

# **Solomon Islands National Parliamentary Elections**

5 December 2001

The Report of the  
Commonwealth Observer Group



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

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Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House  
Pall Mall  
London SW1Y 5HX  
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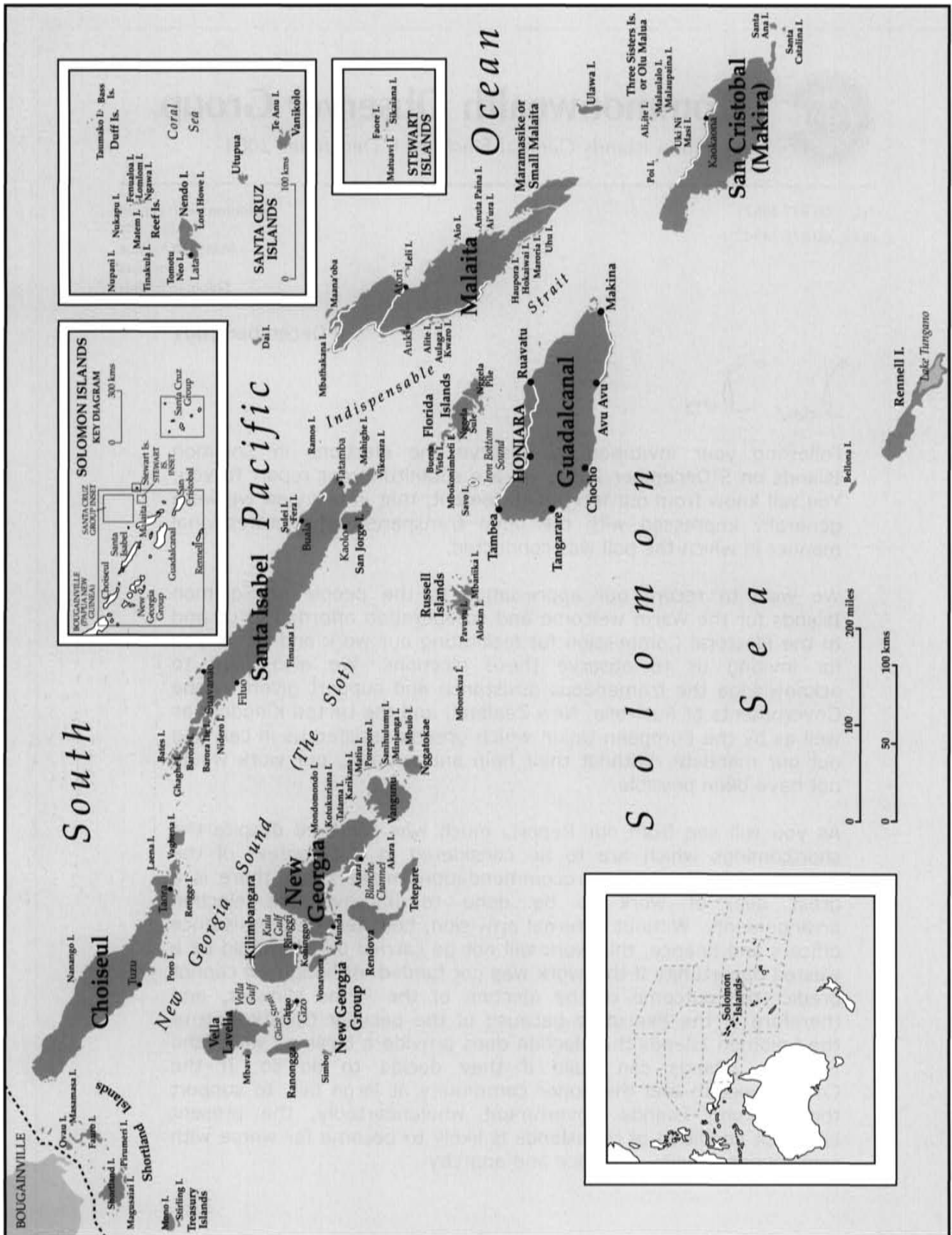
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# Map of Solomon Islands



Map by Sheila Atton, Nidhauen Partnership

# Letter of Transmittal



## Commonwealth Observer Group

Solomon Islands General Election, 5 December 2001

Tel: 00 677 20071

Fax: 00 677 23942

Solomon Kitano Hotel

PO Box 384

Mendana Avenue

Honiara

Solomon Islands

9 December 2001

Following your invitation to observe the elections in Solomon Islands on 5 December 2001, we are submitting our report to you. You will know from our interim statement, that in our view we were generally impressed with the open transparent and professional manner in which the poll was conducted.

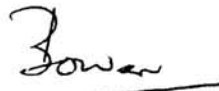
We wish to record our appreciation to the people of Solomon Islands for the warm welcome and co-operation afforded to us and to the Electoral Commission for facilitating our work and thank you for inviting us to observe these elections. We also want to acknowledge the tremendous assistance and support given by the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom as well as by the European Union which greatly assisted us in carrying out our mandate. Without their help and support, our work would not have been possible.

As you will see from our Report, much was achieved despite the shortcomings which are to be considered in the context of the Solomon Islands. As our recommendations make clear, there is a great deal of work to be done to improve the election arrangements. Without external provision, both technical assistance officers and finance, this work will not be carried out. It would be a wasted opportunity if this work was not funded. Although we cannot predict the outcome of the election of the Prime Minister, and therefore of the Executive because of the peculiar Constitution of the Solomon Islands the election does provide a basis on which the Solomon Islands can build if they decide to do so. If the Commonwealth and the donor community at large fail to support the Solomon Islands Government wholeheartedly, the present bankrupt condition of the islands is likely to become far worse with consequent poverty, violence and anarchy.

2/ ...

We leave the hauntingly beautiful Solomon Islands and its people with the hope that their commitment to the democratic process for which they have worked so hard in this election will not fail them and that together with help from all quarters they will realise their ambition of a law abiding democracy offering them a more prosperous economic future.

Yours sincerely,



**Bowen Wells**  
Chairman



**Ambassador Lucy Bogari**



**Peter Choo Fonso**



**Hendrick Gappy**



**THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP . . . (from left to right) Peter Fonso, Hendrick Gappy, Lucy Bogari, Bowen Wells (Chairperson)**



# Introduction

In October 2001, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Don McKinnon, received a request from the Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Solomon Islands, Mr Paul Tovua, for the Commonwealth to observe the 2001 National Parliamentary elections. On 6 November, the Commonwealth Secretary-General confirmed that he would constitute such a Group, the first positive response which encouraged Australia, New Zealand, the United Nations, Pacific Forum Secretariat and other similar observer groups.

These were Solomon Islands' sixth National Parliamentary elections since achieving independence in 1978. The 2001 elections were held against a background of more than two years of 'ethnic tension' between militant groups from Guadalcanal and Malaita. The Commonwealth worked to try to bring these ethnic hostilities to an end.

## The Observer Group and its Terms of Reference

The manner and the process to be carried out by Commonwealth Observers were set down and agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government. The Observer Group of four Observers was chosen from the different regions of the Commonwealth, and supported by three staff members of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Group was led by Mr Bowen Wells, a former Minister and Chairman of the International Development Select Committee, and Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom. Mr Wells is also the immediate past Treasurer of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The composition of the Group is set out at Annex I. The Secretary-General gave us the following terms of reference:

*The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Electoral Commission of the Solomon Islands. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the General Election in accordance with the laws of Solomon Islands. It is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine in its own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people of Solomon Islands.*

*The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.*

*The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Solomon Islands, the Electoral Commission of Solomon Islands, the leadership of the political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to all Commonwealth Governments.*

The establishment of the Group was announced in a press release issued in London on 23 November 2001. This was the 36th Commonwealth Observer Group since October 1990, and the first in Solomon Islands.

## Method of Work

The Chairperson of our Group was briefed in London by the Commonwealth Secretary-General on 15 November 2001.

