

## Chapter 9

### Intervention and nation-building in Solomon Islands: local responses

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In July 2003, Australia led the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in an attempt to restore law and order and rebuild the country after more than four years of civil unrest that left the country bankrupt and an unknown number of people killed. The first phase of the RAMSI intervention, focused on restoring law and order, has been a huge success, partly because of the overwhelming support from the local population. Since the end of the first phase, however, Solomon Islanders have become more critical about RAMSI, especially its approach to state-building, its 'take over' of government institutions, and even its continuing presence in the country. This increasingly critical discussion of the role of RAMSI involves people from different sectors of the Solomon Islands society: rural people, intellectuals, civil society groups, church leaders, former militants, politicians, community leaders, government officials and expatriate Solomon Islanders.

This chapter examines the issues raised in these discussions and the differing opinions amongst Solomon Islanders about RAMSI. It also offers suggestions on how RAMSI could be better organised to ensure that resources it offers are best utilised to benefit Solomon Islands.

#### **Pro interventionist sentiments**

RAMSI has received popular support and praise since its deployment in July 2003. This was evident in the views expressed to the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) tasked with reviewing the regional mission in 2005. At Malu'u on Malaita, for instance, provincial politicians, church representatives, chiefs, youths and villagers told the EPG that RAMSI must remain and that any suggestions for an early exit would not be welcomed. A Malaita man was reported to have told the EPG that 'RAMSI is like an island in the Ocean. Without an island there's no living'.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, at Peochakuri and Mbambanakira on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal, an area that witnessed numerous atrocities before the RAMSI intervention, people called for RAMSI to stay for another ten to fifteen years in order to bring normalcy to people's lives.<sup>2</sup>

The support for RAMSI is particularly widespread amongst rural people who suffered most during the civil unrest and who felt alienated from the state. Many rural people, as demonstrated by comments in the media, were not concerned about the processes that enabled RAMSI to intervene and the laws of its engagement. For them, what was important was the restoration of law and order, the provision of basic services, and the establishment of income-generating opportunities, or markets, for their products. RAMSI's Special Coordinator, James Batley, was therefore right when he stated that '[w]hile some parliamentarians opposed the presence of RAMSI, I am happy to report that there is a strong grass-root support for it, and it was obvious from the debates on the review of RAMSI that there is also a wide support from MPs'.<sup>3</sup>

### *Restoration of law and order*

Since the arrival of RAMSI, law and order has improved, allowing people to move around freely, foreign investors to return and the economy to improve. As part of the attempt to restore and maintain law and order, there is a reform of the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) force, which also includes the training of new recruits. This program, which is supported by the Participating Police Force (PPF), is enabling RSIP to develop skills and professionalism and to improve equipment and logistics. This has been applauded because of the collapse of RSIP and the involvement of many officers with the militant groups during the period of social unrest. Further, RAMSI has contributed to the strengthening of the courts with additional lawyers and judges and the construction of new courtrooms.

#### ***Investor confidence and stabilisation of government finances***

Apart from the restoration of law and order, RAMSI has also enforced financial procedures and regulations leading to the stabilisation of government finances. This, in turn, improved revenue collection and management and investor confidence in the country. Consequently, investors have expressed interest in large-scale industries such as the oil palm plantation and the Gold Ridge mine on Guadalcanal, which closed during the height of the social unrest. In addition, negotiation began for the establishment of another oil palm plantation at Auluta on Malaita. The RAMSI reforms have also ensured that salaries for civil servants are now being paid, unlike previous years when public servant salaries were not paid on time, or not paid at all. Moreover, medical supplies in the Central Hospital and rural clinics have improved.

