned Nick Warner and Ben McDevitt on the RAMSI side. On the Government side, I also had an excellent team that included Hon Milner Tozaka, who was our High Commissioner to Australia at the time. I must also after many years finally publicly acknowledge the role of Robert Goh. Robert, the unpaid Special Adviser to the Prime Minister at the time. He was instrumental at all stages – from the initial idea to the detailed planning. We were very fortunate that our teams managed to collaborate without the interference of egos or politics.

Fourthly, longevity is important. RAMSI has been criticised for running for too long. Yes, it has been over a decade but it is only with the certainty that longevity provides that lasting change can be implemented. There were times of stress in the relationship between RAMSI and the Government, which if left to an annual renewal could quite easily have seen a much earlier RAMSI exit and the failure of many of the longer-term initiatives.

Finally, there has to be a managed exit. While I have said longevity is important, both sides also need to know it is not forever. If RAMSI was staying forever, those calls of sovereignty would be louder than ever — and rightly so. As the saying goes, all good things must come to an end.

*Sir Allan Kemakeza was Prime Minister of Solomon Islands between 2001-2006. Prior to this, he served as Minister of Police and Justice and Minister of Housing and Government Services (1989-1993), Minister of Forest, Environment and Conservation (1996-97) and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (2000). Sir Kemakeza was appointed Speaker of National Parliament between 2010-2014. Before entering Parliament, Sir Allan was an Assistant Police Commissioner. He is currently Chairman of the Savo House of Chiefs and Savo Geothermal Project.*



**Tim George**  
**Former RAMSI Special Coordinator (2006-2009)**

My remarks focus on my personal impressions during my time with RAMSI from late 2006 to early 2009. That period saw a number of ups and downs, and volatility in RAMSI's partnership with the Solomon Islands Government. This was against a backdrop of continuing strong support for the Mission by most Solomon Islanders.

There were also important gains in a number of areas of RAMSI's work program, continuing strong support and greater oversight on the part of the Pacific Islands Forum and its members, and new arrangements to improve the working partnership between RAMSI and the Government.

RAMSI was a work in progress, and we needed to continually learn and seek ways to adapt and to improve. It is never easy for a country to co-exist with a foreign mission, but I was always struck by the willingness of ordinary Solomon Islanders to accept the presence of RAMSI's armed police, military and civilians – sometimes in line positions – if it meant an end to violence, the restoration of normal living for individuals and families, and the revival of government services.

On the other hand, and not surprisingly given inevitable sovereignty sensitivities, this acceptance was not always the case at the political level. For a time, RAMSI's legitimacy and role were questioned by a number in government. At that point RAMSI found it difficult to engage in the regular formal and informal dialogue essential to the functioning of a healthy partnership, and on occasions, misconceptions about RAMSI and the behaviour of its personnel were aired. There were misunderstandings on both sides.

This period, now well in the past, highlighted the need for a closer, more effective partnership between the Government and RAMSI. In due course, important steps were taken in this direction, with the appointment by the Government of a Special Envoy for RAMSI, the development of the keynote Partnership Framework to guide future work and align goals more effectively, and more regular meetings between the RAMSI Special Coordinator and the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The development of personal relations as always was important. I recall with great appreciation being invited to join Prime Minister Sogavare on his tour by patrol boat to remote areas devastated by the tragic earthquake and tsunami of 2007. Over several days we were able to discuss a wide range of subjects in depth, and this was an invaluable experience for me in gaining greater understanding of the Prime Minister's perspectives.

RAMSI developed a comprehensive and well-received community outreach program to engage more closely with Solomon Islanders and get their views, and to ensure that the mission and its mandate were well understood. Often that focused on what RAMSI could do, but on occasions, with expectations high, it was a case of explaining what RAMSI could not. At the same time RAMSI developed an independent performance review process, to evaluate progress and identify shortcomings.

Throughout that period, and more generally, the role of the Pacific Islands Forum and its consistent support for RAMSI, was key. Forum reviews of RAMSI paved the way for the establishment of the officials-level Enhanced Consultative Mechanism meetings and the appointment of a Forum Representative to RAMSI, based in Honiara, who among other duties participated with the Solomon Islands Envoy to RAMSI and the Special Coordinator in the so-called Triumvirate, which provided a valuable coordination mechanism behind the scenes). In 2008, the Foreign Ministerial Standing Committee on RAMSI, which reported to Forum Leaders, was also established.

These activities complemented the first-class contribution members of Pacific Island countries were making on the ground in their various capacities in the RAMSI mission, which contributed greatly to the strong regional sense of solidarity with RAMSI.

One of my stand-out memories is of a visit that our excellent RAMSI Assistant Special Coordinator, Masi Lomaloma, and I made to Papua New Guinea in 2007, when the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and the military and police commanders, all spoke with pride of Papua New Guinea's involvement in the Mission.

On regional matters, I make particular mention of New Zealand, not just for the political and other support it has given to RAMSI, but for the quality of the Deputy Special Coordinators and other personnel appointed to the Mission, who have played an invaluable role.

At working level, the partnership between RAMSI and Solomon Islanders generally continued to work well, despite the vagaries at a higher level. Progress continued to be made across all sectors covered by the Mission's mandate.

The policing sector consistently was a major focus of RAMSI's work, given that the police force had been a big part of the problem during the Tensions era, and a major re-build of the force was necessary.

The civil disturbances of April 2006 underlined the nature of the challenge. Lessons learned from that experience paved the way later for substantial progress in capacity building and training, including: the development of the Police Academy; close collaboration between RAMSI and the RSIPF in developing blueprints for the remarkable achievements now evident in the

police sector; and major steps taken in upgrading infrastructure, including police housing, boats and other essential infrastructure in the geographically challenging environment of Solomon Islands.

In the law and justice sector, clearing the daunting backlog of Tensions trials and rejuvenating the courts and wider justice system presented major challenges. Great strides were taken by RAMSI and Solomon Islander counterparts, with the Chief Justice playing a crucial role.

Meanwhile progress in the Prisons Service was very good, with capacity building, major infrastructure development and new legislation in 2007 allowing prisons to shift from being places of punishment to places of rehabilitation. The outcome is a modern correctional system, which is a leader in the region.