One member of the Group, Ambassador Lucy Bogari, accompanied by a member of the Commonwealth Secretariat staff support team, formed an 'Advance Group' which began its work in Solomon Islands nine days before the arrival of the Main Group. The rest of the Group assembled in Honiara on the afternoon of 27 November 2001. The following morning, the Group was briefed by the Chairman of the Electoral Commission and immediately after the meeting, the Chairperson of the Group issued an Arrival Statement (see *Annex II*) at a press conference.

Over the next three days, the Group was briefed by representatives of the main political parties contesting the elections, Commonwealth Heads of Missions, religious groups, women's organisations, media representatives, the police, and members of the International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT). The Group also undertook a courtesy visit to the Governor-General. The final briefing was organised by the co-ordinator of logistics for all international observers. A schedule of engagements is at *Annex III*.

On Sunday, 2 December 2001, the Group visited Auki and met with Malaitan Premier David Oeta, the police and members of the IPMT based in Malaita. It also visited Tulagi where it had consultations with members of the police as well as visiting one of the designated polling stations. The final member of our Group, Mr Peter Fonso, arrived on the same day.

On polling day, one member of the Group was deployed to Shortlands in the Western Province where all the polling stations were visited, one to Malu'u in North Malaita where 15 out of 18 polling stations were visited, one in the East and East Central constituencies of Guadalcanal where all polling stations in the conflict area of Marau were visited, and the remaining members covered North-West Guadalcanal and all the constituencies and polling stations in Honiara City. (See *Annex IV* for details of deployment.) The Australian High Commissioner facilitated visits by the Chairperson to polling and counting centres in Western Province on the day after polling.

Observers' ability to reconnoitre the Solomon Islands was severely limited by the absence of planes, boats, motor vehicles and the prevalent security concerns in some parts of Guadalcanal and Malaita. The roads were in such poor condition that it made it very difficult to visit many polling stations and impossible to visit some of them. The Australian and New Zealand Governments (and the European Union) were principally responsible for bringing boats, an airplane and a helicopter making it possible for observers to witness the elections throughout Solomon Islands. Without this provision, an effective observer mission would have been impossible. We are deeply in their debt.

The Group reassembled in Honiara on Friday, 7 December, the day after the count, for a post-deployment discussion and to prepare its Report.

(The Interim Statement issued on 5 December 2001 is shown at *Annex V*, while the Departure Statement of 9 December 2001 is at *Annex VI*.)

## CHAPTER 1

---

# Political Background

## Political System

Solomon Islands gained constitutional independence from the United Kingdom on 7 July 1978 and adopted the Westminster system of government. It recognises HM Queen Elizabeth II as its Head of State and is represented by a Governor-General, currently the Reverend Sir John Ini Lapli. Following independence, Solomon Islands joined the Commonwealth.

The unicameral National Parliament comprises 50 Members, elected under a 'first-past-the-post' voting system. The Prime Minister is elected for a four-year term by a simple majority of Members of Parliament. In addition to the National Government, there are 10 Provincial Assemblies, including Honiara City Council.

## Recent Political Developments

Following the forced resignation of Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu in June 2000, after the armed takeover of the capital by elements supporting the opposition, Manasseh Sogavare, who had been opposition leader, was elected Prime Minister at a sitting of Parliament on 30 June 2000. Six Members of Parliament had been prevented from attending the session of Parliament at which the Prime Minister was elected. This was allegedly due to intimidation by the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF).

As ethnic tensions between warring factions of the two militant groups – the MEF and the Guadalcanal Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) – continued, many attempts by the Commonwealth and other nations were made to broker a series of peace talks aimed at stabilising the deteriorating economic and security situation in the country.

This has, however, failed to stem continuing violence which the police have been unable to curb. The establishment of a Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) and International Peace Monitoring Team has thus far ensured an uneasy peace and Solomon Islanders are hoping that the election of a stable government will bring peace and development to the country.

The Prime Minister's attempt earlier this year to extend the life of Parliament from four years to five met with vigorous protests from civil society and the international community, as this would have led to the postponement of the national elections. He was therefore forced to withdraw the Bill to extend the life of Parliament and agreed to hold elections as required within the time-frame stipulated under the Constitution.

## Economic Development

Economic development in Solomon Islands has been seriously affected as a result of continuing 'ethnic tension'. Most export industries have ceased to

operate, export earnings have dropped and government revenue has collapsed. The granting of illegal *ad hoc* duty remissions has further reduced customs revenue and Government has been unable to meet its debt repayments as well as being unable to pay salaries to the civil service and police. This has been exacerbated by continuous demands for financial compensation from different sections of the community allegedly affected by the crisis. Money to pay compensation was supplied by the Government of Taiwan and partially distributed, further exacerbating the unrest.

## **Security**

The security situation in Honiara, the rest of Guadalcanal and Malaita remains volatile, as a large number of high-powered weapons are still unaccounted for. Members of the IPMT reported that a recent inventory of the police armoury undertaken by the members of the IPMT confirmed that more than 400 police weapons have still not been accounted for. Many are allegedly being used for criminal activities and there is fear that failing recovery of such weapons, peace and stability will continue to elude Solomon Islands. The recent recruitment of more than 1,100 former ethnic militia members as special constables has also added to these fears.

## **Political Parties**

There are two main coalitions – Coalition for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (CNURP), and Alliance for Change which subsequently formed the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change Coalition (SIACC) for the purpose of contesting the 2001 elections. The CNURP which elected Manasseh Sogavare as Prime Minister when it took power on 30 June 2000 comprised members of the Liberal Party, People's Alliance Party (PAP), the United Party as well as a number of independents. The Alliance for Change represents the former government led by Bartholomew Ulufa'alu. The PAP parliamentary leader is Sir Allan Kemakeza, the leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) is Manasseh Sogavare, the Solomon Islands Labour Party (SLP) leader is Joses Tuhanuku, the United Democratic Party is led by Jon Maitia and the New Solomons Party is led by Sam Alesia.

The nature of the party system in Solomon Islands is characterised by fluid coalitions, which made it difficult to predict any political outcome of the elections for which 328 candidates had registered.

Additionally, the Solomon Islands Constitution makes provision for an 'Independent Group' whose members are independent both of the Government and of any opposition group and whose number includes a leader who can command their support.

This situation is a consequence of the Constitution, which lays down that the Prime Minister will be chosen from among the elected Members of Parliament, and the nature of Solomon Islands as a collection of many islands each seeking its own best advantage.

Members of Parliament can switch political allegiance at will without any constitutional or legal penalties while others profess membership of more

than one party. A further factor is the 'wantok' system used to differentiate people based on their own dialect or the provinces to which they belong, and which usually influences the democratic process in Solomon Islands. It is also often used as a basis for the election of candidates. The result is that a strong party political system has failed to develop.

# The Electoral Framework and Preparations for the Elections

## The Electoral Framework

There are a number of provisions of the Constitution that are of special significance so far as elections are concerned. For instance, it stipulates the functions of the Electoral Commission. It specifies a single Chamber of Parliament with a life of four years. It also stipulates that national parliamentary elections are to be held within four months from every dissolution of Parliament at a date proclaimed by the Governor-General.

Eligibility to vote is based on universal adult suffrage for citizens who have reached the minimum age of 18 years.

## The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is an independent supervisory body as provided for by the 1978 Constitution and consists of three members. The Chairman is the Speaker of Parliament and also Deputy Governor-General. The Governor-General appoints the other two members. A person shall not be qualified to be an appointed member of the Electoral Commission if she/he is a member of, or a candidate for the election to, Parliament or Honiara City Council or any Provincial Assembly. The Commission directs the whole electoral administration and supervises the operations and observance of the legal provisions in accordance with Section 58 of the Constitution of Solomon Islands. The Commission is not involved in the receipt or determination of the election petitions. The Honiara based office of the Electoral Commission is headed by the Chief Electoral Officer and is supported by expatriate and local staff members. Their main role is to assist the Commission with the executive and logistical operations of preparing for and conducting the elections.