#### ***Rebuilding the machinery of government***

RAMSI has, therefore, contributed to the rebuilding and strengthening of state institutions, ensuring that public service regulations are enforced, and corrupt public servants reprimanded. RAMSI's presence made government officers, especially in the Ministry of Finance, feel secure and confident in carrying out their responsibilities. To achieve this, Australian personnel were placed in in-line positions at the budget division, treasury and other important departments of the Ministry of Finance. Further, fences were erected and pass systems were introduced to control the movement of people in and out of the Ministry and to ensure that officers were not harassed. Some public servants who committed crimes while in office have been charged with corruption. This included a former controller of the Inland Revenue and a senior treasury officer. By the end of 2005, five politicians had also been arrested and charged with abuse of public office, including corruption. Those who support RAMSI argue that this has given Solomon Islanders a renewed trust in the state and a new hope in rebuilding their country. They argue that RAMSI has given back the sovereignty of the nation to its citizens after it had been taken away by criminals, militants and dishonest public servants. From this perspective, they argue, it would be wrong to argue that the RAMSI intervention took away the country's sovereignty.

### **The interventionist critics**

While there has been widespread support for RAMSI, there are those who have been critical of its approach. Many of these critics were not necessarily opposed to the intervention, but were critical of the approach employed by RAMSI and would like to see it more acceptable to Solomon Islanders. There were, of course, others who have not

supported RAMSI because it destroyed their opportunity to exploit the state for personal benefit, or felt that they could be arrested for crimes committed during the period of social unrest.

### *Australian-dominated*

The critics often point to the fact that while RAMSI claims to be a regional mission it is dominated by Australia. The Pacific Islands Forum is marginalised in the decision-making processes on how RAMSI operates on the ground. Mary-Louise O’Callaghan, an Australian journalist resident in Solomon Islands, for example, states that:

... there are no signs of regional representatives in the endless scoping missions sent up by Canberra to fathom how to rebuild the nation? Why weren’t members of the PNG Ombudsman Commission included for instance on the recent accountability mission, looking at ways to deal with the fight against corruption? Where are the Samoan public servants to assist with ideas and even execution of public sector reform?<sup>4</sup>

After two years of operation it seems obvious that the regional identity of the intervention has been negligible. It is Australia (and New Zealand to a certain extent) which make the decisions on RAMSI’s operations. John Roughan, a Solomon Islander commentator, for example, argued that:

The original underpinning of this military/public service intervention by Pacific countries was to be consistent with and directed by the Biketawa Declaration passed years ago by Pacific Forum Island members. This meant that RAMSI should be answerable and accountable to the Pacific Forum's Secretary General, yet consistent with Solomon's sovereignty and integrity. However, the public perception ... is that RAMSI is a Canberra run operation with little or no input from the Pacific Forum's Secretary General.<sup>5</sup>

There is a need for RAMSI to enhance its 'regional image' in order to gain legitimacy amongst Solomon Islanders and avoid being seen as neo-colonialist on the part of Australia. It must proactively involve other Forum Island countries and ensure they feature in the important decision-making positions.

### *Allegation of biased dealings*

There are also allegations that RAMSI is biased in how it deals with Solomon Islanders. The Malaita Ma'asina Forum (MMF) and the Malaita Separatist Movement (MSM), for instance, claim that '... Australians in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) are driven by ethnic hatred, directed particularly against Malaitans'.<sup>6</sup> They claim RAMSI favours ethnic groups other than Malaitans.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this perception on the part of some Malaitans, a majority of Solomon Islanders see RAMSI as even handed in arresting and trying people from both sides of the conflict and others who were allegedly involved in criminal activities. The first 'tension-related' arrests and trials were for crimes that were committed by men from Guadalcanal.

Harold Keke and two accomplices were, for example, arrested and tried for the murder of Fr. Augustine Qeve, the former member of parliament for South Guadalcanal. Similarly, Jimmy 'Rasta' Lusibaea and his accomplices were arrested and tried for the murder of a Malaita man who was shot and killed in jail.

In response to allegations of bias, Batley argued that:

RAMSI does not discriminate against, or work in favour of, any one group or province. The only thing we favour is the rule of law. RAMSI takes the partnership we have with all Solomon Islanders very seriously and we work hard to ensure that all our people respect all groups and customs in Solomon Islands.<sup>8</sup>

To most Solomon Islanders, RAMSI is neutral because its personnel do not have 'wantok' affiliation, as was the case with RSIP.

