

Business Beat

Welcome to the Chamber's Newsletter!



SICCI - RSIPF PARTNERSHIP

SICCI Chairman, Mr Ricky Fuo'o and Police Commissioner, Mr. Mostyn Mangau putting ink on paper to resign the Memorandum of Understanding (Mou) to seal the continuous partnership between the private sector and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF). **STORY PAGE 3.** Photo: SICCI Media.



SICCI urges eligible members to get vaccinated



Maximise the benefits of infrastructure spending



'Less Than a Container Load' service launched



Prime Minister's Business Breakfast



Welcome

This is the official Newsletter of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SICCI), published and distributed to members and stakeholders after every two months.

It contains updates on all Chamber activities, news, members' feature, interviews, upcoming events and department updates from the Secretariat.

This publication is produced by the SICCI Media & Communications Department.

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Local Content

SICCI encourages Local Content in infrastructure spend

p7



Disabilities Database

Pasifiki HR launches database for people with disabilities

p9

Directorship

SICCI hosts 4th Directorship Programme with 25 participants

p12



EIDO Update

EIDO reaches out to cocoa and copra producers in Makira

p17





Representatives from the RSIPF, SICCI Board and Secretariat after the MoU signing ceremony. Photos: SICCI Media.

SICCI renews MoU with RSIPF

Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and SICCI recognises that there is a definite link between the rule of law in a nation and growth in investment which underpins private sector development and job creation.

This was reiterated on Thursday 19 August 2021 during the re-signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SICCI and the RSIPF after a review on the MoU was conducted.

Representing the RSIPF was Police Commissioner, Mr. Mostyn Mangau and SICCI Board Chairman, Mr. Ricky Fu'o'o as the signatories to the MoU.

An initial MoU was signed in 2018 after both parties agreed to enter into a

MoU in relation to a partnership and joint agreement with the objective to strengthen the relationship between the RSIPF and SICCI.

The purpose of the MoU is to provide a platform for cooperation between the RSIPF and SICCI to:

- Promote crime prevention initiatives;
- Recognise the commercial perspective of businesses within the community;
- Recognise both the RSIPF and SICCI share a social conscience for community wellbeing;
- Allow for the sharing and exchange of information on areas of mutual interest;

- Build a strong relationship that will contribute to nation building, stability, employment opportunities and economic growth; and
- Facilitate two-way communication for the Parties.

SICCI Chairman, Mr. Fu'o'o said the importance of the MoU resigning cannot be overstated, especially in these unprecedented times of pandemic and economy uncertainty.

He said the relationship between the RSIPF and SICCI might be seen as unusual in other settings or time but the Chamber sees this as an important link between two frontline communities, the law enforcement and business community.

"In 2018 when we reached out to RSIPF it was a milestone that we have agreed on the signing of MoU to work together to cooperate and promote a secure, peaceful and safe environment in which communities and businesses can prosper through increased economic activity and security," he said.

"The re-signing of the MoU highlights a significant step in our commitments to create an enabled environment for businesses to thrive in a safe, secure and peaceful environment. The understanding also signifies a growth in our relationship

continue next page



Representing the RSIPF was Police Commissioner, Mr. Mostyn Mangau and SICCI Board Chairman, Mr. Ricky Fu'o as the signatories to the MoU.

from previous page

and understanding that the most effective approach is to reach out and grow close with our communities," Mr. Fu'o added.

Police Commissioner, Mr. Mangau acknowledged the renewal of the MoU as a step forward in terms of the partnership between the RSIPF and SICCI and an opportunity for increase capability and responsiveness as it gives strength to crime prevention strategies.

"We have managed to achieve some of our targets under the previous MoU and the RSIPF under my leadership looks forward for further working together with SICCI to progress our ongoing and future plans.

"We can work together to create opportunities that benefits young people. Our renewed partnership offers the chance for young people not only to reconnect with their family and community life, but to have access to support and opportunities to find employment and meaningful pathways in life through the support of SICCI and your membership," he said.

The Police Commissioner also acknowledge the role of the private sector in keeping the country's economy afloat during these difficult times.

An Executive Group was established under



SICCI Board Chairman, Ricky Fu'o signs the MoU.

the MoU that enabled meetings and dialogues to take place with exchange of updates between RSIPF and SICCI on identified common priorities where both parties can work together to promote a safe and stable investment climate in the Solomon Islands.

Some of the priorities under this MoU were Road and Traffic issues, Security, Crimes Prevention and updates on recently the COVID19 efforts by the RSIPF at the borders.