## The Electoral Laws

The election of members to the Parliament of Solomon Islands is conducted in accordance with the following:

- the Constitution of Solomon Islands 1978;
- the National Parliament (Electoral Provisions) Act 1980 (CAP 87);
- the National Parliament Electoral Provisions (Amendment) Act 1987 (No.1 of 1987, passed by the National Parliament on 2 March 1987);
- the National Parliament Electoral Provisions (Amendment) Act 1997 (No.3 of 1997, passed by the National Parliament on 2 May 1997);
- the National Parliament Electoral Provisions (Amendment) Act 2001 (No.5 of 2001, passed by the National Parliament on 14 August 2001);
- the Local Government (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 1964;
- Parliamentary Resolution of 16 December 1992 under section 54(4) of the Constitution in respect of Electoral Constituencies; and

.....  
*It should be noted that the Electoral Commission is not presently represented on the Constituency Boundaries Commission, and we recommend that the Electoral Commissioner should be an ex officio member*  
.....

- Parliamentary Resolution of 28 November 1996 under section 54(4) of the Constitution in respect of Electoral Constituencies.

## **The Electoral System**

A total of 50 Members of Parliament are to be elected, one for each constituency under the uninominal ('first-past-the-post') voting system. The successful candidate is the person who secures a simple majority. Each registered elector may cast only one ballot paper for the candidate of their choice. Having received a ballot paper from the Presiding Officer at the respective polling station, the elector then proceeds to a voting room or compartment and in complete secrecy, places that ballot paper unmarked in a ballot box of the candidate of their choice.

## **The Constituency Boundaries Commission**

The Constituency Boundaries Commission comprises of a Chairman and two other members appointed by the Governor-General acting in accordance with the advice of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. The persons holding the offices of Chief Surveyor and the Head of the Government Statistical Services are *ex officio* members of the Constituency Boundaries Commission. It should be noted that the Electoral Commission is not presently represented on the Constituency Boundaries Commission, and we recommend that the Electoral Commissioner should be an *ex officio* member. Solomon Islands has 50 constituencies and their constituency boundaries were prescribed by Parliament following the recommendations from the Constituency Boundaries Commission.

The Constituency Boundaries Commission may review the number and boundaries of the constituencies whenever it considers it desirable, and such a review is required to be undertaken not later than 10 years after the boundaries were last reviewed. In accordance with section 54 of the Constitution, Parliament approved by resolution on 28 November 1996 the recommendation of the Constituency Boundaries Commission as contained in its Review Report of 1995/96, whereby the number of constituencies was increased from 47 to 50. However, in light of the high increase of registered voters and the apparent imbalance of voters in a variety of constituencies, provision should be made to review and to make alterations to existing boundaries before the stipulated deadline for such a review. Present constituencies range in number of registered voters from 2,584 in Makira/Ulawa/Ugi to 18,890 in East Honiara City, resulting in a serious under-representation in Honiara City and over-representation in some islands. However, this apparent situation is offset by the fact that many voters are registered both in their home constituencies and in the city or town constituencies and left the cities to vote in their home constituencies. Due to these double registrations, the voting registration numbers are inflated and the percentage turnout understated.

## **Preparations for the Elections**

### **Voter Registration**

Section 58(1) of the Constitution provides for the Electoral Commission to have general responsibility for and supervision of the registration of electors for the election of Members of Parliament.

The registration of electors was conducted under the provisions of the Local Government (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 1964 as provided for by section 6(2) of the National Parliament (Electoral Provisions) Act 1980. Registration and Revising Officers were appointed on 10 June 2001 by the Electoral Commission in each constituency to undertake the registration activities. Compilation of the Registers of Electors was carried out centrally through a computerised data entry centre established at the Electoral Commission Office in Honiara. This process was made possible by the provision of funds and technical assistance officers by donors, principally Australia, New Zealand, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Registration of electors commenced on 30 June 2001 and ended on 31 October 2001. An initial Voters' List was published on 12 September 2001 and there was a period of claims and objections between 22 September and 1 October. This was followed by a revision of the voters' list which was completed on 12 October 2001. The settlement of lists and public inquiries by Revising Officers took place over a seven-day period at which time they were delivered back to Registration Officers. Where there were no claims and/or objections the settlement of the voters' list was undertaken and completed earlier. The final voters' list comprising 287,921 electors was published on 27 November 2001, which was clearly an inflated figure considering that the latest census suggests that of the 430,000 population, approximately 50 per cent are below the age of 18.

Voter registration saw an increase of about 81,000 more registered voters than for the last general election. The high increase in numbers of registered electors was attributed in the main to double registration and in some instances to the inclusion of dead people on the electoral list as well as to the registration of under-age voters. It has to be noted that in Solomon Islands, birth certificates are not normally issued and death certificates are not notified to the Registration Officer. It is therefore not possible to verify a person's age or to correct the register by completely excluding the names of those who have died. We understand that the base register was that used in the 1998 local government elections, which would tend to increase the number of deceased left on the register.

We noted that while the voter registration process aimed at ensuring the registration of as many eligible voters as possible, no provision was made to accommodate those voters who were not in their electoral constituency at the time of registration. There is no provision in the Local Government (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 1964 that the voter must register in the constituency in which she/he resides. It is common practice for persons to register at a place other than where they currently reside and there was considerable doubt in many potential voters' minds as to whether they could register where they now live or where they were born. As a result we witnessed many voters returning to their constituencies to vote by irregular and often hazardous means. There could also be important political reasons for



candidates to encourage voters to vote in their home islands particularly as some constituencies have so few voters.

We believe that the Electoral Commission should undertake a review of these practices and regulations relating to voter registration so as to ensure the accuracy of the voters' list and more comprehensive voter registration. This would also be enhanced by an extension of the time-frame for registration as well as for the publication of a Supplementary List of Voters which would reduce the risk of omitting eligible voters who for legitimate reasons had been unable to register during the designated registration period. The Claims and Objections period should also be extended. Many people to whom we spoke were dissatisfied with the voters' list, which was far from accurate.

We were concerned at the lack of facilities for ensuring the registration of the incapacitated voters as well as helping them to vote on polling day. In some instances, it appeared that a number of voters had not registered due to their own apathy. In other cases, it was clear that voters had not registered as they were frightened to do so.

### Voter Education and Training

In our discussions with the Electoral Commission and other groups including political parties, the media and civil society, we formed the impression that the voter education process was objective and impartial. A joint awareness campaign was undertaken to inform electors about their rights and responsibilities, the importance of the forthcoming elections and the technical aspects of where and when to vote. This was communicated through role-playing and wide use of the print and the radio (there being no local television). Voting guidelines were widely circulated by organisations such as the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) and the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT), while detailed instructions were relayed by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) on a regular basis.

It was apparent that the Electoral Commission had provided ample training for election officers with international support. Detailed duties and instructions were issued for Election Managers and Returning Officers who in turn trained Presiding Officers, Polling Assistants and Counting Agents. Comprehensive notes on the electoral process were also provided for prospective candidates, while a manual to assist the police as well as terms of reference and a Code of Conduct for all international and local observers were instituted.