More generally on RAMSI, like any intervention mission, the qualities and professionalism of its members have always been crucial, both for the effectiveness of the mission in carrying out its work, and for its acceptance within the Solomon Islands. Overall, we were fortunate in this regard.

The best personnel were those who strived hard to establish close, collaborative relationships with their Solomon Islands counterparts. A number went well beyond the call of duty in supporting community endeavours, such as charities, sports, and other causes. Our then PPF Commander, Denis McDermott, was an excellent example.

Standards of personal and ethical conduct overall were high, and the rare cases of misconduct were dealt with promptly and firmly. Immunities, necessary for the effective running of a foreign mission like RAMSI, were not abused. Pre-posting training, including in Pijin language and familiarisation with local culture, was substantially improved as the mission became more established, enabling personnel to adapt better and work more effectively.

It will not be possible to make a final judgement on RAMSI for some years, when the sustainability of the work done by the Mission can be better assessed. But I believe that, as RAMSI comes to an end, the Solomon Islands can have a bright future.

It was a great privilege for me to work with Prime Ministers Sogavare and Sikua, their Cabinet colleagues and other members of Parliament, and countless other officials and members of the Solomon Islands community. Their hard work, tolerance, collaboration and friendship were remarkable.

*Mr Tim George served as RAMSI Special Coordinator between 2006-2009 and most recently as Australia's Ambassador to Mexico (2012-2015). He has also served as Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan (2009-2012) and its Ambassador to Israel (2003-2006) and Spain (2000-2003).*



**Harry Kuma**  
**Permanent Secretary**  
**Ministry of Finance and Treasury**

I intend to address the question from the perspective of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MOFT), and discuss RAMSI's support to MOFT under its economic governance and machinery of government pillars across three different periods.

From 2000 to 2003, the period before RAMSI intervened, there was a major law and order problem. Fear and insecurity were the dominant moods in Honiara. Government machinery and the economy was deteriorating and in a risky fragile situation. The administrative apparatus and processes were weak and barely working. Public funds and authority were distorted. Payment and public service salary were in arrears. Public debt was at an unsustainable level. Business that were supposed to pay needed tax revenue were closed.

In sum, the state was virtually incapable of protecting itself and its own systems in this period.

When the RAMSI planes, warships, police and patrolling soldiers arrived at the end of July 2003, Honiara gave a great sigh of relief. Ministry of Finance workers returned to work, traumatised but without fear of being harassed and threatened. They found a weakened Ministry. There were, for example, only two staff in the Budget area, one in Internal Audit, and a handful in Treasury. There was no Economic Reform Unit, Debt Management Unit or Financial Economic Development Unit. The Office of the Auditor-General was only staffed by two officers.

Between 2003 and 2013, RAMSI's supported economic governance and re-establishing and re-setting the machinery of government. Under RAMSI's economic governance program, RAMSI supported the Ministry of Finance and Treasury in the following ways:

- a team of civilians from Australia's Treasury and Ministry of Finance arrived by October 2003 as advisors and to fill in-line positions in the areas responsible for Budget, Treasury, Internal Audit, and Debt Management to stabilise the Solomon Islands Government's (SIG's) fiscal position;
- their task involved addressing the back log of claims, restoring payment processes, slowly resuscitating the Financial Instructions, building the process for developing affordable budget, addressing public debt and restoring relations with donor and development partners;
- essentially, by engaging in these areas, a core element of economic governance began to be restored, and better financial management practices began under the relevant Acts;

- while carrying out these tasks, consultation mechanisms with other Ministries and stakeholders organisations were also mended or built;
- the 2004 annual appropriation was the first Budget that was developed with the assistance of RAMSI officials in MOFT. The total government expenditure prior to that was around SBD \$250 million with Government funding the recurrent budget and donors funding the development budget;
- later on, in 2004, RAMSI team in MOFT expanded to establish the Economic Reform Unit, Debt Management Unit, and support the Internal Revenue Division (IRD) and Customs & Excise division;
- mobilisation of domestic tax and compliance efforts in both IRD and Customs were strengthened. As a result, the government began to realise further growth in revenue, and in Gross Domestic Product;
- RAMSI fostered business confidence. The resumption of the palm oil industry by Guadalcanal Province Palm Oil Limited (GPPOL) was a major achievement. It helped restore investor confidence and build a path for the growth of the economy and government revenue;
- at the same time, MOFT, through the support of RAMSI, began to reform State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and liquidated loss-making SOEs (e.g. SI Printers, LDA, Sasape Marine) and strengthened those that delivered important and essential services (e.g. SIEA, SIWA, SIPA, CEMA, SPC, SIBC and ICSI); and
- RAMSI advisors and external consultants supported private sector development through the enactment of the *Foreign Investment Act*, *Company Act*, and the opening the telecommunication industry to competition.

Under the Machinery of Government Program, RAMSI supported the Solomon Islands Government to strengthen a weak administration and confront improper behaviour in public services.

In addition to supporting accountability institutions, the justice sector and public service, the Program supported MOFT's Financial and Economic Strengthening Program (FEMSP) from 2010. The following should be noted about the FEMSP:

- The SIG-RAMSI partnership targets were to:
  - i. improve standards of living and economic opportunity for all Solomon Islanders;
  - ii. stabilise and sustain the financial position of SIG over the longer term; and
  - iii. increase the capacity and capability of MoFT to provide quality advice to Government on economic and public financial management.