SICCI Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms. Natalina Hong says: "We believe that the

relationship between public and private sector is a crucial partnership, which if strengthen we can adequately face the challenges ahead such a fast-growing population, high unemployment, rapid urbanisation, corruption and inequality."

SICCI believes that it is only through partnership, collaboration, co-ordination that we can collectively set the course to achieve our collective version of a better, safer and more secure future.

On behalf of its members, SICCI would like to thank the RSIPF and look forward to work together between both parties.

SICCI urges eligible members to get vaccinated

SICCI is urging members, their employees and eligible members of the general public to be vaccinated to protect them from the COVID-19 virus as soon as possible.

SICCI acknowledges that vaccination is the most effective and efficient means in which we can protect ourselves and our country against the deadly virus as waiting for a community transmission will already be too late.

"As a Chamber, we commend Government through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services for rolling out the country's vaccination program in Honiara, Guadalcanal, Choiseul and Western Provinces including Malaita Outer Islands," Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms Natalina Hong, said.

"However, we share the same concern on

the slow uptake of COVID-19 vaccination in the country to a level that would protect our population from COVID-19 in the event the virus breaches our borders and reach our communities," she added.

The SICCI Secretariat and Board have been vaccinated since the vaccine became available and we urge member businesses that interact with the public to do likewise. "Vaccination is one of the main ways to protect our communities and businesses to reduce the possibility of community spread if and when our borders are reopened," Ms Hong said.

"SICCI supports Government's cautious approach to date, but with efforts to keep the country's economy afloat at this difficult time we cannot afford to keep our borders closed forever and isolate

ourselves from the rest of the world. With the stringent measures taken many member businesses are struggling to survive especially those in the tourism sector," the SICCI CEO said.

Unless a significant number of the targeted population receives the vaccine, it will be difficult for Government to make a decision on opening our borders, as such, the Chamber urges all eligible residents where the vaccination program is been rolled out who have no underlying medical conditions to take the vaccine so we can get our economy back on track.

"The real impact on individual businesses, their owners, the people they employ, and their families who depend on them will be severe and felt for many months to come if we have community transmission in our communities."



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MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS OF INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

There are currently around SBD7.5 billion worth of infrastructure projects that are either underway or tabled for the next four (4) to five (5) years including the construction of facilities for the 2023 Pacific Games. *Photo: Sol2023 XVII Pacific Games.*

SICCI believes the country can maximise the benefits of infrastructure spending if there are policies and regulations in place to promote local content.

SICCI Board Chairman, Mr. Ricky Fuo'o said focusing on maximizing local content ensures that local workers have a job that will lead to skills development and transfer

Not only that but local suppliers will also have an opportunity to grow in the market, and local companies will develop and contribute to revenue that remains in the country and promotes the standards of local private sector, he said.

Mr. Fuo'o was speaking the Prime Minister's Breakfast on Friday 21st May hosted by SICCI for its members to have an opportunity to directly engage with the country's leadership.

"It is vital that Government takes an active approach to ensuring the greatest benefits from infrastructure development are retained locally. Procurement processes should prioritize local business and MSMEs.

"Some countries prioritise local

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It is vital that Government takes an active approach to ensuring the greatest benefits from infrastructure development are retained locally.

SICCI Chairman, Ricky Fuo'o

business in their tenders under a certain monetary threshold. Likewise local partnering and minimum local employee requirements can be a requirement for contracts given to foreign businesses," he said.

SICCI believes that creating such regulations and policies to promote local content will maximise local participation, otherwise local businesses will remain

spectators in all these infrastructure developments.

SICCI further acknowledges the actions taken by the Government to stimulate economic activity and improve productivity through infrastructure spending and to development partners

continue next page

from previous page

who have contributed towards these infrastructure developments.

Some of these multi-billion dollars infrastructure activities have already been committed to and are currently being constructed. These includes the 2023 South Pacific Games projects, Tina River Hydro Development Project, Upgrade - Munda International Airport Project, Tar Seal of Seghe and Taro domestic airport, Henderson International Airport Upgrade, Fisheries-

Henderson road, White River Highway-road and the USP Campus project.

"Infrastructure is often considered to provide a 'double benefit' to the economy. Initially short-term as an economic stimulus and then in the long term, from benefits the new infrastructure provides. Social and economical infrastructure is essential to sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation," SICCI Chair, Mr. Fu'o'o, said.

Meanwhile, SICCI will also continue

to advocate for fundamental reforms especially in Transport and Tax which are pivotal to expansion of businesses.

These will require partnership, consistent dialogues and support to ensure there is a fair and level playing field for all.