### Nominations

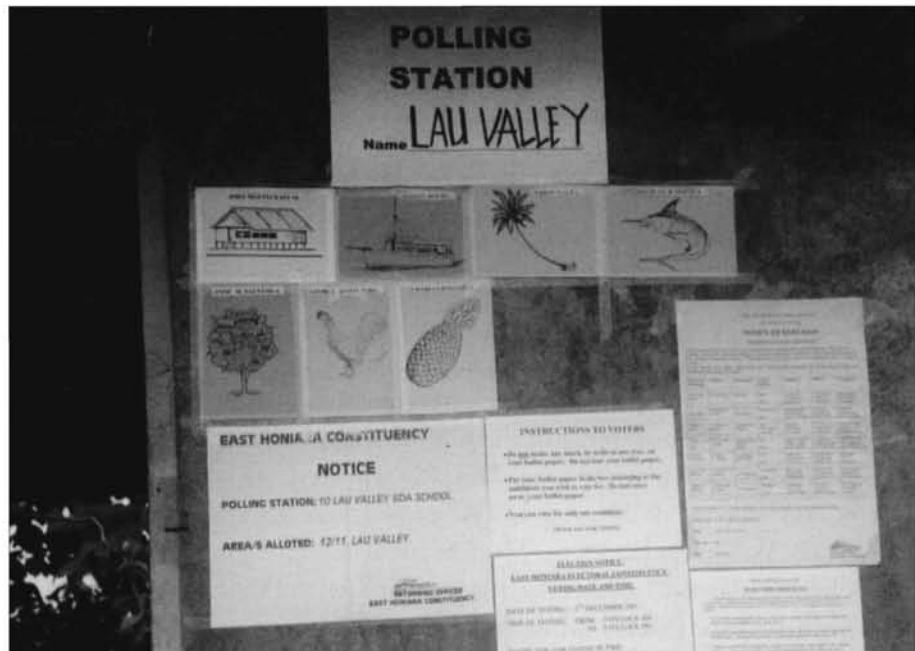
A general election of members of the National Parliament is held on a day fixed by proclamation directed by the Governor-General. The date of the election must not be earlier than 42 days after the proclamation. Following the proclamation, a Notice of Election (which must be published within seven days of the date of publication of the proclamation) is published by each Constituency Returning Officer under section 25 of the National Parliament (Electoral Provisions) Act 1980. The Act sets out the procedure for nominating candidates for election. It provides *inter alia* that Returning Officers are not to accept nominations of candidates unless they are proposed by three electors who are ordinarily resident in the constituency for which the

.....  
*Voting guidelines were widely circulated by organisations such as the Solomon Islands Christian Association and the Solomon Islands Development Trust, while detailed instructions were relayed by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation on a regular basis*  
.....

candidate is nominated and whose parents or either of the parents appear on the electoral list for that constituency or in the relevant province. (This stipulation does not apply to a constituency which is in, or partly in Honiara.)

Candidates can only be nominated once by a single elector and not more than in one constituency. A non-refundable deposit of two thousand (2,000) SI dollars must also be lodged on behalf of each candidate. Invalid nominations can be challenged through the presentation of election petitions to the High Court in its civil jurisdiction as provided for in sections 82 and 83 of the National Parliament (Electoral Provisions) Act 1980 (CAP 87). Provision is also made for the withdrawal of candidature.

**SYMBOLS . . .** notice-board at a polling station in East Honiara constituency shows the symbols allocated to candidates in that constituency on a first come first served basis



A list of 30 symbols, each on a coloured background, was approved by the Electoral Commission and allocated to each candidate on a first come first served basis. Symbols could not be used by more than one candidate in a constituency, neither could a symbol allocated to a candidate be used for any purposes by another candidate. While symbols are designed to assist the illiterate voter to vote, their impact was severely limited because they had no consistent political party relevance. We recommend that the use of such symbols be thoroughly examined and their future use possibly discontinued. They certainly played a very limited role in the electoral process.

### External Assistance

The Electoral Commission received substantial financial and technical assistance from a number of countries and international organisations, principally Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the EU, to ensure the proper conduct of the elections. This included specialists in voter awareness and voter registration as well as in legal assistance and the production of election materials. It was clear that without such international support it would not have been possible to hold the elections due to the low state of preparedness of the Electoral Commission.

## CHAPTER 3

---

# The Campaign and the Media

## Campaign Methods

Although there is no official campaign period in Solomon Islands, section 78 of the National Parliament (Electoral Provisions) Act 1980 infers that campaigning may take place from the date of proclamation to the date of publication of the results. Candidates would normally start their campaigning as soon as they had been validly nominated and allocated their symbol with background colour. Campaign rules for electoral campaign activities, candidates and their supporters were however included in the manual issued for the guidance of the police on security arrangements. However, campaigning was not allowed within 50 yards of the polling station, while no address system was allowed within 200 yards of the perimeter of any polling station.



**ON THE ROAD . . .**  
campaigning for a  
candidate

Candidates used posters with pictures of themselves displaying their symbols and parties, where applicable, while two parties (PAP and Labour) made their manifestos available to us.

It is our understanding that candidates also held village meetings and campaigned from door to door. We however saw no rallies and in one instance attended a political meeting. We also witnessed two motorcades on the eve of the poll which were peaceful.

## Campaign Expenses

In accordance with section 45 of the 1980 Act as amended, each candidate must:

- (a) not exceed the total amount of fifty thousand (50,000) SI dollars;

- (b) submit a Statement of Account, specifying all expenses incurred by the candidate in the election campaign, within one month of the declaration of the result for the respective constituency.

It is our understanding that there is no mechanism to control or account for campaign expenditure and at the last elections no returns of campaign expenditure were submitted. We recommend that a review of campaign rules should be undertaken, and enforcement action implemented.

It is to be noted that every Member of Parliament receives a Constituency Development Fund (CDF) of approximately SI\$500,000 each year for development projects in their constituency, which gives the incumbent MP an unfair advantage. However, because of the lack of funds, no CDF payments were made in the year preceding the 2001 elections. Many incumbents failed to be re-elected.

## **Key Policy Issues**

In our discussions with all of the groups we met, we noted that the major policy issues were the restoration of law and order through the re-establishment of confidence in the disciplinary forces, the disarmament of militants and an urgent desire on the part of many Solomon Islanders for a return to peace. Other key issues were the economic recovery of Solomon Islands and the need for the introduction of a suitable political structure.

## **The Media**

We met with representatives of media organisations.

It was explained to us that the broadcast media in Solomon Islands comprised the public sector owned radio station, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC), and privately owned Paoa FM.

Two newspapers are owned by journalists who started them. One is the daily *Solomon Star* and the other is the weekly *Solomon Express*.

Unfortunately, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation had received no money from the Government and had thus been forced to demand payment. Voter education broadcasts had therefore to be financed by the donors. Donors had also provided additional finance for public sector broadcasting during the elections. In the same way, donors provided money to the Electoral Commission to pay for advertisements of candidates standing, locations of polling stations, counting centres and electoral results. Candidates were able to obtain 30 to 40-second and 15-minute radio slots which they had to pay for in advance at an agreed rate. Similarly, the newspapers would report news items concerning the elections at their editorial discretion. Any candidate or party wishing to use their columns had to pay before publication in the same way as any other advertiser. The result was that only the richest candidates and parties could use the media for election purposes. We recommend that each candidate should, by right, be given free access and equal time allocation to the radio.

The Group was on the whole impressed by the national election awareness coverage provided by the SIBC, which was part of a joint awareness campaign with the Electoral Commission.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Poll and the Count



**MAKING SURE . . .**  
voters checking  
registration numbers at  
a polling station on  
polling day

On Wednesday, 5 December 2001, polling stations were scheduled to open at 7 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. While some of us were able to witness the opening of the poll, others were unable to do so as the ballot boxes had been closed before the arrival of all polling agents. At most of the polling stations we visited, there were few people in the queue, but most persons to whom we spoke expressed their satisfaction with the manner in which the poll was conducted. We were, however, concerned that in some instances the procedures were not entirely followed in accordance with the manual prepared by the Electoral Commission for Presiding Officers and Polling Assistants.

Since the last elections in 1997, the number of polling stations had been increased from 566 to 749. In addition, it had been decided that on average, no more than 750 voters would cast their ballot at any polling station. These additional provisions appeared to work very well in reducing waiting times to vote.

Most polling stations were located in schools, community centres and public buildings. A few were located in private residences. In the majority of cases, they were well lit and adequate space was provided for accommodating electors and polling staff. We were satisfied that the secrecy of the ballot was assured although in some cases this could be compromised in the following ways:

- the elector was left alone in the enclosed polling booth thereby making it possible to come out with the ballot paper;
- in some instances, the ballot box keyhole was not sealed;
- the random and inconsistent order in which the ballot boxes were placed in the polling booths could have influenced voter choice;
- ballot papers were handed to voters folded, thus obscuring the signature of the Presiding Officer and the serial number, resulting in invalid votes; and

- we also observed that where there were women candidates, their boxes were placed at the furthest position from the entrance.

We were informed that in one instance the distribution of ballot boxes was allegedly held up until the register included the names of a number of supporters. It is further alleged that the opening of the polling station was delayed in contravention of the instructions issued to Presiding Officers.