- The objectives were that:
  - i. MoFT develops and implements effective and efficient fiscal and economic policy;
  - ii. public economic and financial management has fiscal discipline, allocates resources strategically and spends with technical efficiency;
  - iii. line entities' budget management processes, systems and performance are improved; and
  - iv. MoFT stewards reform and galvanises a staff focus on quality.
- This translated into 11 RAMSI-supported sub-programs focused on:
  - v. Organisational Development and supporting leadership, management and building a more capable MoFT;
  - vi. Corporate Services and helping MoFT to efficiently and effectively undertake its business;
  - vii. Budget, so that fiscal policy and budget outcomes across SIG improved and benefited the people of Solomon Islands;
  - viii. Treasury, making budget execution, financial management and legislative framework more efficient and effective so the use of public resources is improved. This work culminated in the enactment of the *Public Finance Management Act* in 2014;
  - ix. Economic Policy, to improve economic and fiscal policy;
  - x. Debt Management, so that SIG manages its debt appropriately, thus enhancing fiscal stability;
  - xi. Strengthened Revenue Generation, through better revenue collection coupled with efficient and fair tax reforms;
  - xii. Internal Audit, so that SIG internal audit and control processes were improved;
  - xiii. National Statistics, to advance the quality of national economic and social statistics to enhance economic policymaking;
  - xiv. Border Protection, to improve revenue collection and protect Solomon Islands from threats to health, safety, the environment and domestic industries; and
  - xv. Program Management, to ensure Program implementation and integration with MoFT systems.

Looking ahead, from today onwards, I am absolutely convinced and believe that RAMSI has delivered its mandate within the timeframe it set for itself.

Law and order has been restored and the machineries of government were protected from total collapse. Economic governance, in particular better management of public finance and mobilisation of domestic tax revenue has been enhanced substantially.

RAMSI could only do so much.

There is much more for us to ensure to raise better economic governance and protect public resources from fraud, inappropriate behaviour and distortions. I believe that the destiny of this country and its children, the future development of government machinery that delivers sound economic governance, strengthens accountable administration, and delivers strong and independent system rests on today's leadership.

*Mr Harry Kuma is Permanent Secretary of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MOFT) and Acting General Manager of the Investment Corporation of Solomon Islands. Prior to this, Mr Kuma served as an Undersecretary in MOFT (2010-2015) and as Adviser to the Asian Development Bank (2007-2009). Mr Kuma has also served as Director of the Economic Reform Unit and Chief Financial Officer.*

## Reinstating the rule of law



**Nick Warner**  
**First RAMSI Special Coordinator (2003-2004)**

As we wrap up the RAMSI enterprise and look at what's been achieved, it's worth looking back to the beginning.

Eight months after RAMSI first arrived in Solomon Islands, my friend, ML – Mary-Louise – O'Callaghan, wrote these words for me, for a speech I delivered in Honiara:

*"If you can, imagine a country where hospitals, schools and medical clinics have simply ceased to function for a lack of funds, imagine a nation where public servants go weeks without pay – not surprisingly, some turn up to work, but many do not. Imagine roads that are literally falling apart, public thoroughfares that are the preserves of drunk and thieves. Then, to complete the picture, add to the mix guns, ethnic tension, rouge police, corrupt politicians and business people, and armed criminals."*

This was the nation that greeted RAMSI in the early hours of 24 July 2003.

On that same day I said this to the people of Solomon Islands:

*"People everywhere have a right to live their lives peacefully, to go about their daily lives without threats of violence or intimidation, to have their children educated in schools, to have illnesses attended to in hospitals and clinics, to have a government that is permitted to govern for the benefit of all people, free from intimidation or coercion by armed thugs.*

*Solomon Islands used to be such a place.*

*But for too long this country has suffered at the hands of a small number of militants and criminals who have terrorised Solomon Islands, brought the country to its knees, and done a disservice to the reputation of Solomon Islanders as a good and generous people.*

*We are calling our involvement here Operation Helpem Fren, because that is what we are here to do. We are here as friends, to work in partnership with you ... We will ensure that the people of Solomon Islands regain control of their destiny from a minority of criminals with guns.*

*Solomon Islands is a young country of great promise. We, your partners in the Pacific, and with God's help, are here to help Solomon Islanders fulfill that promise."*

The RAMSI operation that Ben McDevitt and I led all those years ago laid down the foundation for our successors and for the successes that followed.

We deployed with 300 police officers, backed by 1700 military personnel, from nine regional countries. And let's be clear, without the strong support and involvement of the countries of the region RAMSI would not have had the success it has had.

RAMSI in this first vital phase was a police-led operation, with the military playing a support role, providing protection and logistical assistance, but also helping to build a crucial environment of compliance.

The task of the police was to immediately establish law and order in Honiara, working closely with the RSIPF. On Day One, the Prime Minister was provided with Close Personal Protection by RAMSI police and key government buildings and installations were placed under armed guard. This immediately lifted the threat that had hung over the Government since the coup in mid-2000.

In 2003, dramatic change came quickly. Within the first 100 days we had:

- established RAMSI police posts in all nine provinces, allowing people to report crimes without fear and creating an environment where reconciliation between communities could take place.
- Solomon Islanders responded to calls for a gun-free society by handing in more than 3700 guns, including more than 660 military-style weapons. This couldn't have happened without the support of Paul Tovua and the National Peace Council.
- working closely with the RSIP and supported by RAMSI's military component, we helped bring back peace and respect for the rule of law.
- Harold Keke and his thugs were quickly arrested. And the Malaitan Eagle Force dismantled.
- RAMSI police and the RSIP arrested more than 350 people and laid about 600 charges for some very serious offences. A large number of former militants had also been arrested; and
- we had begun to rebuild and professionalise the RSIPF.

For Ben and I, and RAMSI, the Weathercoast was a key focus in the early days of RAMSI. Tensions were high. Not long before RAMSI's arrival, villages had been burnt and there had been a series of atrocious murders. Harold Keke and his group were still at large. When we first went to Mbambanakira in late August the school was deserted and villagers were just starting to trickle back after the reign of terror from Keke.

Now the Weathercoast, just like Honiara, is very different.

This transformation has come about through the work of many thousands of RAMSI personnel from all over the Pacific over many years.

The large military force that RAMSI initially deployed with played an important role, getting the attention of the militants and the thugs and ensuring that not a shot was fired in anger.

Of course, so did the RAMSI police. As did the many civilians who helped to rebuild the police and judiciary and the prison system, and helped to stabilise government finances and rebuild basic government services and the machinery of government.

But at the heart of RAMSI's success in those early days and over the next 14 years was the overwhelming support of the people of Solomon Islands. None of this transformation of this beautiful country would have happened without that.

In the speech that I made as RAMSI first arrived on 24 July 2003 I said that we were determined that from that day forward "Solomon Islanders would have a better life, a safer life, a more prosperous life".