### ***Impact on national sovereignty***

There are also expressions of concern that RAMSI might threaten the country's sovereignty. This concern was expressed particularly by the militants and their advisors and supporters who benefited from the lawlessness. However, now that law and order has improved, the sovereignty issue is being raised by other Solomon Islanders, many of whom have no connections to militants.

The concern over sovereignty now emerges from the perception that RAMSI is behaving as though it is the government of Solomon Islands, and also because of questions surrounding the legality of the *Facilitation of International Assistance Act* (2003), which

facilitated its deployment. RAMSI personnel are able to move in and out of the country without visa or immigration requirements. In particular, there were questions surrounding the immunity provision, which protects RAMSI personnel from prosecution under Solomon Islands law if they commit a crime. Part II Section 17(1) of the *Facilitation Act* for instance states that:

... members of the visiting contingent, the assisting country, and other country whose personnel are members of the visiting contingent, shall have immunity from legal proceedings in Solomon Islands courts or tribunals in relation to actions of the visiting contingent or its members that are taken in the course of, or are incidental to, official duties.<sup>9</sup>

A group that is at the forefront of challenging the *Facilitation Act* and other privileges provided for RAMSI is the MMF. The group argues that the existence of RAMSI and the immunity provided to them are encouraging lawlessness in the settlements around Honiara and on Malaita. They also believe that the bill is unconstitutional. The MMF, for example, issued a statement to that effect in October 2004 stating that:

[t]he immunity clause in the bill giving right to RAMSI to be immune to the laws of Solomon Islands is a complete disregard for the sovereignty and legitimacy of Solomon Islands laws. Its effects are obvious with more and more young people in the outskirts of Honiara



defying the law because they knew RAMSI personnel are free under the immunity to break the laws.<sup>10</sup>

The subsequent legal challenge to the immunity provision of the *Facilitation Act* was encouraged in part by the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Supreme Court ruling against the constitutionality of immunity in the case of Australian personnel serving in PNG as part of the Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP). In the case of Solomon Islands, however, a case by lawyer and former MEF leader, Andrew Nori, challenging the legality of RAMSI was dismissed by the Solomon Islands High Court in April 2006.

#### ***Failure to develop local capacity***

Another issue of concern is the sustainability of the nation-building processes if RAMSI leaves. At present the nation-building process is facilitated by the logistics, personnel and finance provided by RAMSI. Local capacity has not been developed. Consequently, it is anticipated that if RAMSI leaves there would be problems in sustaining the nation-building project. There are, for example, claims that RAMSI continues to develop its own capacity to deal with crimes in the country while ignoring the capacity of its local counterparts.<sup>11</sup> The incapacity of the police - both the local and RAMSI police - was clearly demonstrated in their inability to stop the riots and looting in Honiara in April 2006 following the election of Snyder Rini as prime minister.

It is often argued that it would be appropriate if the local police could be supported in terms of logistics to reach out to areas inaccessible to PPF officers. This would also help in building and sustaining a local police presence. The sustainability of peace and nation-

building processes will eventually depend on the authority and reach of the local police. From this point of view it may be necessary to spell out clearly plans for the long-term maintenance of RAMSI's efforts and the general peace process instead of talking about an exit strategy.

There is a general feeling that things are working efficiently in government ministries that have RAMSI officials in in-line positions. For instance, there is a marked improvement in the control of money flow at the national treasury with the presence of Australian advisers and in-line managers. Nevertheless, the long-term sustenance of such efficiencies is highly questionable. This is because of the distinct disparities in facilities available to local officers compared with the RAMSI civilian officers. Insiders talk of RAMSI officers having access to mobile phones, computers, vehicles and other logistics that enable their efficiency at work while the local officers have no access, or limited access, to such things. It was because of this realisation that the Cabinet Committee reviewing the 'Intervention taskforce' report on RAMSI recommended:

RAMSI to ensure that all equipment (vehicles, computer and accessories) and office supplies used by staff of Budget Support Programme, staff in both line positions and advisory capacity, must be available to non-expatriate staff in the Department.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of the so-called 'cooperative intervention' is to have a lasting positive impact on efficiency and effectiveness of administration in critical government departments. However, there is a feeling that the long-term sustainability of good results

will be threatened unless local capacities are developed. To do this it would be wise to build one public service rather than two parallel institutions.