In the North Malaita constituency, it was observed that with the exception of one voter, an entire village was omitted from the electoral list and were therefore disenfranchised. The village was known to be openly supportive of a particular candidate. We cannot rule out therefore that significant intimidation of voters took place in those two constituencies, particularly as those elected were leaders of militant groups.

We observed that in many cases, the names of the electors were not called out by the Polling Assistant and were generally inaudible when this was done. At some polling stations, processing of voters remained slow during voting hours. The presence of security officers, though strong, was discreet in most places.

A few cases of personation were reported, in which case the persons involved were arrested by the police.

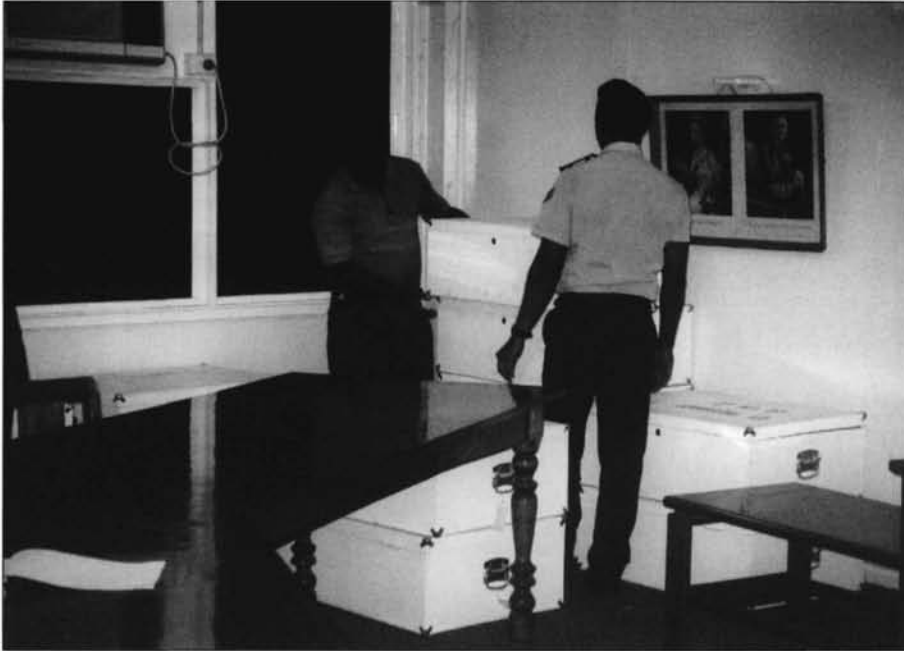
**INK MARK . . .**  
voters had  
indelible ink  
applied to the little  
finger of the left  
hand, to prevent  
the possibility of  
double voting



In Honiara City, the turnout was 32.08 per cent in West Honiara; 32.2 per cent in Central Honiara and 29.39 per cent in East Honiara. In other islands, the percentage ranged from 56.58 per cent in Malaita/Baegu/Asifola to 80.89 per cent in Makira/Ulawa/Ugi.

This was attributed to the fact that most persons residing in Honiara had withdrawn to their provinces of origin where they had also registered to vote. Double voting was prevented by the use of indelible ink applied to the little finger of the left hand.

We were concerned that a number of Presiding Officers and police officers on duty at polling stations where they did not register were disenfranchised



**BRIEFLY IN STORAGE . . .**  
ballot boxes were stored  
in crates prior to the  
count at the counting  
centre

because their names were not on the register. This situation must also apply to other voters engaged in essential services and should be redressed for future elections.

## **Close of Poll and Count**

In most areas the poll closed as scheduled at 5 p.m., although we observed in one case the polling booth was closed much earlier. Although most Presiding Officers followed the procedures for the close of poll, there were instances where the sealing of the ballot boxes was not executed in accordance with set procedures. This may be attributed to the lack of a clear understanding of the procedures as set out in the *Manual for Presiding Officers and Polling Assistants*. The transit period from polling station to counting centre was in some cases well over three days. Counting at each polling station immediately after the close of poll might be quicker and more secure in future elections.

The count, though orderly, was very slow and tedious. Generally, the transparent method of counting the votes – whereby the ballot boxes are taken from the crates in which they were stored, emptied and counted in batches of tens by officers in the presence of representatives of candidates – is to be commended. However, the sorting, opening and counting of ballot papers by the Returning Officer who then passed them on to the Assistant Returning Officer for a re-count followed by an announcement of the total votes for each candidate by the Counting Officer unnecessarily prolonged the process. This procedure should be reviewed to expedite the count. After the count, the Returning Officer verified the election results by cross-checking the total figure with those in attendance. We recommend that consideration be given to the provision of a single ballot box with a ballot paper listing all the candidates.

The presence of observers was acknowledged and warmly welcomed. We encountered no difficulty in observing the count and were very impressed by the spirit of co-operation among all those present.

**KEEPING TALLY . . .**  
counting of votes



## **Security of the Poll**

The Electoral Commission produced a *Guidance Manual for the Police on Security Arrangements* for election-related activities, particularly in respect of events leading up to polling day itself and the period immediately following polling day. The *Manual* was also aimed at improving police awareness and understanding of the election process.

Security and the maintenance of law and order on election day was the responsibility of the police. Each polling station included members of the regular Solomon Islands Police Force (SIPF) and special constables. Members of the Police Field Force (PFF) were stationed at police stations to assist with security arrangements on polling day, if necessary. Members of the Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) were also present in Guadalcanal and Malaita.

The presence of the police at the securing of all election material and during transportation to counting centres, as well as their presence at the latter, lent credibility to the process.

The International Peace Monitoring Team provided logistical support to the Electoral Commission in the transportation of ballot boxes to polling stations and counting centres as well as transporting some international observers to and from polling stations. The Australian and New Zealand Governments also provided additional air and boat transportation which was crucial to the success of the elections.

## **Announcement of Election Results**

Up to the time of writing our Report, final results were still outstanding in seven constituencies. Pending the declaration of the final results, it was not possible to determine which party or group of independent candidates would





**OUTCOME . . .**  
patiently awaiting  
announcement of  
results in Honiara

eventually command the support to elect a Prime Minister and form the government. As these events unfold, we are concerned that the success of the elections might be jeopardised and the selection of a Prime Minister further delayed. Such developments would unfortunately detract from what have otherwise been praiseworthy achievements in these elections.

# Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

We formed our Conclusions and Recommendations while examining most aspects of the election process during the Solomon Islands National Parliamentary elections in accordance with our terms of reference, which state, *inter alia*, that the Group “would ... be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.”

## Conclusions

- The people of Solomon Islands should be congratulated for the orderly and disciplined manner in which they conducted themselves on polling day.
- While in most instances the secrecy of the ballot was assured, this was compromised in certain areas by the inadequacy of voting arrangements.
- The arrangements for provision of materials and staff for polling stations were adequate.
- The procedures were generally understood and followed with some exceptions.
- Election officers were co-operative, helpful and willing to share information.
- Voter education and awareness seemed adequate.
- The count was thorough and transparent although the counting process was excessively slow.
- The presence of international observers was well received by the Electoral Commission, political parties and the voters.
- In some places where we observed, there was some measure of intimidation of voters by the presence of special (armed) constables.
- Presiding Officers had no means of communication with the Electoral Commission.

We also note that:

- Prior to polling day, there were serious doubts about the adequacy and credibility of the voters' list, which will only be dispelled following a new registration exercise.
- We saw very few women engaged at a senior level in the management of the elections.
- There were very few women candidates and the sole female MP in the last Parliament was defeated. As a result, there will be no women in the new Parliament.
- Provisions for the incapacitated were inadequate and accessibility in some cases very difficult, if not impossible.

## Recommendations

- The Electoral Law should be reviewed.
- A review of the use of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) should be undertaken to avoid abuse of the advantages of incumbency.
- More encouragement and support should be given to women to stand for election and to participate in the political life of the country.