I like to think that the promises we made to Solomon Islanders then have been met.

Working together, we have helped restore promise to your country.

And working together, we have helped to restore hope for a better life for all Solomon Islanders.

RAMSI might be going, but we - your Pacific neighbours - remain your friends and our help is there, anytime you need it.

*Mr Nick Warner AO PSM was the first RAMSI Special Coordinator (2003-2004). He has held a number of senior positions in the Australian public service. Since 2009, he has been the Director-General of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service. Prior to this, he was Secretary of Defence (2006-2009) and the Senior Adviser (International) to the Prime Minister (2005-2006). Overseas, Mr Warner headed the inter-agency Emergency Response Team to Iraq in 2004 and 2005 and was Australia's High Commissioner in Port Moresby (1999-2003) and Ambassador in Tehran (1994-1997).*

## Police assistance



**John Tanti**  
**Commander, Participating Police Force**  
**RAMSI**

The RAMSI Participating Police Force (PPF) has been rebuilding the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) for many years. This included while it was still delivering frontline policing, which ended in Honiara and several provinces in 2011, and across the nation by 2013.

New police buildings, vehicles and boats are the most obvious manifestations of RAMSI's police capacity-development efforts, but buying assets and constructing infrastructure was a relatively small component of the success that we measured ourselves against.

The real challenge and RAMSI's investment centered on affecting cultural change and instilling leadership and accountability at all ranks.

For example, over the last four years, RAMSI's flagship training course has been its Accountability, Authority and Responsibility (AAR) course. To date, nearly all (1,240) RSIPF officers have started AAR training, with 266 completing all three stages and eight RSIPF trainers now delivering the course across the force.

Building a positive police culture has been an important focus of RAMSI, and it will continue to be a focus of Australia's post-RAMSI bilateral Solomon Islands Police Development Program (SIPDP).

A positive police culture values ethics, standards and accountability, and the systems and governance that support those tenets. It also deals directly with *wantok*-ism – embracing the positive aspects, but rejecting the negative aspects.

Good progress had been made in this regard, but the RSIPF will need to continue to focus on accountability, performance and ethical decisions.

Today, there is a healthy Professional Standards and Internal Investigations (PSII) unit in the RSIPF, supported by a strong investigations capability. The RSIPF is also exhibiting good operational security practices.

Importantly, the RSIPF also has strong and ethical leaders. RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government prioritised leadership development over the last

14 years. More support, however, will be needed – including well below the Deputy and Assistant Commissioner ranks.

Since 2003, almost two-thirds of the force has changed over since the Tensions. It is a relatively young police force. This means it will continue to need external policing assistance. It also means the RSIPF needs a little time and space to bed down its training and new capabilities – such as its re-armed specialist units – before further expansion is considered.

Still, I am very confident that the RSIPF is ready to resume full responsibility for policing and national security. It has the technical skills, infrastructure and a capable leadership cohort to engage in community policing and enforce law and order, thanks to RAMSI.

In addition to the AAR training, RAMSI has been training the RSIPF in recent years in the fields of: investigations; leadership; human resource management (including performance management); use of force, operational safety, firearms training, close personal protection, and public order management. This is in addition to the advisory and logistical support that we provided to RSIPF-led operations.

The RSIPF also has a strong policy-base and strategic vision. The RSIPF is served well and has a sound blueprint for the future through three strategic plans: The Appropriate Cost of Policing Report, the RSIPF Capability Plan, and the Government's Crime Prevention Strategy.

For all these reasons, the RSIPF deserves the growing trust of the people it serves, but the RSIPF will need to continue to build community trust and support.

We should not under-estimate, however, the challenges of delivering policing services in Solomon Islands. Travelling and enforcing laws across the archipelago is a difficult and expensive enterprise.

A police force that is not adequately funded will therefore struggle to deliver effective police services. And if there is a perceived drop in services, we will also likely see a slip in community confidence.

That is why it will be important that the Solomon Islands Government manages the gap between the delivery of RAMSI-supported police services and the level of service that the RSIPF can afford and maintain independently.

A stark and immediate example is that from 1 July 2017 the RSIPF will no longer be able to request the use of RAMSI's leased helicopters, which have been used until now for search and rescue operations, aero-medical evacuations, and other high-priority tasking.

Hearteningly, the national government has committed to properly resource the police in accordance with the Appropriate Cost of Policing Report.

Another part of the solution is speaking and engaging openly with the public. The RSIPF will need to continue to share its successes but equally manage community expectations using a forthright communications and media strategy, including via its weekly radio programs, the weekly Commissioner's Briefings and its Facebook page.

Looking back at the RAMSI's police development efforts, there have been a number of lessons. Personally, I would point to three issues:

- RAMSI missed an opportunity to establish more formal learning and development opportunities for police personnel from RAMSI contributing nations. The training offered to the RSIPF was the envy of personnel from other police services in the region. That said, the on-the-job training and exchanges afforded to Pacific Island Contingent members, as well as Australian and New Zealand members, has been significant. There is no doubt that the RAMSI members now returning to countries throughout the Pacific region do so with an arsenal of new skills, professional connections, cultural appreciations, and heightened confidence.
- The Crime Prevention Strategy, which now services the RSIPF very well, could have been conceived and implemented earlier.
- The short-term deployments of police advisers – sometimes between 6 and 12 months, or less – fed recipient fatigue and disjointed capacity-development as RSIPF counterparts watched dozens of advisers walk through their doors over the years. This is being addressed in Australia's new program, which contemplates two-year deployments.

*Commander John Tanti was the final Commander of the RAMSI Participating Police Force (PPF). He is a senior Australian Federal Police Officer (AFP) with 25 years of policing experience. Prior to assuming command of the PPF in August 2016, he worked as AFP's Manager Close Protection and National Coordinator Crime Operations. Commander Tanti has worked overseas in Timor Leste during the 1999 popular consultation, in Fiji as the Police Liaison Officer and Law Enforcement and Capacity Development Adviser to the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretary-General, and in Thailand as the AFP Senior Liaison Officer. Mr Tanti became the Commander of the bilateral AFP police development program in Solomon Islands after RAMSI concluded.*

## Lessons for future interventions



**James Batley**  
**Former RAMSI Special Coordinator (2004-2006)**

Lessons from RAMSI can be derived from an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.