### ***Inappropriate approach***

Questions have also been raised about the fact that a significant percentage of funds allocated to Solomon Islands were actually spent in Australia, or to benefit Australians. At times, RAMSI personnel used helicopters to move to nearby places to conduct meetings. This was seen as a waste of resources that could be diverted to other useful developmental purposes in Solomon Islands. One also sees and hears helicopters flying around Honiara at night. An elderly mother in my village one evening commented on a RAMSI helicopter: 'I wonder what types of crimes RAMSI is looking for in the air up there?' She was commenting because the local RSIP and RAMSI never responded to crimes committed in the villages.

RAMSI's professional conduct was also questionable. Officers of the PPF were often seen speeding up and down the Malaita and Guadalcanal roads with little public relations understanding. For instance, PPF officers normally walk up to people and ask them for things and expect immediate answers. This was done without realising that this is not the way to find out about something in Solomon Islands. One needs time to sit down, familiarise oneself with the village, and know people before investigating things. This is when proper answers would be obtained.

### ***Support for 'failed' institutions***

Solomon Islands is branded a 'failed state', a failing state, or a weak state by Australian authorities.<sup>13</sup> This implies that the current government and governance structures existing in the country are of no real use. The question for many Solomon Islanders then is why did Australia, through RAMSI, partner with a government that many of them see as being part of the problem because its leadership is often seen as corrupt? Further, why did RAMSI focus on maintaining a system of government that has failed? Why didn't RAMSI focus on calls for the establishment of a federal system to replace the unitary system that the country now has? Many Solomon Islanders think that RAMSI should invest its resources in helping Solomon Islanders find an appropriate system of government; one that fits the local context and is accepted locally. As Ashley Wickham, a Solomon Islander commentator, states:

We realise that the Australian government views current moves towards constitutional reform with some apprehension, even disdain, at least how we perceive it. In withdrawing its support for various activities that would help us find our constitutional feet, it has distanced itself from a very necessary process in our collective view. We need to continue the discussions to take us toward some agreements about how we should look after ourselves and each other better. One of our enduring difficulties is just that: we do not have systems that allow us to look after our own provincial communities properly. How then, can we look after the national community?<sup>14</sup>

The argument is that RAMSI should facilitate the local processes and attempts for constitutional reform that would prevent the country from failing in the future.

### ***Too many advisers***

Commentaries on RAMSI and its approaches also point to the large number of foreign (especially Australian) advisers and the fact that it is overwhelming local initiative. Most positions under RAMSI are filled by Australian nationals, which means that the money is actually going back to Australia instead of helping the country to recover economically.

While it is accepted that experts that are not available in the country should be sourced from outside, tasks that Solomon Islanders could do should go to Solomon Islanders. There is a joke around Honiara saying that there are so many advisers at Rove Prison that many of them have nothing to do except open and close gates. RAMSI personnel are also paid handsomely compared to their local counterparts, for doing the same tasks. Moreover, it is alleged that some of these outsiders were not even eligible to enter the public service in Australia. The perception is that they easily obtained positions as advisers in Solomon Islands as if they were in the country to try out their qualifications in the field. Solomon Islands, in other words, became a training ground for Australians. The opportunities could be better utilised by engaging local counterparts in the real spirit of 'helpem fren' and the ultimate intention of developing local capacity. Better still, RAMSI could improve its public image by engaging other Pacific Islanders in some of these advisory positions.