- While police officers exercised their responsibilities discreetly, the numbers of police deployed at some polling stations were excessive.
- Arrangements for the speedier transportation of ballot boxes to counting centres should be improved.
- The administration of birth and death certificates should be improved to help to ensure the integrity of the voters' list.
- Separate voting arrangements should be made to ensure voting by the disciplined and essential services if they are not registered to vote in the constituency where they are deployed.
- The establishment of a permanent Electoral Office would facilitate continuous registration of voters.
- A Supplementary List should be issued to ensure late registration of voters.
- The period for Claims and Objections should be extended.
- The use of symbols should be reviewed.
- Consideration should be given to the future integration of the Electoral Commission with the Constituency Boundaries Commission; pending this the Electoral Commissioner should be made an *ex officio* member of the Constituency Boundaries Commission.
- A review of the number and boundaries of constituencies should be undertaken as soon as possible.
- Campaign Policy guidelines should be introduced to prevent campaigning right up to the day of poll.
- Media campaign should be provided free by the state on the basis of equal time allocation.
- A method of accounting for campaign expenditure should be devised and enforced.
- A voter's card should be issued to each voter bearing the name of the polling station, the voter's name and registration number to reduce the problems now encountered by Presiding Officers in identifying the voter on the electoral register.
- We recommend that serious consideration should be given to the provision of a single ballot box with ballot papers listing candidates which voters must mark against the candidate of their choice.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to place on record our sincere appreciation to the many organisations and individuals who assisted us during our stay in Solomon Islands. We wish to thank in particular the Electoral Commission for its co-operation and assistance. We also want to express our appreciation for the co-operation of Commonwealth High Commissioners, the European Union, the political parties, the media, Church leaders, the non-governmental organisations and others whose briefings greatly assisted us in our work.

We highly valued the co-operation and close working relationship with our colleagues in the Pacific Islands Forum Observer team, and other international observers.

We were grateful for the assistance of our interpreters and drivers, and thank all those we met for the warm welcome and support which we received. We take this opportunity to wish the people of Solomon Islands well for the future.

Finally, we thank the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, for giving us the opportunity to serve the Commonwealth in this way. We also wish to place on record our appreciation for the help and support from the cheerfully dedicated and professional staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat without whom we could not have fulfilled our mandate.

## ANNEX I

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### **Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group**

#### **Mr Bowen Wells (United Kingdom – Chairperson)**

Mr Bowen Wells is at present an international development specialist and is on the UK and International Board of CARE, as well as a member of the Board of the African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). He was a Member of Parliament for 22 years (1979-2001) and held ministerial office becoming Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury. During his parliamentary career he was a long-standing member of the Foreign Affairs and European Legislation Select Committee and became the founding Chairman of the International Development Committee (1997-2001). At present Mr Wells is working on projects for African agriculture, constitutional change and holding workshops in Botswana, Malawi and South Africa on strengthening Parliaments.

#### **Ambassador Lucy Bogari (Papua New Guinea)**

Ms Lucy Bogari is a senior Foreign Service Officer in the Papua New Guinea Foreign Service for over 20 years. She has served both at home and at missions in Asia, Europe and the Pacific. Until recently, Ms Bogari was Head of Economic and Development Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She has led many high-level delegations on behalf of her Government in negotiations with foreign donors and economic partners of Papua New Guinea. Ms Bogari is currently Papua New Guinea's High Commissioner to New Zealand.

#### **Hon Peter C Fonso, MP (Cameroon)**

Mr Peter Fonso is a Member of Parliament in Cameroon. He is also the Electoral District Secretary for the leading Opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), and has occupied this position for the past 10 years. He is very involved in politics and the democratic process in Cameroon. He was a member of the Counting Commission during the presidential election of 1992 and the Councils Supervisory Commission of 1996. Mr Fonso did his tertiary education in the United Kingdom. From 1968 to 1983 he served as a senior education officer and as a former diplomat for Cameroon in the UK. At present he is a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cameroon National Assembly.

#### **Mr Hendrick Gappy (Seychelles)**

Mr Hendrick Gappy is the Electoral Commissioner and the Registrar of Political Parties. He is responsible for the registration process and the delimitation of election boundaries. He has overseen six national elections and in 2001 organised the presidential election. Mr Gappy holds the post of Census Commissioner and was formerly the Director-General responsible for the National Statistics and National Information System. During the 1994

South African elections, Mr Gappy held the post of Commonwealth technical adviser. He has been involved in several election observer missions including to the 1999 Mozambican elections where he was a Southern African Development Community (SADC) observer. Mr Gappy is a member of the Executive Committee of the SADC Electoral Forum.

**Secretariat Support Staff**

Mrs Judith Pestaina

*Team Leader*

Mr Albert Mariner

*Assistant to Observers*

Ms Charlene Lee Ling

*Administrative Assistant*

## Arrival Statement, 28 November 2001



### Commonwealth Observer Group

Solomon Islands General Election, 5 December 2001

Tel: 00 677 20071  
Fax: 00 677 23942

Solomon Kitano Hotel  
PO Box 384  
Mendana Avenue  
Honiara  
Solomon Islands

**ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY MR BOWEN WELLS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**

We are pleased to be here in Solomon Islands. We have come in response to a request from the Government of Solomon Islands through the Electoral Commission to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. the Rt. Honourable Don McKinnon, for the Commonwealth to observe your National Parliament Elections on 5 December 2001.

As Chairman of this Commonwealth Observer Group, I feel it is important that I explain to the people of Solomon Islands the purpose of our visit here and the way we intend to go about our work.

The Group's objective is to observe the organisation and conduct of the elections in accordance with the laws of Solomon Islands. We will abide by your laws. And, above all, we will respect your people. We hope to meet as many of you as possible. We will consult widely and take every opportunity to see the process for ourselves.

We have no executive role and will not interfere in the process. At every stage we will act with neutrality, impartiality, objectivity and independence. Each of us participates in our individual capacities. We represent the whole Commonwealth rather than the countries from which we have come. We are independent of our governments, and most certainly independent of any political influence in this country.

Our concern is purely with the electoral process. Our mandate is to:

- consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole;
- determine in our own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors; and
- determine if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

In order to make such a judgement, we will aim to arrive at a broad overview of the process. We will not be able to be present at every polling station or counting centre, but we hope that we will be able to take a representative sample. We hope to work in close co-operation with the other international observers.

We met earlier this morning with the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, Mr Paul Tovua and his colleagues at the Electoral Commission. We will also be meeting with political parties, non-governmental parties and others. After we have witnessed the immediate pre-election period, the campaigning and the media, we will observe the polling itself and the count. To this end, on Sunday 2 December, we will deploy around the country to observe the election on the ground. We will return here after polling to consider and write our report, before we depart.

We will subsequently submit our report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will in turn forward it to the Government of Solomon Islands, the Electoral Commission, the leadership of all the political parties taking part in the election and then to all Commonwealth governments. The report will be made publicly available, here and throughout the Commonwealth.