One of RAMSI's greatest strengths was the legitimacy conferred by its multi-country, regional character and this is one of the key lessons of the intervention.

In terms of RAMSI's relationship with the government and people of Solomon Islands, key lessons are the importance of:

- having in place both a formal legal framework, as well as a formal, structured framework for dialogue and consultation rather than relying only on informal mechanisms for such dialogue; and
- a robust public communications and outreach program.

From a development perspective, three key lessons stand out:

- the importance of long-term commitment, and being driven by results rather than deadlines;
- the importance of being clear about the difference between capacity substitution and capacity development: both have their place but they demand very different skills; and
- while it is important to strengthen central government agencies, it cannot be assumed that this will necessarily result in a “trickle out” improvement in government service delivery to rural areas.

Internally, a key lesson is that there is enormous power in a “whole-of-government” approach that includes (as in RAMSI's case) civilians as well as police and military personnel, but at the same time that significant investments of time and energy are required to make whole-of-government cooperation work well. It doesn't happen by itself.

Over time, RAMSI learned that investing time in pre-deployment training and induction for staff paid real dividends.

The RAMSI period is a reminder of the importance of sticking to an agreed mandate and avoiding “mission creep”.

Finally, RAMSI reminds us that context is vital – there is no one template or model for regional responses to neighbourhood problems.

*Mr James Batley joined Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs in 1984. From 1997-1999 he was Australia's High Commissioner to Solomon Islands. During this time he also served two terms as the senior Australian civilian member of the Bougainville Truce Monitoring Group and the Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group. From 1999-2002 he was the head of Australia's diplomatic mission in East Timor, becoming Australia's first Ambassador to East Timor following that country's independence in 2002. From 2004-2006 he served as the leader of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and from 2007-2009 he was Australian High Commissioner to Fiji (and Permanent Representative to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat). In Canberra, Mr Batley worked in a range of senior positions including Deputy Director-General of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Since 2015 he has worked as Distinguished Policy Fellow in the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University in Canberra.*



**Reverend Philemon Riti**  
**Former Secretary-General**  
**Solomon Islands Christian Association**

RAMSI is hailed a success story. Just about everyone is singing the same tune of congratulations and jubilation. It was a fine achievement of a regional cooperation, led by Australia and New Zealand. All member countries of the "Helpem Fren" operation must be congratulated and their contributions acknowledged and appreciated.

RAMSI landed on the island of Guadalcanal amid drama and as part of a military strategy. It came in, in one sense, as invaders. Many people witnessed their arrival with both admiration and fear. Now RAMSI is on the eve of its departure, it is no doubt feeling contentment and satisfaction.

And as RAMSI is about to leave the shores of Solomon Islands, we should identify lessons for future interventions. Still, it must also be appreciated the RAMSI model will not work equally successful in another country. Each country and conflict will have its own characteristics and magnitude.

Discussions and decision about future interventions should consider the following:

Political stabilisation:

- There is little that an intervention force can do about politics except to protect democracy.
- An intervention mission must assist the central government to educate the populace about the process and necessity of people involvement in elections.
- An intervention mission must ensure that its presence will not be regarded as an alternative government.
- An intervention mission must address the root causes of any situation that lead to the need for intervention.
- The intervention must respect both victims and perpetrators in all its dealing, and establish dialogue with all parties.
- The host government must understand fully the purpose of the intervention and the citizens of the country should be thoroughly informed prior to arrival of mission.
- All participating member countries personnel should be treated fairly and equally.

On the surface, politics in Solomon Islands appears stable. Time will tell.

State building:

- State-building programs must be through the government.
- Projects must be in line with government plans and programs.
- Infrastructure programs must be directed toward rural areas.
- Minimize foreign advisers; utilise local human resources,
- Avoid programs that could create divisions within communities.
- Consider long-term/future project sustenance and maintenance.
- Do not place too much emphasis on trying to convert an island nation into a metropolis or replica of another country.
- Involve provinces and/or local governments in the approval of community projects.

Church and community leadership: It is important that church and community leaders are involved in any peace program. Peace-building is integral to human development. The moral and spiritual components of peace-building adds value to the process.

RAMSI paved the way for peace to return to Solomon Islands, a shining light amidst our darkest hours – a savior to our vulnerable and helpless state, and an answer to our prayer for "peace advocacy".

The Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) and Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association, which serve as the National Council of Churches (NCC) in Solomon Islands have established ecumenical networks across the region and globally, and helped build peace by:

- initiating the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC);
- mobilising its members to be 'salt and light' to both offenders and victims;
- organising peace-building courses, programmes on peace and reconciliation, and a range of consultations and conferences;
- strongly advocating restorative justice
- mediating between conflicting parties;
- providing trauma counselling to both victim and offenders; and
- supporting reconciliation between inmates and victims

The effort cost the lives of seven Melanesian Brothers, whose mission to negotiate for peace with a known warlord. Their sacrificial deaths will be long remembered as true martyrs of Peace.

Community leaders have been peace-makers for thousands of years and their involvement is very important. They should be involved in all

deliberations for peace. It is important, however, to identify the right leaders – that is, respected and true community leaders, not politically-identified individuals.

Peace-building should also incorporate and take account of traditional norms. In Solomon Islands, for example, there can be no peace without reconciliation according to customs and tradition.

Looking ahead, as we chart an onward direction, we must neither lose sight nor lessen our concerted efforts to address the issues that continue to affect and shape the lives of our people.

During the Tensions, there seemed to be a complete breakdown of law and social order, and the erosion of moral values among Solomon Islanders. This mentality is more dangerous and scary than issues such as globalization and HIV/AIDS because it challenges the heart of Christian principles of Justice, Love, Peace and Unity.

There is an urgent need in Solomon Islands and the broader region to govern with God's wisdom. To govern with God's wisdom comes with its own risks. Wisdom chooses what is good over what is bad, what is right over what is wrong, what is righteous over what is evil, what is better over what is good, what is best over what is better, what is true over what is a lie, and even what is the lesser evil of two or more evil.