SICCI encourages local content in big infrastructure spend



SICCI encourages the Government and relevant authorities to ensure there is sufficient local content included in the billion-dollar worth of infrastructure projects that are planned for the next five years to enable the economic benefit to remain inside Solomon Islands.

SICCI Chairman Mr. Ricky Fu'o'o highlighted this when SICCI representatives appeared before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) recently during the inquiries into the 2021 Appropriation Bill 2021.

Considering the number of foreigners currently competing across certain industries in Solomon Islands, one of the things SICCI is advocating on is for Government to focus on local content.

"That is to formulate some form of threshold, where certain number of contracts are reserved for indigenous businesses and individuals. This can be done not only for the construction industry but also for suppliers and across all industries," Mr. Fu'o'o, said.

The SICCI Chair said this is purposely to protect our local industries, businesses and local jobs.

"For most indigenous businesses and existing businesses, all the money we make and spend stays in the country. If we continue to promote local content and protect local businesses that would have a big impact on economic growth as well," he told members of the PAC.

"Local competition is growing and international competitions are coming in but there is no form of protection for local industries and indigenous business owners," he added.

Solomon Islands has a large pipeline of infrastructure projects that is about to be spent into our economy which the Chamber considers as being a key factor in the country's economic recovery.

"One other thing we have been advocating for on a lot of these large international contracts is to see local content built into it.

"So that a certain percent of that work is down stream to local contractors,

local suppliers and local businesses.

"While we have these big expenditures of infrastructure, there is that spill over effect into the local economy, to ensure we are not just by-standers when a lot of these infrastructure are getting built and delivered," Mr. Fu'o'o said.

SICCI also understands that there are currently around SBD7.5 billion worth of infrastructure projects that are either underway or tabled for the next four (4) to five (5) years.

These projects including Solomon Water Capital Works (SBD 760M), Tina River Hydropower (SBD 1.95bn), ADB Ports and Road program (SBD 1.115bn), Kukum Highway Phase II (SBD 256M), World Bank Roads and Aviation Project (SBD 451M).

There are also the bilateral agreements with Development partners such as the sport stadium and construction work proposed for the 2023 Pacific Games which total to an approximate SBD2.5bn.

Express Freight launches 'Less Than a Container Load' service at BA5 event



Representatives from Strongim Bisnis, Express Freight Management and Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group during the SICCI BA5 event. Photos: SICCI Media.

Express Freight Management (EFM), with support from Strongim Bisnis, have invested in the creation of a scheduled less than container load service. With this service local exporters can ship as little as 1m³ and only pay for that amount, instead of the whole container.

This new service was launched during the SICCI Business After 5 (BA5) networking event on Friday 6 August at the Heritage Park Hotel.

EFM Country Manager, Mr. Ronnie Isip says at the moment they are focusing on exporting agricultural products to the global market as a way of providing assistance to local agricultural farmers.

"At Express Freight we are aware of the requirements and needs of the people and through our services we will give time to consolidate those products, put them in a container and then send them globally opening the market for Solomon Islanders," he said.

According to Mr. Tim Lawther, Business Partnership Director at Strongim Bisnis, Sectors cannot grow unless they can trial new products and/or new markets.



Express Freight Management (EFM) Country Manager, Ronnie Isip presenting their new LCL service to members of the business community.

Mr. Lawther said Express Freight have proven to be a collaborative and reliable partner to Strongim Bisnis in this initiative.

"Strongim Bisnis will guarantee the empty space under 13m³, which is roughly the break-even point to send a container.

"This means if only 6m³ of space is bought by an exporter, we (Strongim

Bisnis) will cover the remaining 7m³. If 11m³ is bought, we'll cover 2m³," he said.

He said, as long as at least 1m³ is booked, Strongim Bisnis will cover 12m³ and the container will go every two months for a start, to Singapore, and from there anywhere in the world.

"If this is successful, we may guarantee the Less Than Container Load (LCL) services with greater regularity to other locations. And with other freighting firms.

With this LCL service Strongim Bisnis will also be collaborating with the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA Plus) and Mr. James Kana from Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group who have launched an LCL Platform, to allow businesses to book consignments online and with ease. The two interventions will fit together and give exporters options.

"I think it's going to be transformative for any Solomon Islands business requiring outbound freight," Mr. Lawther said.



Strongim Bisnis representatives, Managing Director Pasifiki HR, Mr Bob Pollard and staff at Pasifiki HR. Photos: SICCI Media.

Pasifiki HR's disabilities database for employment

SICCI acknowledges one of its members, Pasifiki HR for a new service they have introduced which will provide employment support for people living with disabilities.

