

THE PRIME MINISTER



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HONIARA
SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS HON CLAY
FORAU, MP, DURING THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE LATE GRAEME
WILSON, FORMER SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR RAMSI
RAMSI BASE, HENDERSON, 23 SEPTEMBER, 2014**

Caretaker-Ministers of the Crown

Special Coordinator of RAMSI, Her Excellency Justine Braitewaite

RAMSI Officers

Distinguished Guests

Friends and colleagues of the Late Graeme Wilson

Ladies and gentlemen

- I was greatly saddened to hear the news of the passing away of the Late Graeme Wilson, former RAMSI Special Coordinator on 2 September 2014 at his home in Pretoria, South Africa. He was at post when he passed away, which is true of his character. The Late Wilson was a very committed and wonderful person who gave life everything. My family wishes to convey our personal heartfelt sympathies to his wife Lisa, daughter Laura and sons Andrew and Matthew. Your husband and father had touched lives in Solomon Islands in ways you may never truly appreciate but for which we can only say thank you.
- On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islanders, I also wish to register their condolences and express our heart-felt appreciation of the Late Graeme Wilson.

- Today however, whilst we miss this wonderful person, we should celebrate his life and times. I have had personal relationships with the Late Wilson and enjoyed working with him a great deal. I have also had the opportunity to look through the record of his distinguished career and two features stand out from his career.
- First, since his university days in Melbourne to his latest posting in Pretoria, he had always been interested in the Foreign Service. To me, this is a person whose heart is very big and more importantly open to peoples of other nations. He was a person who desires his country to have long and lasting relationships with people from everywhere.
- Second, from his records, he has close affinity and bonds with the South Pacific region. From 1983 to 1985 he was Third Secretary in Port Vila. From 1995 to 1998 he was Consul General in Noumea. From 2005 to 2008 he was Assistant Secretary in the Pacific Islands Branch. Most illustriously from 2009 to 2011, he was Special Coordinator to RAMSI. This is a man who was committed to the Pacific. In fact, more than that, he was in love with the Pacific.
- Solomon Islanders and indeed the region will remember him most prominently for his role as the Special Coordinator of RAMSI from 2009 to 2011. The reason he was chosen for the position was no doubt based on his intimate knowledge of the region and his relationships with leaders and actors across the region. By the time he was Special Coordinator, he has already forged relationship with people across Melanesia having served in Port Vila and Noumea previously.
- The Late Wilson will be remembered as a wonderful person who is able to build relationships and get things done even in the midst of formidable challenges. He has shown to all Solomon Islanders the real meaning of partnership in his deeds. He always availed his time and engaged SIG in the design of the SIG RAMSI Partnership.

- In mid-2009, when the Parliamentary Select Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee commenced their work into RAMSI, Late Wilson always availed his time to defend and clarify areas of concerns that people have on RAMSI. He was very genuine in his views.
- One of the situations which really demonstrated the Late Wilson's excellent abilities in dealing with people in difficult situations is the Titinge incident in 2010 which resulted in the fatal shooting by RAMSI officers of a local man. His genuineness and his ability to see solutions, engage and drive parties to this common goal enables him to present a traditional *chupu* in line with the custom of Guadalcanal and allowed reconciliation and peace to be restored. This is a remarkable achievement on any count.
- At the eve of his departure as out-going Special Coordinator, the Late Graeme Wilson, said he was proud of what RAMSI and Solomon Islands had achieved in the partnership. He added that as RAMSI plans its transition, he believed Solomon Islanders can have confidence in the solid foundation SIG and RAMSI had laid down together for the country's recovery and this nation's future.
- The Late Wilson's talent in bureaucracy and diplomacy is only matched by his skills on the field of sports. Mr Wilson was at one time playing at the elite level for the South Melbourne Football Club (which is now the mighty Sydney Swans). Although his career in diplomacy was to occupy much of his time, his love for sports was always clearly demonstrated.
- The Late Wilson was instrumental in invigorating Australian Rules Football (AFL) in the country. He will be remembered for coaching a young Solomon Sharks side and taking the team to their first

international debut at the 2010 Oceania under 16s tournament in Tonga. His players will remember him with fond memories.

- The Late Wilson was also instrumental in the revival of cricket in the Solomon Islands. Had he served a little longer, he might bring the sport to a more competitive level. This is his passion.
- For those young Solomon Islanders who have come to know this man, he is a real people's man, one that lives to inspire others. He has a very full life which overflowed to others. His passion for life was contagious.
- Solomon Islands will truly miss this great person. We will miss him as a capable former RAMSI Special Coordinator. Some will miss him as a lively coach on the AFL and Cricket pitches. Some will miss him as a former boss. Some will miss him as a former colleague. Many of us will miss him as a friend.
- On this day, we celebrate the life and times of the Late Graeme Wilson. Today, we embrace the memories of a man who was truly bigger than life. On this day, we remember his wife, children and loved ones.
- Today we commit his life to God almighty. We cherish the memories and we thank God for giving us 60 wonderful years of blessings through the life of former RAMSI Special Coordinator, wonderful husband, father, Australian and friend, the Late Graeme Wilson.
- May his soul rest in Peace. God Bless Australia and God Bless Solomon Islands.