### ***Exaggerating military capabilities***

There is frustration among some Solomon Islanders about the exaggeration of RAMSI's military capabilities. During the first months of RAMSI's presence in the country, there were regular displays of the military might of RAMSI. One of the fallacies this promoted was the ability of trained dogs to uncover hidden weapons and guns. This raised the expectations of people. Moreover, the regular helicopter flights and firing exercises implied that RAMSI would actually uncover all hidden weapons and track down the wanted militants who were causing problems in the rural areas. Unfortunately, these turned out to be untrue when hidden weapons were not found and many fugitives were not captured. This has resulted in disappointment and doubts about RAMSI's capabilities. It has also boosted the confidence of those criminals on the run. It can be argued that the murder of the Australian officer in late 2004 and the shooting at a RAMSI convoy on Malaita in 2005, exemplifies these attitudes.

Ordinary Solomon Islanders would be encouraged if the military and police were vigorously pursuing all criminals on the run. Efforts should also be made to talk with people in the villages who will direct them to people still holding guns. More importantly, RAMSI should provide logistics (vehicles, boats, and so on) to local police officers. Support should be given to police outside the town boundaries in places like Tetere, Buala and Auki who will reach out to communities and pursue criminals rather than concentrating vehicles and facilities in Honiara. Once again the partnership between RSIP and RAMSI should be encouraged to increase the capability of the state. RAMSI's capabilities were further questioned following the rioting and looting in Honiara in April 2006. Despite all the resources at its disposal and its military and police might, RAMSI was not able to prevent the destruction and looting of properties in Honiara.

### ***Illegal activities in Honiara***

There is a feeling in some sectors of the Solomon Islands community that although RAMSI claims to promote law and order, it also encourages and participates in illegal activities in which its members are immune under the *Facilitation of International Assistance Act*.

Karlynn Tekulu for instance describes a number of incidents in which RAMSI officers participated in illegal activities. She points out that RAMSI officers are known to participate in prostitution and the purchasing of black market alcohol and *kwaso*, an illegal homebrew. She describes some incidents of RAMSI officers and prostitutes or schoolgirls participating in immoral and illegal acts close to their base.<sup>15</sup> Although this involved only some members of RAMSI, it is something that must be addressed. RAMSI officers are seen frequenting illegal liquor outlets and purchasing *kwaso*, and this has affected efforts to curb such illegal activities.

### ***Pleas to apprehend 'big fish'***

There was also frustration that leaders (or the 'big fish') who were allegedly involved in initiating and sustaining the social unrest have not yet been reprimanded. During the Forum Eminent Persons' Group visit to Solomon Islands in 2005, the Malaita premier reiterated this call:

... if RAMSI has sufficient evidence on the perpetrators right now, the Malaita public would be pleased to see the 'big fish' facing justice .... We want RAMSI to dig down into the root causes of the crisis and arrest the architectures of the recent troubles. We

believe this is one of the major steps towards lasting peace if Solomon Islands is to remain integrated as a nation.<sup>16</sup>

There is widespread public feeling that RAMSI must not ignore public officers and politicians who might have been involved in criminal activities. Although RAMSI has begun to arrest some of those in this category the perception is that this has a long way to go.

### **The way forward**

Given the opportunities that have now been provided by RAMSI, it is important for Solomon Islanders to learn from past mistakes and put in place policies, rules and strategies to avoid a repetition of similar problems in the future. There is also a need for RAMSI to critically reflect on its approaches to state-building and ensure that its efforts are seen as legitimate by Solomon Islanders. For this to happen, RAMSI personnel need to listen more and communicate better, in a real spirit of partnership. The idea that it was anti-RAMSI proponents who always orchestrate criticisms of RAMSI has needlessly given rise to suspicious feelings between Solomon Islanders and RAMSI. Many of the criticisms should be understood as pointing towards areas of dissatisfaction that can be rectified in order to improve the international engagement with Solomon Islands and the achievement of RAMSI's long-term objectives.