This new service was recently launched during SICCI's latest Business After 5 (BA5) networking event on Friday 6 August, 2021.

"Basically, what this new service involves is that we work with training institutions that train people living with disability and disability organisations to source people with skills," Pasifiki HR's People Manager, Alpha H Tufah, said.

"We will have this database that we are going to register them on and then we will work with employers on giving them work experience," she added. "If any employer is interested in employing them then we are happy to support them in that aspect as well."

"We look forward to having more employers come forward and support our people who are living with disabilities," Mrs. Tufah said.

People living with disabilities make up 10% of the country's population that is being excluded from economic activities.

Mr. Tim Lawther, Business Partnership Director at Strongim Bisnis, said to quantify the issue in Solomon Islands, the skills, talents and efforts of in excess



Pasifiki HR's People Manager, Alpha H Tufah.

of 50,000 people are not being utilised.

He said Strongim Bisnis will share in the risk of this new venture for both Pasifiki HR and the employers who engage them.

Strongim Bisnis will be offering subsidies to employers who take on employees (people living with disabilities), as well as tied grants for workplace accessibility modifications. Pasifiki HR will be building a database of jobseekers with disability, including their specific skills – presenting a strong pool from which employers can draw.

Ask Simaema



EVENTS & TRAININGS?
SICCI offers a professional events management service using a wide network of businesses. We bring you popular SICCI events such as the Business Breakfasts, Business After 5 and our renowned annual Business Excellence Awards.

Members can benefit from accessing our trainings on certain business topics such as leadership, planning, productivity, management and marketing.

SERVICES TO MEMBERS?
Service to our members and stakeholders is our priority as a private sector organization. The strength of SICCI lies in its membership, not only in its numbers, but more so in what the numbers represent - a wealth of private entrepreneurial expertise in business.

Have a question about the Chamber? Send Simaema a message: services@solomonchamber.com.sb

Charity Golf Day raise funds for National Referral Hospital

More than 50 members of the business community turned up on Sunday 25th July 2021 at the Honiara Golf Club Honiara for the Charity Golf tournament. The money raised during this year's Charity Golf tournament will be donated towards the National Referral Hospital.

A total of \$45,015 was raised during the Charity event.

SICCI wishes to acknowledge the Golf Club and Committee, SICCI members and businesses who have sponsored teams, made donations and those that had turned up for the event ensuring the Charity Golf tournament was a success.

Special thanks to Meat Lovers, Bulk shop, Sullivans, Global Vision, Solbrew and Daily Bread for sponsoring of winners' prizes, raffle prizes and food sales that contributed to the donations as well. Also, to Reeves International and Fijian Boys Club for their generous donations toward the cause.

It was a strong competition for the top spot by participating teams namely South Pacific Oil Ltd, Tradco Shipping, Global Vision, Tongs Corporation, Morris & Sojnoski, GPPOL, Kramer Ausenco, Bred Bank, Pink South Pacific and SICCI.



SICCI welcomes reduction in electricity rates

The Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) is understandably heartened by the news that electricity tariff rates are going to be reduced starting in May 2021.

SICCI, as the peak body representing private sector in the country, welcomes the decision by the Government to revise the current Electricity Tariff Regulations as timely and relevant for the long-term economic recovery ahead.

From discussions with the Solomon Power CEO, SICCI understands that the reduction will be made to non-fuel Tariff which is the cost other than fuel



to produce and deliver electricity to homes or businesses, including the cost to operate equipment and maintain facilities.

Fuel Tariff (the cost for fuel required to provide each kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity) is not subsidised unlike other regions and therefore will still remain.

SICCI has been a strong advocate for a reduction of tariffs which was included

in its submissions to Government for the Economic Stimulus Package and more recently in the Private Sector Pathway to COVID-19 Recovery Strategy.

"Reducing the tariffs will also reduce the immediate burden placed on households and would provide immediate relief for businesses at a time when cash-flow is decreasing alarmingly," SICCI Chairman, Mr. Ricky Fu'o'o, said.

LATEST IUMI TUGEDA HOLIDAYS FROM HONIARA FLYER NOW AVAILABLE

With 47 local tourism operators and 12 destinations now included, Solomon Airlines lumi Tugeda Holidays program continues to expand and host more stays every month.

The latest lumi Tugeda Holidays from Honiara flyer is now available to download offering stays of up to 7 nights for travel through to 31 March 2022 and savings of up to 50% at accommodation around the country combined with Solomon Airlines discounted airfares.