*Reverend Philemon Riti is the former Secretary-General of the Solomon Islands Christian Association and currently serves as a Commissioner for the Political Parties Integrity Commission. He commenced his career as a teacher, before attending Bible School and then moving to Papua New Guinea to attend Rarongo Theological College in Rabaul. In 1991 he was elected as Bishop for the Solomon Islands region of the United Church of PNG and Solomon Islands, before becoming the pioneer leader of the independent United Church of Solomon Islands in 1997. Reverend Riti has also worked as a member of both the Law Reform Commission and Citizenship Commission, and was a United Church moderator on community leadership in peacebuilding.*



**Ruth Liloqula**  
**Chair, Transparency International Solomon Islands**

Whilst there were areas that could have been improved during its tenure, the RAMSI mission in Solomon Islands has achieved much that is of great value to the Government and the people of Solomon Islands.

The most important of these is creating a conducive environment for the leadership of Solomon Islands to deal with sensitive issues and begin the task of addressing the root causes of the tension.

Another was the restoration of law and order and capacity development in the Law and Justice Sector. There are many more.

*A truly equal partnership*

These positive impacts, however, have been counter-balanced by a local perception, rightly or wrongly, that this assistance has been at the expense of local 'ownership', that the partnership was unequal, and suggestions designed to improve strategies of delivery were sidelined.

RAMSI could have achieved more had there been an equal partnership as it would have benefited from a wealth of local knowledge and experience of both the public sector, the private sector, and civil society.

*The Public Sector Reform Programme*

The RAMSI-Solomon Islands Government (SIG) partnership should have carefully examined and learnt from the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP), which was introduced in late 1997 by the SIAC government under the leadership of late Prime Minister Ulufa'alu. The Programme made substantial progress between 1998 and 1999, but weakened and effectively ended as the result of the Ethnic Tension on Guadalcanal. Much could have been learned from the origins, achievements and shortcomings of the PSRP, and its still-unfolding legacy. It was a missed opportunity. The lessons should therefore inform future assistance, be it bilateral or multilateral.

RAMSI had a crack at public sector reform and reconstruction. The reform was made more complex and harder by the Ethnic Tension as the wounds were deeper than anything inflicted by the maladministration of previous decade.

A year after RAMSI's arrival, it was clear that the Public-Sector Reform Programme was dead. Still, it made an enduring impression on people outside the Government who gained a 'voice' through the Programme and had no intention of giving it up. Though corruption and cronyism have again been elevated to be principles of governance, the Government is facing better-

informed, braver and more organised opposition to the misuse of public resources than ever before. Some of this new capacity and determination to call the Government to account has its origins in the PSRP's emphasis on transparency and accountability, and its deliberate involvement of the private sector and civil society in monitoring the public sector.

#### *No exit timeframe*

On 4<sup>th</sup> July 2003, the Governor-General of Solomon Islands gave notice of an Act of Parliament, *'The Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003'*, which ratified an Agreement between the Government of the Solomon Islands and Assisting Countries (RAMSI). This Agreement Framework (May 2003) specified the activities of the 'visiting contingent' in the restoration of law, order and security, and that *'the nature size and duration of the intervention be proportionate to the nature gravity and development of the crisis* [Section 2.3.1 of the agreement Policy]. There was no inclusion in the agreements, however, around a specific timeframe for termination of the assistance. To improve the impact of such a mission, such a provision should be considered in any future mission of this nature.

#### *Securing internal consent*

Several challenges experienced by RAMSI at the outset and during the implementation of its mandate should be noted in the interest of improving future missions in our region and addressing the root causes of the conflict (which, in Solomon Islands, remained unattended over the last 14 years by successive governments of Solomon Islands).

First, where a mission such as RAMSI is working at the invitation of, and as a partner with, the host government, it must at all costs avoid appearing to undermine the authority of the elected government while working with that partner to take back full management.

Second, the mission should have strategies to maintain the support and consent of the local population, the administration and leaders and provide platforms for handling dissent and disagreements so that ideas and grievances have a fair hearing.

This internal consent, both political and popular, form a critical part of any mission's legitimacy, and for RAMSI. Without the blessing of the government and the citizenry, it is impossible for the operation to exist, let alone have an impact.

Most local criticism stems from the perception that the operation wields too much power, with little to no control by the host government. There may also be perceptions that it is suppressing bilateral and multilateral relationships and alienating good and valuable contributions from within the country when dealing with the conflict.

### *Transitioning from stabilisation to state-building operations*

The first five years of stabilisation and growth under RAMSI needs to be acknowledged. The second phase of RAMSI, however, had to respond to criticisms and a different set of circumstances. This led to the reshaping of the Mission to reflect a genuine and respectful partnership between the Government and the ‘assisting countries’ where the authority of the host government was respected and strengthened.

The Government’s policy statements at the time outlined the scope of the new circumstances and the requirements and basis for this next phase. The realignment, which has relevance today and into the future, was from crisis containment to social and economic growth and stability. This had or should have included:

- shifting the focus from rehabilitating damaged social, economic and physical infrastructure to stimulating economic growth, particularly in the rural areas;
- working within and strengthening the current Constitutional systems and frameworks;
- a continued focus on building the capabilities and capacities of Solomon Islanders so that they can independently manage their affairs;
- an acknowledgement and a strengthening of the roles of chiefs and leaders to protect the traditional rights of resource owners; and
- meaningful reconciliation between people at all levels designed to lead to a national healing and eventual unity.

More importantly, the realignment needs a strong and stable Government and its Administration executing sound governance, pursuing social and economic development, and off-loading chronic issues and problems to bilateral, long-lasting partnerships and relationships.

These features were and should continue to be fundamental to political parties of all persuasions in Solomon Islands. They provide a lasting foundation for Solomon Islands going forward.

### *Reviews*

It is also important that Solomon Islands or any country that hosts such a mission carry out its own review of the impact of the Mission. While there have been many reviews of RAMSI, they have always been self-generated and based within external perspectives and models.

