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# UNIVOIS NEWSLETTER

## SINU and Central Islands Province Explore Site for New Center for Islands Futures



### Honourable Michael Salini, Premier of the Central Islands Province, and his accompanying delegation for a high-level meeting with SINU Vice Chancellor, Professor Transform Aqorau.

On 7 April 2025, the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) was pleased to host the Honourable Michael Salini, Premier of the Central Islands Province, and his accompanying delegation for a high-level meeting with SINU Vice Chancellor, Professor Transform Aqorau.

The discussions centred on the proposal to establish the flagship Centre for Islands Futures (CIF) within the Central Islands Province, with particular interest in two proposed sites: Tulagi in Gela and Pavuvu in the Russell Islands.

The Centre for Islands Futures is a visionary initiative. It aims to position the Solomon Islands as a global leader in Indigenous knowledge systems, sustainable island governance, and climate-resilient development.

By embedding ancestral wisdom into academic curricula and applied research, the Centre will offer unique programmes and living laboratories that connect students with island communities, their environments, and cultural practices.

Premier Salini welcomed the opportunity to partner with SINU, stating, "the Central Islands Province, with its unique geography, rich cultural traditions, and accessibility, is ideally suited to host a Centre of this significance. Locating the CIF here will not only strengthen our province's development potential but also reaffirm our identity as custodians of knowledge deeply rooted in our islands' histories and futures."

The Centre's focus on "Living Labs" and Indigenous innovation will bring students and researchers into direct engagement with community-based sustainability solutions, traditional ecological knowledge, and local governance systems. Its proposed postgraduate and research programmes—ranging from climate adaptation to Indigenous governance—are expected to attract local and international scholars and catalyse new opportunities for economic and social advancement.

Vice Chancellor Professor Transform Aqorau emphasized the University's broader strategic commitment to decentralizing higher education and making it more accessible to rural and remote communities.

At SINU, we believe education should not be confined to urban centres. By bringing higher learning into our rural heartlands, we enable our people to study and thrive in their own environments. Establishing the Centre for Islands Futures in the Central Islands Province aligns with our mission to democratise knowledge and cultivate the next generation of critical thinkers, ethical leaders, and agents of sustainable change."

Two potential sites will now be subject to further scoping and feasibility assessments:

- Tulagi, the historical capital of the Solomon Islands, offering strategic maritime significance and infrastructure.
  - Pavuvu, located in the Russell Islands, known for its pristine environment and potential to serve as a model for sustainable island development.
- The CIF is supported through a collaborative framework involving SINU, the Islands Knowledge Institute (IKI), Arizona State University, and global partners such as Nia Tero. Its programmes will include postgraduate diplomas, master's and PhD opportunities, community-driven research hubs, and international summits on Island Futures.

The initiative further aligns with the Solomon Islands Government's national development goals and regional frameworks such as the Pacific Resilience Framework (2020–2030), supporting climate-resilient pathways for island nations.

As the CIF progresses towards its formal establishment, today's dialogue marks a significant step in forging place-based, people-centred solutions for a sustainable Pacific future. SINU and the Central Islands Province are committed to ensuring that the CIF becomes a beacon of excellence not just for Solomon Islanders, but for island peoples across the region and beyond.

# SINU Successfully hosts 2025 FALAH Return Homecoming Seminar



## FALAH participants and facilitators posed for a group photo.

The Solomon Islands National University (SINU) on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April successfully hosted the 2025 Family Farming, Lifestyle and Health (FALAH) Research Seminar.

The event featured eight presenters from SINU who shared their research on FALAH with attendees during the half-day seminar.

Speaking to officially open the event, Pro Vice Chancellor Academic Dr. Eric Katovai highlighted the crucial role that research plays in shaping the future of Solomon Islands.

"It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this Research Seminar Series. As the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the overall supervisor of the Office of Research and Postgraduate Studies at the Solomon Islands National University (SINU), I am honoured to open this event and emphasize the crucial role that research plays in shaping the future of our nation."

"In the Solomon Islands, where we face both challenges and opportunities unique to our context, research is not just an academic exercise—it is a driving force for development."

"Through research, we can generate knowledge that informs policies, strengthens industries, and addresses the pressing social, economic, and environmental issues that impact our people."

"Whether it is improving healthcare, advancing agriculture, enhancing education, or tackling climate change, research must be at the forefront of our national development agenda."

Dr Eric Katovai further stated, "at SINU, we have a responsibility to grow and nurture a vibrant research culture—one that is not confined to our academic staff but extends to our students and ripples out to the wider community. A strong research culture fosters innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, qualities that are essential for nation-building. Our university must be a hub where ideas are explored, tested, and translated into real-world solutions that benefit our people."

"I encourage all of you—faculty, students, and researchers—to take full advantage of this seminar presentation. Engage in discussions, challenge perspectives, and collaborate with one another."

