



Australian  
National  
University

Department of  
Pacific Affairs

## **Navigating Change: Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Development in the Solomon Islands**

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Vice Chancellor**

**Vice-Chancellor's Closing Remarks, SINU Panatina Campus**

**Panatina Seminar, 3 November 2025**

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, and friends – tagio tumas (thank you very much) for being here. As I stand at this podium in the fading light of our inaugural Panatina Research Seminar, I am filled with profound gratitude and pride. Today has been one of the proudest days of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor. Together, we have navigated a day rich with ideas, debate, and inspiration. Before we conclude, allow me to reflect on what we have achieved and to acknowledge those who made this milestone possible.

### **Heartfelt Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I wish to extend my warmest thanks to the people whose tireless efforts behind the scenes brought this seminar to life. Our outstanding organizing team – Dr. Anouk Ride, Dr. Hugo Bugoro, Mr. Alex Makini, Mr. Andrew Awa, Ms. Siona Koti, and Dr. Patricia Rodie – have worked with unwavering dedication. You have been the driving force coordinating logistics, shaping the program, and ensuring every session ran smoothly. *Thank you* for your

passion and hard work, and to the many others at SINU who also contributed to the success of this event. You have shown what our SINU community is capable of when we work together with a shared vision.

I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean of the College of Asia and the Pacific at ANU, and to all of her colleagues from the Australian National University who joined us. Professor Sullivan, thank you for traveling here and for delivering a thought-provoking keynote address this afternoon. Your presence and engagement exemplify the true spirit of partnership. To you and your ANU team – mifala tankiu (we thank you very much) for walking alongside us on this journey. We are excited to continue strengthening the bond between ANU and SINU. In fact, I am pleased to affirm that we intend for the Panatina Research Seminar to become an annual event, a much-anticipated fixture on our academic calendar for years to come. This is just the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration.

Our gratitude further extends to the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian High Commission in Honiara for their generous support of this seminar. In particular, I acknowledge Ms. Simone Corrigan, who as First Secretary (Education) at the High Commission championed this initiative from the very start, and Ms. Ami Bah, who has ably picked up the torch as Simone's successor. I also warmly thank His Excellency Rod Hilton, the Australian High Commissioner – although he was unable to attend today, we are mindful of his steadfast encouragement and support. The backing provided through the Pacific Research Program, the Australia Awards, and the Solomon Islands–Australia Education Partnership has been instrumental in making this gathering a reality. Tagio tumas to our Australian friends: your support has not only funded an event, it has forged a partnership that we cherish.

## The Value of Partnership and Dialogue

Beyond the logistics and funding, I want to highlight what this partnership has truly achieved. It has sparked a new flame of intellectual curiosity among Solomon Islanders and created a space for dialogue that did not exist before on our shores. We saw that spark in the eyes of our participants who presented today, in the lively questions from the audience, and in the cross-pollination of ideas between local and international scholars. This seminar series provides a

much-needed nexus for interdisciplinary dialogue on Solomon Islands' pressing development issues. In one room we heard about climate change adaptation, in another about healthcare technology or agricultural innovation, and yet in another about governance and nation-building. Bringing these diverse threads together under one event is powerful – it nurtures a holistic understanding of development. This is exactly the kind of open, inclusive intellectual space our country has long needed, and it is now here at SINU, *your* national university.

Allow me also to offer a special acknowledgement to Professor Sinclair Dinnen. Some time ago, Professor Dinnen planted a seed of an idea – he observed that SINU is uniquely placed to serve as a national conduit for dialogue on development issues, much like the great Waigani Seminar did for Papua New Guinea decades ago. His insight struck a chord with us. Our national university is indeed uniquely positioned to convene leaders, scholars, students, and community voices to discuss the challenges and opportunities we face. Today, that idea has come to fruition. We have fulfilled Professor Dinnen's vision by hosting this forum for national development dialogue, and I want to thank him for inspiring us to embrace this role.

## Solomon Islands: A Microcosm of Challenges and Hope

As we reflect on today's discussions, it is clear that the Solomon Islands is a microcosm of the development pressures faced across the Pacific. Consider the breadth of what we grapple with as a nation: the existential threat of climate change and sea-level rise to our islands; a youth bulge – a rising generation of young Solomon Islanders hungry for education and opportunity; the ecological degradation of our forests and reefs that strains our natural heritage; the geographic isolation of our many islands, which poses unique challenges for unity and service delivery; the burden of high energy costs and the need for sustainable power solutions; and the persistent struggle of unemployment and building an inclusive economy. We face all these challenges at once, in one small country. In this way, our nation encapsulates so many issues of the wider Pacific. Yet, in that very fact lies our hope: if we can find innovative solutions here, they can echo throughout the region. We heard echoes of these themes in every session today. From climate resilience and fisheries management, to youth empowerment, good governance, and community cohesion – each topic was a piece of a larger puzzle, the puzzle of how to secure a sustainable and inclusive future for Solomon Islands.

## Pieces of a Shared Future – Together

To all the participants of this seminar – our distinguished speakers, session chairs, note-takers, students, officials, and guests – thank you for your enthusiastic engagement. You have been active contributors, bringing this event to life with your questions, ideas, and insights. I watched vibrant discussions unfold during Q&A sessions and lively debates spill into the tea breaks. I saw senior scholars listening intently to student presenters, and policymakers engaging with academic research. That spirit of mutual learning and respect is exactly what we hoped to foster. It is your engagement that made today a success. I applaud you all for being part of this journey of learning, and I encourage you to carry these conversations back to your ministries, your villages, your classrooms, and your homes.

As I stand here at the close, I find myself reflecting on the interconnectedness of everything we have heard today. Each session and each perspective shared has been like a piece of a shared national development puzzle. By itself, a single puzzle piece shows only part of the picture. But when we put all the pieces together – when we connect the insights from climate science to the needs of rural farmers, link the importance of good governance to the delivery of health and education, and weave together traditional knowledge with new innovations – we begin to see the full picture emerge. It is a picture of a Solomon Islands that is stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient. In my mind, I envision this picture as a beautifully woven tapestry of our nation's future, where each thread represents a contribution from today's seminar – each of you has added a thread to that tapestry.

## Commitment and Closing

Today has demonstrated that SINU can be the beating heart of national dialogue on development. We have seen the power of partnership and knowledge-sharing to illuminate the way forward. I am personally committed to continuing this inclusive dialogue. As Vice-Chancellor, I reaffirm SINU's commitment to ensuring that knowledge and opportunities reach every corner of our country, from Honiara to the most remote atolls<sup>[5]</sup>. Inclusive national development is not just a phrase to me – it is a promise that no one is left behind as we pursue progress. This seminar exemplifies that ethos: we have welcomed voices from all walks of life, and we have learned from each other.

In closing, let us celebrate what we have started here. The inaugural Panatina Research Seminar has achieved more than we could have hoped – it has connected us in a shared purpose. Let us carry this momentum forward. The conversations ignited today must continue tomorrow, and the next day, and indeed we will meet again at next year's Panatina Seminar to build on what we have begun.

On behalf of the Solomon Islands National University, thank you once again to everyone who played a part in this historic day. Tagio tumas to our partners from ANU and Australia, to our SINU family, and to every participant. Your contributions are now part of our nation's story.

It is now my honor, with great pride and optimism, to formally declare the inaugural Panatina Research Seminar closed. May God bless you all and bless our beloved Solomon Islands. Safe travels and a pleasant evening to you. Thank you *tumas*.