Contact

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www.flysolomons.com

SICCI delivers 4th Directorship Programme



This month's delivery marks the fourth Directorship Programme SICCI has delivered in Solomon Islands. *Photos: SICCI Media.*

As an organization that strives to achieve excellence in corporate governance, the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) is again delivering the Essential to Directorship Programme.

The four-day programme got started at the Heritage Park in Honiara on Tuesday 27 April with twenty-five participants from various sectors including senior representatives from State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), the private sector and the public sector.

SICCI has been delivering the Essential to Directorship Programme since 2018 in partnership with the Institute of Directors, New Zealand (IODNZ).

Two programmes were delivered in 2018 and one in 2019. The 4th Directorship Programme was initially planned for 2020, however, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic it was delayed until this month and for the first time this year's programme is delivered online.

This programme offers a comprehensive



introduction to boardroom governance. It exposes participants to international best-practice in developing organisational strategy, oversight of finance, managing risk and assessing performance.

Delivering his remarks at opening day

on Tuesday 27th April, SICCI Chairman, Ricky Fu'o'o said the benefits of the Directorship Programme will go beyond governance skill building.

"It is beneficial to our personal growth

continue next page

from previous page

and confidence, developing strong leadership, decision making ability in the boardroom and way to add value to our respective organisations," the SICCI Chairman told participants.

The purpose of the program is to develop governance. Participants will gain an awareness of the responsibilities and challenges of being in a governance role. Together we will examine the opportunities for participants to support effective governance and how to influence relationships, create an environment based on trust and respect and build individual's leadership capability.

Mr. Fuo'o acknowledged the significance of the governance training, noting that strategic clarity at the Board level can go a long way in influencing positive change at the operational level.

"Governance plays an essential role in defining leadership and management practices that ensure long-term success.

"A high-performing board can make all the difference when it comes to long-term corporate success - and implementing best corporate governance practices is a key board responsibility," he said.

He said such training can no longer be considered for big companies and organizations only and insisted that providing executive education and relevant board of directors training programs, must be integrated in all companies, churches, civil society and government agencies to increase performance.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms. Natalina Hong said the Chamber is committed to improving Boards and company-owning structures through this programme.

"There continues to be a need to train up more individuals in this area, as it means that there will be more diversity in the domestic pool to draw Board Directors, and CEOs from.

"At the moment, this pool is very limited. Also, the training method of learning from curated examples, such as discussions around case-studies and sharing of international best-practice is ideal, as it will improve decision making process and leadership within the country's boardrooms," she said.

At the end of this year's offering, this represents 100 Directors, CEOs and Senior Managers having been educated



It is great to see a diverse participation of both experienced and young leaders aspiring leaders this year.



Vice President of Solomon Islands' Bar Association, Anika Kingmele having a group discussion with two young female participants.

in international best practice Board governance.

As the peak body representing private sector in the country, SICCI is proud to be offering this high calibre programme in the Solomon Islands. Not only targeting SOEs and multinational companies, it is an extremely relevant course also for family-owned businesses who are thinking of enhancing governance and formalising strategy.

SICCI Board members and CEO's have participated in this programme since the first delivery.

Current SICCI Chairman, CEO and Board members of the Chamber, Ms. Namoi Kaluae and Daniel Tucker are participants in the programme this year.

2021 Prime Minister's Business Breakfast



Prime Minister Hon Manasseh Sogavare and members of the SICCI Board and CEO during the PM's Breakfast event. Photos: SICCI Media.

P rime Minister Hon Manasseh Sogavare had the opportunity to address key members of the business community in Solomon Islands on relevant Policy, enhanced partnership and respond to the Private Sector Pathway to COVID-19 Recovery Strategy submitted to his Government earlier this year.

This was during a Prime Minister's Business Breakfast on Friday 21st May, 2021 hosted by the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI).

The event is an initiative under the MoU between Government and the private sector which presents the opportunity for SICCI members to engage directly with the country's leadership and also creates a platform for the Prime Minister engage to directly with tax payers.

Delivering his keynote address, Prime Minister Hon Sogavare said such occasion provides a space where we can discuss common but important issues and objectives that is pertinent to business development and overall growth in the country.

"The current global pandemic underscores the important role that this



SICCI CEO, Ms. Natalina Hong welcoming Prime Minister Hon Manasseh Sogavare upon his arrival for the event along with Vice Chair, Qila Tuhanuku.

kind of discussion plays in nurturing and strengthening the partnership between the Government and the private sector in mapping out the appropriate policies, strategies and legislations to ensure economic recovery following the adverse effects of COVID-19 in 2020," he said.