### *Machinery of Government*

RAMSI’s Machinery of Government Program did not achieve the level of success that was needed or expected, particularly in terms of building

noticeable capabilities across the public sector. Instead of strengthening the public sector, it undermined the confidence and ability of public servants and created impediment to its strategic development. A case in point was the changing of the name Ministry of Finance to Ministry of Finance and Treasury for no convincing reason. Local insight and input must be respected for the sake of ownership and the sustainability of results.

### *Root causes*

The question of “What of the future? and “Where to now?” rests with the government and the people of Solomon Islands. It is time to have leaders that can champion the people’s cause and bring about sustainable true peace, and socio-economic development for all and not just a few privileged groups.

This requires national leaders to deal with the underlying root causes of the Ethnic Conflict. Specifically:

1. Leadership – successive failure of government policy and strategies

Fundamentally, the crisis can be attributed to the failure of successive governments to implement effective or just policies and strategies that developed the country’s human and natural resources. Governments ignored the issues that were important to the people. People must be at the centre of development and benefit equally from the exploitation of their resources, and respect for people, their culture and resources.

Political and administrative leadership in Solomon Islands falls into two main groups. First, there are leaders that intend to improve the social and economic status of Solomon Islands through their own Province and constituency [“Developers” as described by A. Hughes in *Lessons from False Dawn*, 2001]. Their policy is based on social and economic analysis of local and overseas observed data, and committed to seeing these through. As a rule, they do not direct the disposal of public funds, land and other material benefits to themselves. The second group of leaders are those who are in politics predominantly to divert the flow of public funds and other material benefits to themselves, their families and supporters. They are highly skilled in spotting opportunities to use their political office, or position in the public sector, for these ends and have no shortage of persons ready to assist them, domestically and overseas [“Diverters/rent seekers” as described by A. Hughes in *Lessons from False Dawn*, 2001].

Solomon Islands continues to be impacted by the effects of a government system dominated by politicians and public administrators that are *diverters* and *rent seekers*. Few politicians are entirely devoid of good intentions, so many of their policies look similar to the policies of *developers*. Still, the over-riding goal of a diverters’ government is to stay in power to maintain the flow of benefits to itself and its cronies.

2. Land – Land Utilization, Ownership, and Availability and Accessibility.

Land is a complex issue. It is also often used to draw attention to real grievances and injustices on other fronts – ranging from land use and ownership, to identity and the imposition of other island's traditions, customs and laws by settlers who do not respect the customs and property of the host province.

Local courts that deal with land and other civil disputes in communities and villages are poorly manned and virtually ignored by the central government. And with rising corruption and the politicising of land administration and public service, these local mechanisms are not only forgotten but often corrupted themselves.

3. Development – Decentralisation of development.

Nation building, national unity and sustainable peace needs to be pursued through the empowerment of the people, rural advancement, a revitalized economy, improved law, order and justice, effective service delivery, sound governance and devolution of powers and decision-making authority to the people. Economic growth, particularly in the rural areas, would allow most people to remain in their own province, on their own land, discovering their own economic potential, and enjoying access to markets and social services.

*New windows of opportunity*

RAMSI's leaving creates and opens new windows of opportunity for Solomon Islands to build a more sustainable and long-lasting partnerships and relationship with its bilateral partners and a more suitable avenue for addressing chronic and lingering issues.

RAMSI helped Solomon Islands bring back law and order. It did not create, however, a viable environment for an equal partnership with the host country, nor for building long-lasting partnerships and relationships.

In suppressing these relationships, RAMSI may have created an excuse for Solomon Islands leaders to not address the root causes of the tension and to avoid doing what they needed to do for the people of Solomon Islands. This excuse no longer exists. The new opportunities should be fully utilised to bring about development for all Solomon Islanders and those living and doing business in Solomon Islands.

*Mrs Ruth Liloqula is the Chair of Transparency Solomon Islands. She joined the Solomon Islands Public Service in 1978 and has held a number of high-level government positions, including Under-Secretary, Ministry of National Planning and Human Resources Development; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Police and National Security; Permanent Secretary,*

*Ministry of Home and Civil Affairs; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace; Permanent Secretary [Special Duties Truth and Reconciliation Commission Terms of Reference] and as Secretary to Cabinet, Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet. During the Tensions, she was involved in various peace negotiations and was the behind the scenes researcher and strategist, mentor and advisor on processes, procedures and protocol to open the doors for women to talk and meet with government leaders. Following the restoration of peace, Mrs Liloqula was heavily involved with activities to restore law and order and fight corruption. She compiled the Term of Reference for the Steering Committee on the establishment of the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission.*



**Peter Kenilorea Junior**  
**Permanent Secretary**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade**

United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world have had mixed results. Countries have back-slid into conflict. The transition from conflict to development has therefore always been an area of concern.

The phased approach that RAMSI followed – from law and order restoration, to institutional strengthening, particularly in the law and justice sector, to financial stabilisation – is an example of good practise in this regard. It reflected lessons learned from around the world.

Looking ahead, a key message to Solomon Islanders is that RAMSI is going, but Solomon Islands' partners will remain. After all, the region remains and our neighbours remain.

Solomon Islands has finalised bilateral police assistance programs with Australia and New Zealand. Australia and Solomon Islands are also finalising a security treaty, which would allow, following consultations, Australia to be deployed to assist Solomon Islands in a crisis.

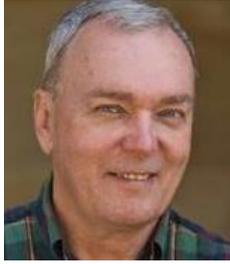
The UN Peace Building Commission (PBC) may also be an important player. The PBC is looking to be more active outside its traditional sphere of focus. Solomon Islands is accordingly well positioned to benefit from this UN body and its peace-building funds as we build peace.

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade has said, there can be no development without peace and security, and no peace and security without development. Moreover, both these pillars cannot stand without respect for human rights. The base for these three pillars is the rule of law, which we must continue to uphold.

RAMSI has given Solomon Islands a chance to remake the Solomons into the Happy Isles that we all want. Let us seize this moment with confidence moving forward. I believe Solomon Islands' better days are ahead. We have a young population who are our future.

