

**EULOGY DELIVERED BY JUSTINE BRAITHWATE**  
**FOR THE LATE GRAEME WILSON FORMER SPECIAL COORDINATOR**  
**MEMORIAL SERVICE 23 SEPT 2014**

- The Minister for Foreign Affairs & External Trade, Hon Clay Forau
- The Hon Danny Phillip
- The Hon David Day Pacha
- Sir Paul Tovua and Lady Tovua,
- Rev Willie Maezama
- Permanent Secretaries and SIG officials
- High Commissioners from the Australian, New Zealand and Papua New Guinean High Commissions
- Members of the RSIPF
- PPF Commander and PPF members
- Members of the Solomon Islands AFL team
- Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends

Good fala morning.

As Special Coordinator I would like to extend to each and every one of you a very warm welcome, particularly to the Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs & External Trade for his attendance and for representing the Solomon Islands Government. I am grateful and indeed honored to see you all here this morning as part of the memorial service to commemorate the life and contribution of the late Graeme Wilson.

Graeme joined RAMSI at a critical time. When he first arrived in country, RAMSI and Solomon Islands had just gone through some rough relationship patches and what was needed on both sides was strong leadership and commitment to the spirit of partnership.

For RAMSI's part, it was Graeme who provided that leadership and commitment. And I am glad to say that three Solomon Islands leaders who provided the leadership from the SIG side are all here this morning. They are former Prime Ministers; the Hon Derek Sikua and Hon Danny Phillip and the former and most dedicated Permanent Secretary for RAMSI, Sir Paul Tovua.

At the time of his passing on 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, Graeme was serving as the Australian High Commissioner to the Republic of South Africa. I'm sure Andrew Byrne, the Australian High Commissioner to Solomon Islands, will agree with me that Graeme was at the height of his career as a distinguished Australian diplomat when he died unexpectedly, at only 60 years of age.

As a diplomat, Graeme served around the world, including as Australia's Ambassador to Mexico, as Consul-General in Noumea, and also in postings to Paris and Vanuatu.

Yet Graeme acknowledged his time as Special Coordinator as possibly the most rewarding, and most challenging role of his career. That assessment probably reflects the key point I would like to note this morning: that Graeme truly loved Solomon Islands, and cared deeply for its future and its people.

Graeme was a man who gave his all to whatever responsibility was assigned to him. A member of my staff who served under Graeme described his commitment to his work this way and I quote "Graeme never relaxed on a chair. He relaxed with his work. He went to sleep and dreamed and woke up with a commitment." Unquote.

This sense of commitment showed in all his undertakings whilst in the Solomon Islands. Working closely with the Hon Derek Sikua, the Hon Danny Phillip, Sir Paul Tovua, Graeme led and oversaw many important initiatives

- It was under his leadership that the SIG-RAMSI Partnership Framework was signed, a significant milestone
- Graeme was there as a steady hand guiding RAMSI's support for the 2010 national elections.
- He took forward a comprehensive program of capacity development for the RSIPF
- He promoted greater transparency of decision making in the justice sector,
- He oversaw the introduction of new public financial management systems and micro-economic reforms
- He did much to strengthen electoral management processes and promoted public sector reform and greater accountability across government
- Graeme was also strong proponent of gender equality, overseeing RAMSI's first "gender stocktake" to determine how RAMSI programs could better support equality and development of women in politics, business and government.

One of the defining issues of Graeme's time in Solomon Islands was sadly a shooting incident involving a RAMSI member, in which a civilian from the Peochekuru people of South Guadalcanal lost his life. This became known as the "Titinge incident".

Graeme will always be remembered by the people of Peochekuri for the way in which he handled the response to the Titinge incident, and for his sensitivity, understanding and respect for local culture. Working closely with the Hon David Day Pacha and Sir Paul Tovua (on whom he relied greatly for advice), Graeme was able to negotiate to assist the family of Harry Lolonga, the victim of the incident, with a family house and an education fund for the children. According to my

Assistant Special Coordinator who was there at the time, Graeme fought tooth and nail to ensure the package of assistance was finalized and delivered before he departed from Solomon Islands.

But Graeme didn't limit his work to just RAMSI. He was deeply concerned with youth unemployment and in particular with how this problem would spill over to other areas of Solomon Islands life.

This leads us to what perhaps will be remembered as Graeme's greatest legacy. Being a keen sportsman, it was Graeme who introduced Australian Rules football to Solomon Islands.

Not only did he introduce the sport in Solomon Islands he actually built it from nothing to what it is today. His efforts were rewarded when he coached the first Solomon Islands AFL Under Sixteen team that took part in the AFL Pacific Tournament in Tonga.

For most of the members of the team, it was their first time on a plane and their first trip overseas. Graeme acquired another skill on that trip, that of a flight attendant as he had to go around to check on his team members' safety belts as well as brief them on emergency procedures. I'm pleased to see many members of the team are here today.

Whilst still on sports, Graeme with the support of the Hon Dr. Derek Sikua also revived cricket. Had he remained here longer, the Solomon Islands cricket team would have no doubt progressed to be part of the world cricket series.

Graeme walked the capitals of the world but never lost the common touch. He felt comfortable with people at all levels from Prime Ministers to villagers in rural areas. He had such a deep attachment to Solomon Islands that I'm told on his last day, the aircraft that was to take him back to Australia had to wait for him, as he wanted to shake every hand that came to wave him good-bye.

Graeme has gone but he has left much behind for Solomon Islands to remember him for. I know you will join with me in sending our best wishes and deepest condolences to Graeme's family – his wife Lisa, and children Laura, Andrew and Mathew.

I hope it will be of some comfort to them to know that we here in Solomon Islands will always remember Graeme for the great and real impact he made on people's lives as RAMSI Special Coordinator.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all once again for coming this morning to celebrate Graeme's life.