28 November 2001



## ANNEX III

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### Schedule of Engagements

#### Tuesday, 27 November

1830 Meeting with Commonwealth High Commissioners (Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, United Kingdom)

#### Wednesday, 28 November

0800 Briefing by Advance Observer: Ambassador Lucy Bogari  
0900 Electoral Commission: Mr Paul Tovua (Chairman), Mr John Babalu (Chief Electoral Officer), Mr Ranjit Hewagama (Solicitor-General, Legal Adviser), Mr James Remobatu (Commissioner)  
1100 Press Conference  
1330 People's Progressive Party: Mr Michael Maina  
1430 Labour Party: Mr Tony Kangovai, General Secretary  
1530 Solomon Islands Alliance for Change: Mr Bartholomew Ulufa'alu (Liberal Party) and Mr Francis Billy Hilly (National Party)  
1615 Independent Members of Parliament Movement: Mr Thomas Koh Chan

#### Thursday, 29 November

0900 People's Alliance Party: Sir George Lepping (National President), Sir David Kausimae (Vice-President), Dr John M Fugui (Political Adviser), Mr Edward Kingmele (General Secretary)  
1000 Media Organisations: Mr Johnson Honimae (Director, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation), Mr George Atkins (Publisher, *Solomon Express*), Ms Mary Louise O'Callaghan (Pacific Correspondent for *The Australian*), Ms June Mani (Paoa FM), Mr Imo Taasi (*Solomon Star*), Ms Dorothy Wickham (freelance)  
1100 Peace Monitoring Council: Sir Peter Kenilorea  
1330 International Peace Monitoring Team: Ms Kate Steains (Leader) and Mr Peter Noble (Deputy Leader)  
1430 Co-ordinators of Logistics for International Observers: Mr Graham Elson and Ms Stephanie Chetwynd  
1530 Women's Organisations: Ms Ethel Sigimanu (Head of Women's Development, Ministry of Youth), Ms Josephine Teakeni (Solomon Islands Women & Communication Network), Ms Apollonia Tabo (National Council of Women of Guadalcanal), Ms Naelyn John (Dorcas Women's Organisation, affiliated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church), Ms Ruth Liloqula (employed with the Ministry of Police and Justice and Legal Services), Solomon Islands Family Support Centre, Mothers' Union (affiliated with the Anglican Church)

**Friday, 30 November**

- 0900 Mr Tom Leemans, European Union  
1100 Courtesy call on the Governor-General  
1400 Briefing by representatives of Churches: Archbishop Adrian Smith (Catholic Church – Peace Process Committee), Archbishop Sir Ellison Pogo (Church of Melanesia, Anglican), Father Norman Arkwright (Solomon Islands Christian Association, SICA), Mr Bob Pollard (SICA), Mr Philip Funifaka (SICA)  
1600 Visit to Electoral Commission

**Saturday, 1 December**

- 1000 Deployment Briefing  
1400 Logistics Briefing and Accreditation of all international observers – Mr Graham Elson and Electoral Commissioner

**Monday, 3 December**

- 0630 Deployment

## ANNEX IV

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### Deployment of Commonwealth Observers

| Team   | Base Location                |
|--|------------------------------|
| Mr Bowen Wells<br>Mrs Judith Pestaina        | Central Honiara              |
| Mr Peter Fonso<br>Mr Albert Mariner          | West Honiara                 |
| Mr Hendrick Gappy<br>*Mr John Corrie, MEP    | Manikaraku, Guadalcanal      |
| Ambassador Lucy Bogari<br>'Mr Richard Pebble | Malu'u, Malaita              |
| Ms Charlene Lee Ling<br>'Mr Ken Averre       | Shortlands, Western Province |

*\*Leader of the European Union Observation Team*

*'Member of the International Group of Observers*

## Interim Statement, 5 December 2001



### Commonwealth Observer Group

Solomon Islands General Election, 5 December 2001

Tel: 00 677 20071  
Fax: 00 677 23942

Solomon Kitano Hotel  
PO Box 384  
Mendana Avenue  
Honiara  
Solomon Islands

#### **INTERIM STATEMENT BY MR BOWEN WELLS, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**

The Commonwealth Observer Group arrived in the Solomon Islands on 27 November 2001. The Group consists of 4 experienced Commonwealth persons and three support staff.

The mandate of the Commonwealth Observer Group is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the National Elections in accordance with the laws of the Solomon Islands and to determine whether the conditions existed for a free expression of will by the electors.

The Group began its work with a briefing by the Electoral Commission, political parties, women's groups, church groups, the media and other groups.

In spite of the transport difficulties in the Solomon Islands, we were able to go to 5 provinces during the final stages of the campaign. On polling day, we visited 52 polling stations in Honiara as well as polling stations in Western Province, Malaita, North West and South East Guadalcanal where we were able to witness the opening and close of polls. We will also be present at the count in the areas to which we were deployed.

Up to the close of poll and in the areas where we observed the count, we were impressed with the open, transparent and professional manner in which the election officers conducted the poll. The polling stations opened and closed at the appointed times and we were struck by the orderliness and patience of electors and the role played by the security forces which contributed to the smooth conduct of the polls.

The picture that emerged as the polls closed was of an election day, which was peaceful. The Electoral Commission and their polling station officials should be commended for helping to ensure the success of polling day. In all the stations visited by us, representatives of candidates expressed their satisfaction with the conduct of the poll.

Whilst we received no complaints from voters about the voting process, we were however concerned that in a number of places voters were unable to vote due to inaccuracies in the compilation of the electoral register. The turnout of voters in Honiara was disappointingly small but this may be accounted for by the large number who have left Honiara to vote in Malaita and other islands. We will be issuing a

Departure Statement before leaving the Solomon Islands and make a more thorough assessment of what we have observed after the count when we will have consulted our colleagues in Malaita, Western Province and South Guadalcanal. We will send our final report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

**Honiara  
5 December 2001**

## Departure Statement, 9 December 2001



### Commonwealth Observer Group

Solomon Islands General Election, 5 December 2001

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#### *News Release*

**DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY MR BOWEN WELLS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**

We have now completed our observation of the 2001 National Parliamentary Election in Solomon Islands.

We would like to express our gratitude for the warm welcome and support extended to us by the people of Solomon Islands, the political parties, members of the Press and the Electoral Commission and many other people involved in Solomon Islands life.

In our Interim Statement, I commented positively on the conduct of the elections. In some constituencies, it is clear that the results are unreliable but overall the outcome of the elections has succeeded in expressing the will of the people. In our report, we have made recommendations and suggestions as to how the electoral process could be improved. These are made with the hope of ensuring that the Electoral Commission is able to continue its work with the continued help of the Commonwealth and donors, thus enabling it to strengthen the democratic process in Solomon Islands.

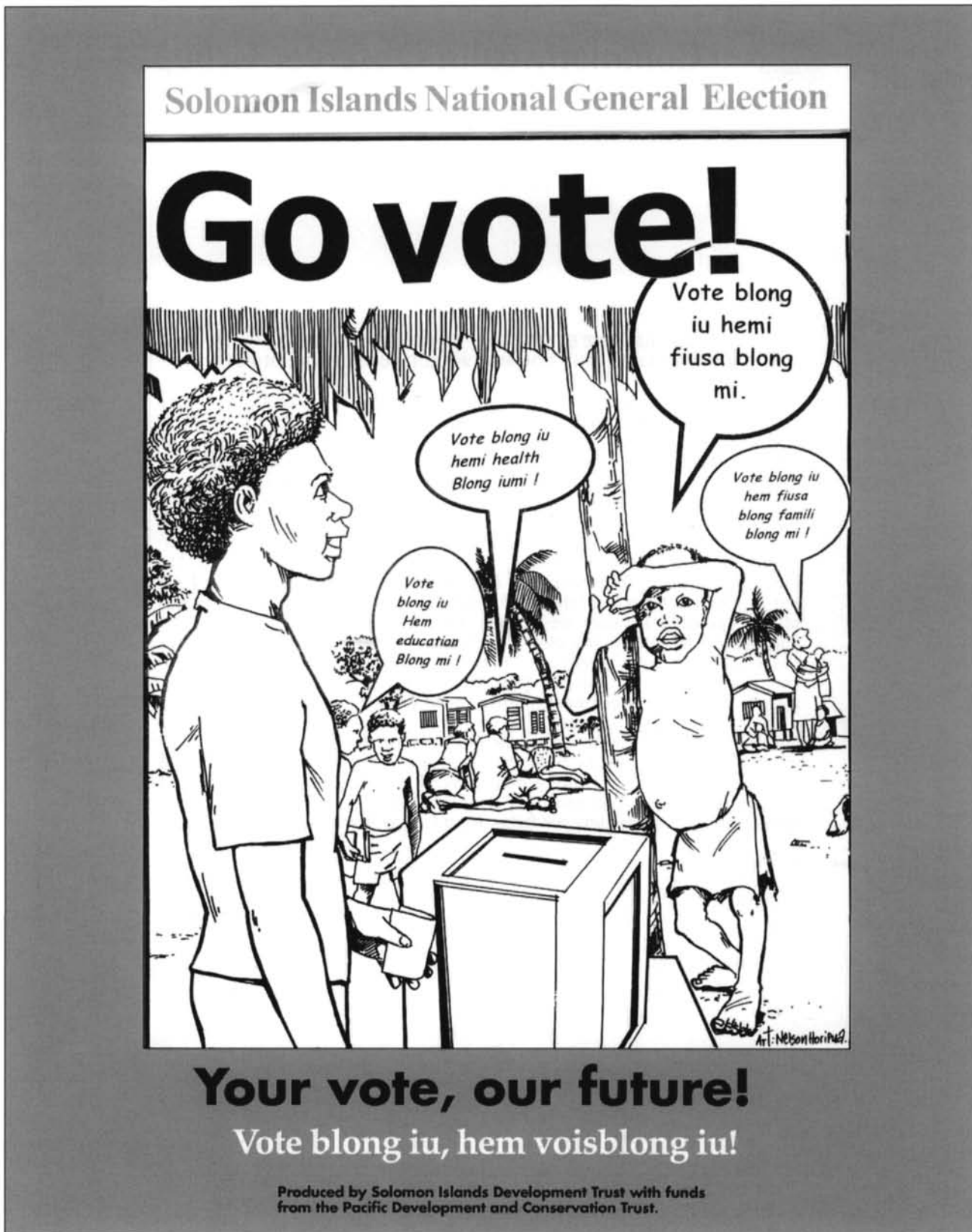
For the Solomon Islands to make progress following this election, it is essential that all aspects of governance are improved starting with the enforcement of law and order without which it is impossible for development to take place. Once the Solomon Islanders begin to believe in themselves, investment in the economy will follow from foreign investors.