*Mr Peter Kenilorea is the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. Prior to this appointment, he held a number of positions in New York in the United Nations Secretariat. From 1996-2000, he served in the Chambers of the Solomon Islands Government's Attorney General's Chambers.*

## Rapporteur's Summary



**Professor Clive Moore**  
**Emeritus Professor**  
**University of Queensland, Australia**

My task is as rapporteur, the person who attempts to summarise the symposium as it draws to a close.

Two points of reminiscence first, before I begin. In 2003, before RAMSI came into being, I was completing a book on the crisis years, *Happy Isles in Crisis*, but had no idea how to bring it to a conclusion. The decision to form RAMSI provided me with an ending, for which I was grateful. I wrote that RAMSI would generate a huge literature and much analysis in years to come, but I did not realise how true this was or that fourteen years later RAMSI would still be in Solomon Islands.

The second point is that this hotel is on the site of the original Government House. Please forgive an historian for using an historical simile. Sir Robert Stanley was the first Western Pacific High Commissioner to be based in Honiara, between 1952 and 1954. When he left there were the usual ceremonies down at the wharf, with British pageantry with feathered helmets and white suits. He received an eighteen-gun salute and sailed away, satisfied. He never knew what happened afterwards. Sir Robert was not well liked, and as his ship sailed west along the coast, the rest of the officials adjourned to the Guadalcanal Club and toasted good riddance to him as he sailed past. This is what happened sixty years ago, but it bears no resemblance to the feeling of gratitude that Solomon Islanders have exhibited this week as the RAMSI presence ends.

How does one sum up a day-long symposium looking at the legacy and lessons of RAMSI? All Solomon Islanders remember the feeling of helplessness during the 'Tension' years, and we need to pause to think what would have happened if RAMSI had not arrived to deal with the deteriorating situation. As Sir Allan Kemakeza said in his presentation, "We were in a lawless state with an armed criminal militia creating a feeling of fear throughout all layers of the community".

We also need to remember that RAMSI was unique, the first Pacific Islands Forum response to a crisis in a member state. It was also the first time that Australia had led a substantial intervention mission beyond its borders that was not under United Nations auspices. It has been an important learning experience for all Pacific Island states as well as for Australia and New Zealand. There was no blueprint to follow.

It is also crucial to recognize that while the outside intervention has been judged a success, it could never have succeeded without the strength of

Solomon Islands society and its cultural complexity. The ‘Tension’ years brought customary institutions to the fore as guiding mechanisms when the state apparatus faltered. The churches, women and local governmental systems had always been essential, but during the crisis they took on a new importance, which they retain to this day. Solomon Islands cultures displayed a resilience, an etiquette of behaviour, and a core strength that came from, and not despite, diversity. As Reverend Philemon Riti said in his presentation, Solomon Islanders came “already equipped with a culture”. Let us not forget that this strength prevailed, and was the real glue that made RAMSI work. The success emerged out of ingredients that were already here, not from imposed institutions. Religion has always held a strong place in the nation, and it, too, has been strengthened during these years. One theme in the speeches to Parliament and other presentations and oratory we have heard this week, including in this symposium, is the power of Christianity has to provide basic, guiding principles for the nation. The churches have been fundamental to the peace-building process.

While we must acknowledge this core cultural strength, no one would say that Solomons traditions were all suitable for the modern world. One that is incompatible with a prosperous future is a gender structure which emphasize men and does not utilise the joint strength of males and females in creating the modern nation. RAMSI has quietly worked towards raising the valuation of women’s roles in all aspects of government and society. The empowerment of women continues to be an important aspect of nation-building. We were told by the Police Commissioner that whereas at one time women made up just three percent of the officers in the force the figure is now a more respectable twenty percent. While there is much room for improvement, there is now better recognition that building a modern nation requires gender equity.

There are aspects of reworking society that were beyond the RAMSI brief and are best achieved by Solomon Islanders by themselves. One is implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reconciliation was not part of the RAMSI mandate but remains crucial to the process by which Solomon Islanders have to come to terms with what has happened. In the week leading up to this symposium, Prime Minister Sogavare has made clear that he feels RAMSI has acquitted its mandate well, and that his government remains committed to implementing the findings of the 2008–2012 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with a reparations framework in place.

RAMSI was always much more than a policing operation. There was a deeper agenda to reform the state apparatus and to provide significant development assistance to rebuild the machinery of government—what became the Three Pillars operation. RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government have learnt to be flexible with that agenda, perhaps more so than they usually admit. Closer analysis will show that over the fourteen years objectives have been altered. Lessons have been learned, and despite a few political storms in the Coral Sea there has been goodwill on all sides. As several participants have noted, errors were made at key junctures. This must be expected with such a brave

international intervention with no precedent and involving large numbers of personnel working in difficult situations over many years. Through RAMSI, regional relationships have been strengthened and countries have been brought closer together through a common cause.

Ruth Liloqula reminded us that many of the underlying causes of the ‘Tension’ years have not been satisfactorily addressed or resolved. She listed leadership, land, and decentralisation of development. I would add urbanisation, as a process separate from land reforms. I see the national capital, in particular, as a unique challenge—decisions must be made about Honiara, and soon.

Even after fourteen years, much remains to be achieved. At its most basic level RAMSI was about people and goodwill. It was important to Solomon Islanders that RAMSI was a Pacific-wide operation, even if largely financed by Australia. Bringing other Pacific Islanders into Solomon Islands was part of the success. There was a cultural energy created that reverberated with Solomon Islanders, who realised and appreciated that other Pacific Islanders had come to help them restore normality and progress. The success could never have occurred without this component. Solomon Islanders have had peace restored and been given confidence in their own ability to take their nation forward.

*Professor Clive Moore is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Queensland, Australia, and has written extensively on Solomon Islands. His teaching at University of Queensland covers Australia, Queensland, and the Pacific Islands, colonial and race relations history, and the history of gender and sexuality. He was Head of the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics from 2008 to 2013. Professor Moore holds the McCaughey Chair in History. In 2005 he was awarded a Cross of Solomon Islands. He has been a member of the Board of the Journal of Pacific History since 1998.*