The seminar featured eight research presentations from SINU academics, covering diverse topics related to family farming, lifestyle, and health:

1. Dr. Hugo Bugoro – The role of traditional food preservation methods in strengthening food security and health resilience of small island communities in the Solomon Islands.
  2. Dr. Vaeno Vigulu – Root architecture of teak and flueggea in mixed species systems in the Solomon Islands.
  3. Mr. Alex Makini – Building health and resilience: Improving food security and reducing non-communicable diseases through urban agriculture in Honiara.
  4. Dr. Lindon Havimana – White-tailed crescent (*Variola albimarginata*): A preliminary study on size at sexual maturity, seasonal gonadal variation, and growth.
  5. Dr. Mary Tahu – Gender, climate change, and indigenous ecological knowledge in the Solomon Islands mangroves.
  6. Mr. Patrick Miniti – Positive impact of teaching physical education and physical activities using locally available equipment and indigenous games in the Solomon Islands.
  7. Mrs. Marineth Magi – Personal factors affecting adherence in hypertensive patients in the Solomon Islands.
  8. Mr. Danny Shadrech – The influence of ENSO on the rise of equatorial waters in the Pacific and its impact on fishing.
- The event was attended by SINU staff, students, stakeholders, and members of the local media.

## SINU Hosts Research Training Workshop to Empower Early-Career Academics



**Participants listening attentively to the workshop facilitator Professor Helen Wallace during the research workshop held at FAFF.**

The Solomon Islands National University (SINU) on Thursday 10 April successfully hosted a Research Training Workshop at the Faculty of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (FAFF) Conference Room.

The workshop is designed to strengthen research capacity among early-career academics. Organized and sponsored by the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the workshop is part of an ongoing initiative to equip academic staff—particularly those working in agriculture, forestry, ecology, environmental science, fisheries, physical geography, and biology—with essential skills in research planning and scholarly publication.

The workshop is facilitated by Professor Helen Wallace, a distinguished researcher and Head of the School of Biology and Environmental Science at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia.

With over 35 years of experience in agriculture and ecology, Professor Wallace's research spans a wide range of topics including horticulture, food processing, forest restoration, forestry, pollination, and bee conservation.

Her work focused on "trees and bees," explores innovative ways to increase food production while promoting environmental sustainability, particularly in subtropical and tropical regions of Australia and the Pacific.

Professor Wallace is also a key partner in the Livelihoods in Forest Ecosystem Restoration (LIFER) Research Project, currently being implemented in the Solomon Islands. In collaboration with Dr. Vaeno Vigulu and Associate Professor Eric Katovai, the project supports forest regeneration trials led by local communities in the New Georgia Group of Islands in Western Province.

Professor Wallace is expected to be formally endorsed as an Adjunct Professor at SINU, under the purview of FAFF and the Office of Research and Postgraduate Studies.

In his welcoming remarks, SINU's Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Associate Professor Eric Katovai, warmly thanked Professor Wallace for sharing her wealth of knowledge with the SINU academic community.

He emphasized the importance of nurturing early-career researchers, noting that building their competencies is key to generating meaningful, impactful research outcomes within the Solomon Islands and the wider Pacific region. "We are privileged to host a scholar of Professor Wallace's calibre.

Her experience and dedication are not only inspiring but instrumental in shaping our next generation of researchers," Associate Professor Katovai said.

This two-day workshop reflects SINU's continued commitment to fostering a vibrant and impactful research culture that supports the advancement of science, innovation, and sustainable development in the Solomon Islands.

# SINU Launches 2025 Solomon Islands Elections Report

On Thursday 10 April 2025, the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) proudly launched the 2024 Solomon Islands Elections Research Report, a landmark study jointly conducted by SINU and the Australian National University (ANU), through its Department of Pacific Affairs.

Described as one of the most comprehensive and methodical studies of electoral processes in Solomon Islands to date, the research draws on data from 5,300 citizen surveys and 570 election observer reports across 15 constituencies.

It offers a deep dive into the 2024 national elections and the many forces shaping our democracy.

In his opening remarks, SINU Vice Chancellor Professor Transform Aqorau welcomed the collaboration as a powerful example of “people-to-people research partnerships” that go beyond institutional ties.

Prof. Aqorau acknowledged the exchange of skills, the building of personal relationships, and the mutual growth of knowledge and capacity that such collaborations bring.

In a time of heightened geopolitical competition, he encouraged more cross-border academic cooperation, joint research, and staff mobility between universities in the region.

“The real opportunity,” he noted, “lies not only in the data we’ve collected, but in how we use it to inform future joint research, policy engagement, and publication.

We must work towards a Solomon Islands where evidence-based decision-making and data-driven governance are the norm—not the exception.”



**Professor Sonia Palmieri, Associate Professor at the Australian National University shared a few remarks during the launch.**

The report covers a broad spectrum of critical issues including:

- Voter education and campaign strategies
- Registration, election integrity, and polling day security
- Women’s political participation and persistent barriers
- Constituency Development Funds (CDFs) and their electoral impacts
- Post-election governance, money politics, and voter confidence

These findings, the Vice Chancellor said, must remind us that “elections are not just a one-day event, but part of a longer democratic process.”