In response, Board Chairman of SICCI, Mr. Ricky Fu'o highlighted that

the relationship between SICCI and Government needs to function beyond political and commercial interests "and underpinned by our commitment to rebuild this great nation, to provide opportunities for our people and to fully realize our growth potential."

[continue next page](#)

2021 Prime Minister's Business Breakfast

from previous page

Mr. Fuo'o said SICCI's continuous emphasis on partnership with Government and development partners is crucial for growing business that will impact economic growth. He assured the Prime Minister that SICCI members have affirmed their willingness to work with Government to support inclusive economic development.

"We all play a major role in supporting Solomon Islands' aspirations to achieve more inclusive economic development by investing in the productive capacity of the country and creating jobs to benefit Solomon Islanders," the SICCI Chair said.

Mr. Fuo'o said it is clear that development cannot occur without any partnership with the private sector.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister used the occasion to announce that Government will now provide budgetary support to SICCI by including this in each year's National Budget under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration.

"I reassure you all that the Government values and is committed to this partnership and as a testament to this commitment the Government will now support SICCI as well," Hon Sogavare told members of the business community during the Breakfast event.



Prime Minister Hon Manasseh Sogavare meeting with representatives of the Private Sector.



Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare found time to meet members of the business community and employees in private sector.



Prime Minister Hon Manasseh Sogavare addressing private sector representatives during the Business Breakfast event.

“Fundamental Reforms needed to create better business environment”

SICCI and the Economics Association of Solomon Islands (EASI) has highlighted to the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) a number of fundamental reforms priorities that would create a better business environment.

This was during a SICCI-SIG Consultation on earlier this year focusing on Government's Policy Redirection which is aimed at cushioning the negative economic impact of COVID-19.

“As a Chamber, we would want to see some tangible actions in regards to Government's reform priorities.

“If resources are limited within Government to undertake some of these legislative reforms than we should focus on the few things that we really can achieve,” a SICCI statement said.

From a private sector perspective, a comprehensive tax reform – to create and deliver a fair, simple and broad-based tax system is one that is long overdue and requires tangible action.

This could have a big impact on the economy, on private sector and economic recovery.

“Reforming the tax system will be an important driver to improving the business environment settings and

stimulating private sector growth and we are encouraged to hear that the Governments redirection policy aims to refocus and address key priorities within the current policy mandate.

“The current tax structure in Solomon Islands constrains economic growth and limits the pace of development. It imposes a very high tax burden when compared to other Pacific countries and the structure of the tax system is outdated, inefficient, complex, expensive to administer and anti-competitive.

“The tax system imposes high compliance costs on taxpayers and encourages unproductive tax avoidance and evasion activities. Moreover, it does not actively support growth - for example, it does not systematically support exports and instead relies upon distortionary exemptions for exporting industries,” the SICCI statement said.

SICCI further highlights that access to finance is also a key constraint to businesses particularly Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

According to a World Bank report on SME Finance, it is the second most cited obstacle facing SMEs to grow their businesses in emerging markets and developing countries.

“There is a strong link between access to finance and business growth, and, in turn, growth in employment and incomes. DBSI provides an opportunity for more innovative financing options that are more suited to the Pacific to driver economic diversity and sectors with future growth potential,” the SICCI statement added.

SICCI also reiterated that the cost of electricity is also a key cost faced by businesses.

“Solomon Islands faces some of the highest electricity costs in the Pacific and there needs to be a review of the Solomon Power tariff.

“While a thorough review of the tariff model should occur, continued reductions in the tariff will continue to alleviate the costs faced by business and consumers.”

These fundamental reform areas highlighted here including other key areas on (1) The basics right to create certainty for businesses; (2) Providing Immediate support to alleviate pressure on business and (3) Actions to stimulate economic activity and improve productivity via infrastructure and sector support are been documented in what will be SICCI's “Private Sector Pathway to Covid-19 Recovery Strategy”.



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Business Beat

Welcome to the Chamber's e-newsletter!



SICCI to host Infrastructure Symposium

This inaugural Infrastructure Symposium will bring together key stakeholders in the infrastructure development sector in Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands Government and development partners announced around SBD10 billion worth of infrastructure projects for Solomon Islands in the next five years. From the Chamber's perspective, this is a key factor in the country's economic recovery. [Read more](#).





SOLOMON ISLANDS CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

2021

INFRASTRUCTURE SYMPOSIUM

Prioritizing Local Content for road ahead to Recovery

21 - 22 October, FFA Conference Centre



Membership & Services Desk



Simaema Neilsen
Membership & Services Officer

Hello, from the Membership & Services Desk.