As we leave, we hope that the success of the elections will not be jeopardised by any delay in the election of the Prime Minister and the Government which commands the support of the vast majority of the people of the Solomon islands.

It has been a pleasure to observe the elections.

9 December 2001

## Voter Awareness Campaign Poster



# Observation Notes and Checklist for Polling Station Visits

|     |  |                                  |                                   |
|-----|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8.  | <b>Domestic Observers present</b>          | No/Yes                           | Details:                          |
| 9.  | <b>Atmosphere at Station</b>               | Orderly?                         | Tense? Chaotic?                   |
| 10. | <b>Secrecy of the Ballot</b>               | Assured?                         | Poor? Uncertain?                  |
| 11. | <b>Voting</b>                              |                                  |                                   |
|     | (a) Personation attempts alleged:          |                                  | No/Yes                            |
|     | (b) Multiple voting attempts alleged:      |                                  | No/Yes                            |
|     | (c) Women deterred from voting<br>Details: |                                  | No/Yes                            |
| 12. | <b>Closing of Poll</b>                     | On time?<br>Procedures followed? | Numbers still in queue?<br>No/Yes |
| 13. | <b>The Count</b>                           | Are procedures being observed?   | No/Yes                            |
| 14. | <b>Post Count</b>                          | Procedures followed?             | Boxes secure?<br>No/Yes           |
| 15. | <b>Apparent fairness overall?</b>          | Good?                            | Acceptable? Questionable?         |
| 16. | <b>Other Comments</b>                      |                                  |                                   |

**COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**  
**SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL PARLIAMENT ELECTION**  
5 December 2001

**CHECKLIST FOR POLLING STATION VISITS**

Team Members: .....

Constituency: .....

Island: .....

Polling Station: .....

Time of Arrival: .....

Time of Departure: .....

Voters in Queue: .....

---

|    |                                   |   |                                |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. | <b>Opening of Poll</b>            | On time?<br>No/Yes  | Procedures followed?<br>No/Yes |
| 2. | <b>Register Process</b>           | State of Register<br>Is there a Supplementary Register?<br>Are there many objections? | Are voters on it?<br>Poor?     |
| 3. | <b>Layout and Facilities</b>      | Good?   | Adequate? Poor?                |
| 4. | <b>Polling Staff</b>              | Efficient?  | Satisfactory? Poor?            |
| 5. | <b>Security Presence</b>          | Discreet?   | Intrusive? Oppressive?         |
| 6. | <b>Complaints by Party Agents</b> | No/Yes  | Details:                       |
| 7. | <b>Complaints by Voters</b>       | No/Yes  | Details:                       |

**COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP  
SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
5 December 2001**

**OBSERVATION NOTES FOR POLL AND COUNT**

**PART A**

The Observers may focus particular attention on the following aspects of the conduct of the election:

**THE CAMPAIGN**

1. Balance of Radio election coverage and extent and nature of access by party and other candidates.
2. Print media: nature of coverage and extent of access by the political parties.
3. The tone and content of material put out by the candidates, access to printing facilities.
4. The conduct of political meetings/rallies (permits for public meetings?).
5. The conduct of house-to-house canvassing of voters.
6. Nature, scale and effectiveness of Electoral Commission and other voter education on radio, in the print media and by other methods.
7. Activities/measures to encourage the participation of women.
8. Access to funds and sources of funds.

Note: because the campaign will have effectively ended by the time you are deployed much of the evidence of the above is likely to be anecdotal and/or second hand information.

**THE POLL**

1. The location of polling stations.
2. Distances travelled by voters to polling booths, particularly in rural areas.
3. The procedure followed at the opening of the poll.
4. The length of time voters wait to cast their votes.
5. The adequacy or otherwise of facilities at polling stations and their state of readiness.
6. Availability of adequate supplies, e.g. ballot papers, official stamps and stamp pads etc.
7. The performance of electoral officials at the polling stations visited.
8. The procedures in place to ensure proper security of ballot papers, ballot boxes and official seals.
9. Arrangements to facilitate voting by women.
10. The steps taken to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is assured.
11. The general atmosphere at the polling stations visited.
12. Access of party agents and domestic observers to polling stations.
13. Whether illiterate voters are assured of a vote in secret.
14. Whether the security of ballot boxes overnight is assured.
15. Security of boxes in transit.

**THE COUNT**

1. Inspection of seals.
2. The process of reconciling the number of people who voted with the number of ballots in the boxes.

3. The determination of invalid ballots.
4. The facilities for party agents and their representatives to witness and verify the count and overall transparency.
5. Access by domestic and international observers.
6. The conduct of election officers.

**PART B**

Questions that may be put and which you may ask yourself:

1. Was the Voters' Register compiled in a satisfactory way? Were people missed out? Were the names of dead people or "phantom voters" included?
2. Who are the election officials? How were they chosen? Are voters confident that they will be impartial?
3. Is the person in the street satisfied with arrangements? Will he/she vote? If not, is he/she afraid to do so? Were there any attempts to discourage/encourage the participation of women and were they effective?
4. Have all parties been able to campaign freely? Has the campaign been free of intimidation etc? Have all parties had full access to the mass media?
5. Is there freedom to advertise and distribute posters, leaflets etc?

**ON POLLING DAY**

1. Before polling starts, are the ballot boxes empty? Are they properly sealed? Are all procedures being adhered to?
2. Are all the parties/candidates represented at polling stations? Are they satisfied with the process?
3. Are the voters apparently voting freely? Are they enthusiastic? Do they talk freely?
4. Do they exhibit signs of fear or intimidation?
5. Do voters understand the procedures properly? If not, are the procedures being explained fully and impartially? Are attempts being made to suggest how voters should vote?
6. Does the turnout indicate that women have been deterred from attending to vote?
7. Is only one person at a time being allowed into the voting compartment?
8. How long are voters waiting to vote? If a long time, are some being put off?
9. Will all parties be represented at the polling centres throughout voting and the count?
10. Are agents adequately trained and vigilant?
11. Will domestic and foreign observers have free access to all stages of the process?
12. Is the security presence effective/oppressive?

**THE COUNT**

1. Are the boxes kept safe until opened? Are all parties present at the Opening?
2. Does the number of used ballot papers tally with the record of those who voted?
3. Are the papers counted properly? Are counting agents present? Are they satisfied with the procedures of the count?
4. Are the proper procedures followed for declaring votes as invalid?
5. Is the result of the count posted on the wall of the polling station?



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