He also emphasized the risks when citizens are sidelined after elections, saying that “democracy becomes elitist when political participation is restricted to a few, and citizens are reduced to bystanders.”

He closed by thanking the research teams from both ANU and SINU for their commitment and hard work, and left the audience with a powerful reminder from President John F. Kennedy:

“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.”

Remarks were also delivered by Sonia Palmieri, Associate Professor at the Australian National University; Lindsay Buckingham, Minister Counsellor at the Australian High Commission; and Jasper Anisi, Chief Electoral Officer and CEO of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC).

The joint research team from the Solomon Islands National University and the Australian National University —Dr Colin Wiltshire, Dr Lincy Pende, Dr Leonora Houma, Ms Vhairi Devi, and Dr John Fasi also presented the key findings of the report during the event.

The presentation was followed by a lively question-and-answer session, giving attendees the opportunity to engage directly with the researchers and discuss the report’s findings and implications.

SINU remains committed to producing research that not only informs but empowers—and we look forward to future partnerships that deepen our understanding of Solomon Islands’ democratic journey.

# W E L C O M E

## TO OUR TEAM

Solomon Islands National University is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Billy Fitoo as Associate Professor in Education Leadership within the Faculty of Education and Humanities (FEH). Dr. Fitoo brings a wealth of experience as a long-serving educator and administrator in the Solomon Islands.

Throughout his distinguished career, he has held senior leadership roles within the Teaching Service, including serving as Principal of National, Provincial Secondary, and Community High Schools, as well as Headmaster of Primary Schools. He also served in the Public Service as Deputy Director of the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) under the Solomon Islands Government (SIG), prior to his appointment to the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 2016.

At USP, Dr. Fitoo held several key positions, including Education Leadership Programme Coordinator and Senior Lecturer at the School of Education, Laucala Campus, Fiji. Most recently, he served as Director of the USP Solomon Islands Campus from 2021 to 2024. His additional academic responsibilities included serving as Postgraduate Coordinator for the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education (FALE) from 2017 to 2018, and as Student Liaison Academic Staff for the School of Education in 2019.

Dr. Fitoo has presented at numerous international, regional, and national conferences and seminars. He has published widely, including high-ranking single-authored and co-authored articles—eight ranked A+ and A, and ten ranked B—as well as co-authored book publications, including reading books for primary school children in the Solomon Islands.



**Dr Billy Fitoo, Associate Professor in Education Leadership**

He has supervised and examined PhD, MA, and MEd theses and has reviewed journal articles for International Studies in Sociology of Education (Routledge), International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, and Directions: Journal of Educational Studies.

Dr. Billy holds a PhD in Education from USP, a Master of Education from Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand, a Postgraduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching, and a Bachelor of Education from USP. He also holds a Diploma in Teaching Secondary and a Certificate in Teaching Primary from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). He hails from Kulusakwalo Village, Central Kwara'ae, Malaita Province.

**Personal Statement:**

“I am a committed leader who continually aspires to further support and mentor those around me. I am ethical in my daily approach to life and enjoy working in a focused team to strive to work towards a shared vision.”

## Staff Profile

**Name:** Annie Sinclair

**Province:** Western Province

**Age:** 31

**Workstation:** Kukum Campus Finance Office

**Department:** Procurement Department

**Job title:** Assistant Procurement Officer

**Qualification:** Professional Diploma in Business Administration

**How long have you been working here?** 6 years

**Tell us about your job:** As an Assistant Procurement Officer at SINU, my role involves supporting the procurement process to ensure that goods and services are acquired efficiently, transparently, and in accordance with university policies and regulations. This includes preparing purchase requests, assisting with tender documentation, communicating with suppliers, and ensuring that all procurement activities meet our budget and compliance requirements. I work closely with academic and administrative departments to make sure their needs are met in a timely and cost-effective manner, contributing to the smooth operation of the university.



### What do you like about SINU and your job?

One of the things I really appreciate about working at SINU is the sense of purpose and service, knowing that our work in procurement helps support students, faculties, and staff across the university. I enjoy being part of a team that values accountability, integrity, and continuous improvement. The environment at SINU encourages professional growth, and I've learned so much during my six years here. I also value the diversity of people I interact with every day and the opportunity to contribute to the development of higher education in the Solomon Islands.

## About us:

Solomon Islands National University (SINU) is the Prime and ONLY National University of Solomon Islands. Founded in 2013, SINU is striving to be one of the Best Education and Research Institute in the Region. Our VISION: "A quality National University, raising Standards of education and applied research in the Pacific Region."

Our Mission: "Championing the pursuit of knowledge, skills, academic inquiry and applied research to transform lives through higher education and training, inclusive of diverse communities, while providing relevant solutions for the Solomon Islands."



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