Events

A few updates from my Department for the Month of July and August 2021. In July we had two (2) Business After 5 (BA5) networking events, the Media Association of Solomon Islands (MASI) presenting on the 2nd of July and the New Zealand High Commission hosting on July 23.

In August, one BA5 event was hosted by Strongim Bisnis where Express Freight and Pasifiki HR launched new services they are providing which are supported by Strongim Bisnis. (See pages 8 & 9 for related articles).

BA5 Attendance: 300+ attended BA5s from May 2021 – August 2021.

The Department also took lead in hosting the annual SIG Procurement Workshop on 15th July and Golf Charity Tournament in aid of the National Referral Hospital (NRH) in Honiara. (See page 10).

2021 COVID-19 Enterprise Survey

The Department in August also took lead in conducting a third COVID-19 Enterprise Survey on SICCI members.

43% of the SICCI membership (86



SICCI members at the BA5 hosted by the New Zealand High Commission in July.

businesses) participated in this survey which was conducted online between 14th July and 17th August 2021.

A high rate of responses from the survey highlighted that expansion and investment decisions have been delayed due to international travel restrictions, hindering development plans as consultants, directors, investors, visitors and tourists are unable to enter the country. (Visit the SICCI website for more details on the survey).

Partnership with Facebook

SICCI becomes the first Chamber of Commerce in the Pacific to partner with Facebook to offer free digital skills and support to local businesses.

SICCI and Facebook are partnering to equip local small businesses with the digital skills to connect with customers and support them to grow online.

The partnership will offer free training and promotional resources to SICCI and its members, commencing over the coming months.

This will be the first time Facebook has partnered with a Pacific Islands Chamber of Commerce to upskill local businesses to better connect with their customers and reach new audiences using digital tools.

Natalina Hong, CEO of SICCI, says "Many Solomon Islands businesses are thriving on Facebook and we want to ensure more of our members have the skills they need to grow in a world where consumers increasingly engage online. Partnering with Facebook means we can offer valuable new skills to our members and also celebrate local businesses through an online campaign."

Mia Garlick, Regional Director of Policy for Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands, says "Facebook is proud to partner with SICCI to help Solomon Islands businesses amplify their reach and voice through the use of digital technology, something we hope can be replicated

[continue next page](#)

from previous page

in other Pacific Islands countries. This partnership, Facebook's first in the Pacific Islands aimed at businesses, builds on our work throughout the region in online safety, digital and media literacy, disaster response and COVID-19 management".

Membership

- 77% SMEs, 23% Larger businesses, Affiliations, Honorary Members



NZ High Commissioner, Georgina Roberts (far left), SICCI CEO, Natalina Hong (second from left), SICCI Vice Chair, Qila Tuhanuku (second from right) and two SICCI members during a BA5 event.

Welcome New Members!!

Company Name

Dignity Pasifik

Dive Operators Solomon Islands (DOSI)

Dream Cast Theatre

Gold Ridge Mining Limited

Henderson Logistics

Kahuto

LEL

Lopia Resort Limited

Matari

Global Vision

SI Copra Exporters Pty Ltd

GW Associates Pty Ltd

Malona Investments Ltd

Magic Creations

Tavanipupu Wellness & Spa Retreat

Upcoming Events

October 21 - 22

Infrastructure Symposium

Host: SICCI

Venue : FFA Conference Centre

November 20

2021 Business Excellence Awards

Host: SICCI

Venue: Coral Sea Resort

For events enquiries contact our
Membership & Services Officer,
Simaema Neilsen on phone 39542/39543
or email
services@solomonchamber.com.sb

Advocacy Desk



John Ta'amora
Advocacy Officer

SICCI Sub-committees

SICCI's subcommittees are now currently underway after full membership have been endorsed following expression of interests from members. The two subcommittees are the Building and Construction and the Manufacturing Industry Working Groups. Both subcommittees have had their first meetings convened in early July 2021.

The subcommittees were established in 2020 by the former SICCI Board with the intent of gathering expert knowledge in the Building/Construction and Manufacturing Sectors to inform SICCI's advocacy efforts to the government.

Advisory Group Meetings

SICCI have had its 2nd Advisory Group meeting on 9th of June, 2021. This is the 12th Advisory Group meeting since the first SIG-SICCI MOU was signed in 2017. It was re-signed last year 2020 to continue this formal link with the Solomon Islands Government. Key areas highlighted during the meeting by the private sector were:

- Business Exemption list for a planned Lockdown
- Local content in large infrastructure



SICCI Advocacy Officer at the MoU resigning ceremony between SICCI and the RSIPF.

projects

- Private Sector Involvement in the National Budget Process
- Level playing field for businesses in all sectors

RSIPF-SICCI MoU Resigned

In 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and SICCI. On Thursday 19 August, 2021, following its expiry, the RSIPF-SICCI MoU was resigned after a review was done. Representing the RSIPF was the Police Commissioner Mr. Mostyn Mangau and SICCI Chairman Mr. Ricky Fuoo as the signatories to the MoU.

An Executive Group was established through which meetings have taken place on exchange of updates between RSIPF

and SICCI and common priorities identified where both parties can work together to promote and safe and stable investment climate in the Solomon Islands. Some of the priorities under this MoU were Road and Traffic issues, Security, Crimes Prevention and updates on recently the Corona virus efforts by the RSIPF at the borders.

EIDO Desk



Ronnie Golopitu
Export Industry Development Officer

EIDO reaches out to Cocoa and Copra producers in Makira

Our Export Industry Development Officer (EIDO), Mr. Ronnie Golopitu was in Kirakira recently as part of a delegation from SICCI, the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA) and Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) to conduct a five-day Cocoa and Copra Processing Quality Assurance and Marketing training for rural farmers in the province.

Mr. Golopitu said participants at the workshop were encouraged to be more organised and think Agribusiness as the way forward.

"It is part of SICCI'S strategy to provide relevant trainings, networking and information sharing delivery for its members and potential members especially SMEs to help them grow businesses in a more sustainable way.

"Establishing a Chamber base in the provinces is one other way to achieve a vibrant private sector in the provincial level," he said.

SICCI through its Export Industry Development Department focuses on supporting businesses in the Agribusiness sector through the improvement of existing market arrangements and by reducing barriers for existing Industry Working Groups representing Coconut, Cocoa, Sawn Timber and Horticulture.



Farmers in and around Kirakira during the 5-day training.

SICCI partners with PHAMA Plus, CEMA to deliver training for farmers in Makira

Twenty (20) rural farmers and entrepreneurs in Makira/Ulawa Province are now equipped with the relevant knowledge to produce good and quality Copra and Cocoa to meet requirement needed in exporting their products.

This was following a Cocoa and Copra Processing Quality Assurance and Marketing training conducted in the provincial capital Kirakira from 10th – 13 May 2021.

The training was funded by the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA), coordinated by the Export Industry Development Department of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) and facilitated by Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA).

It targeted those involved in the export supply chain of Cocoa and Copra to

ensure consistent supply of quantity and quality production is achieved.

The training also covered the preparatory tasks farmers should be aware of in preparation for the implementation of the Registration of Cocoa Processing Facilities which includes drying facilities, fermenting boxes and storage sheds as stated in the CEMA Act 2013.

This is also in line with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's 10-year Strategic Plan detailing all processing facilities to be registered so that good quality copra and cocoa can be effectively monitored, tracked and traced back to its original processing facilities while ensuring the quality of copra and cocoa production supply in the Solomon Islands.

SICCI'S Export Industry Development Officer (EIDO), Mr. Ronnie Golopitu said the Cocoa and Copra Processing Quality Assurance and Marketing training was the first of its kind to be jointly conducted with the aim of providing basic information on the practices of producing and processing good quality and marketing of cocoa beans and copra to those in the supply end.

Know Your Board

SICCI Board Members for 2021/2022



CHAIR
Ricky Fuo'o
General Manager
TGB



VICE CHAIR
Qila Tuhonuku
*Marketing & Corporate
Manager*
Solomon Breweries Ltd



Martin Beattie
Country Head
ANZ Bank



Kazi Mushfiqur Rahman
General Manager
Si Tobacco Company Ltd (SITCO)



Craig Gibsone
General Manager
GPPOL



Namoi Kaluue
Co-Founder
Adkonec & Pacific Tenders



Daniel Tucker
Country Manager
Kramer Ausenco (SI) Ltd



Frank Wickham
General Manager
NFD



Dr Lazarus Saungao Tavichikai
Founder
ECALL Health Centre

Meet the SICCI Team



Natalina Hong
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



Florence Rhibbie Auma
Executive Officer (EO)



Shaun Konaga
Administrative Manager &
Assistant Finance Officer



John Ta'amora
Advocacy Officer



Philip Lilomo
Media & Communications Officer



Simaema Neilsen
Membership & Services Officer



Ronnie Galopitu
Export Industry Development
Officer (EIDO)



Emmanuel Pitakaka
YECISI Coordinator



Rosslyn Ramoifuila
YECISI Membership & Partnerships
Officer

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