First, the efforts of the intervention force should be streamlined with nation-building efforts. This means that apart from looking purely at law and order, and the



machinery of government, there should also be a push to make the economy self-sustaining and to do so in an unbiased manner. The focus should be on developments such as roads, bridges, schools, and the facilitation of people's participation in the process. Moreover, there should be equal development and employment opportunities through a decentralised approach. The 'cooperative intervention' experiment must not allow the idea that 'RAMSI cannot do everything' to overshadow the reality that they can make a huge impact on the building of Solomon Islands. Here, RAMSI should look to the precedent of assistance it gave to reopening the main road and bridges in north Malaita, something it claimed not to be part of its role. When it decided to do that, tangible benefits were realised in the area and RAMSI did what people would regard as assisting in nation-building through the maintenance of infrastructure. This is what ordinary villagers see as 'helpem fren'.

A second priority is for RAMSI to support the design and establishment of an appropriate and relevant system of government. The various calls for autonomy by groups and regions prior to independence and after the recent ethnic uprising, suggest the importance of giving major support to the constitution-making process. It is of concern that Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands Forum that endorsed the RAMSI intervention have chosen to ignore the calls and urgency for constitutional reforms in the country. The issues to be addressed in the reforms are well documented in the various protests, demands, peace agreements, communiqués, and other documents. Solomon Islands needs assistance in identifying strategies to address the causes of the social unrest. If stakeholders ignore these calls and place their attention elsewhere, then the country's friends are encouraging it to go around in circles, with the recreation of the form of national governance which led to the conflict in the first place.

A third focus should be in assisting the country find solutions to the causes of the social unrest and the various national crises. There is a tendency to ignore issues that led to the country's demise. The RAMSI slogan of 'helpem fren' really means to help government. For the peace process, there are informal, non-governmental structures that are found everywhere throughout Solomon Islands that could be utilised to facilitate the process. For instance, churches have a significant influence and the presence of guns previously rendered them helpless. Now that RAMSI has created law and order it should involve churches and other institutions in dealing with aspects of the peace process.

Fourth, RAMSI personnel should be exposed to and understand Solomon Islands cultures. The training and briefings that officers undertake in Australia before going to Solomon Islands could be complemented by in-country training programs. An understanding of Solomon Islanders cultures would assist communication and minimise misunderstandings. There is clear evidence that Pacific Islander RAMSI personnel who understand the culture are more effective in communicating with Solomon Islanders and receive more welcoming comments when compared to their Australian counterparts.<sup>17</sup>

A fifth proposal is for RAMSI to recognise that 'failed states' are not the same as 'failed communities'. It was government apparatus that failed during the period of social unrest. Communities remained and indeed succeeded in acting as buffers providing the needs of their people in the absence of government services.

Sixth, RAMSI should ensure that it builds local capacity rather than relying on external personnel to do what the current workforce can do. As indicated above, there are complaints about the lack of consideration for local staff in in-line ministries in terms of logistics and equipment. Moreover, there is an allegation that there are two parallel

government systems operating: RAMSI and the Solomon Islands government. Efforts must be made to ensure that capacity in terms of human resource development and sustainable infrastructure are in place.

In the instance that RAMSI leaves, strategies and logistics must be fully in place and working. A question normally raised is, what will happen when RAMSI leaves? Announcement of the actual timeframe and dates for exit may not be a good idea for strategic reasons particularly given the ‘payback’ elements that characterise Melanesian cultures. Nevertheless, some kind of planning and preparation for RAMSI exit should now be in place. This will determine the outcome of this cooperative intervention in the long term. Without building local capacity, RAMSI efforts could be wasted when RAMSI departs. In the same manner, the capacity of other Pacific Island countries could be developed through their increased participation in RAMSI. Capacity in the region will not be developed if only Australians and New Zealanders are engaged under the auspices of RAMSI.

Finally, the efforts of the ‘cooperative intervention’ mission in Solomon Islands need some oversight. It does not speak well of RAMSI when the operation is not accountable within the country or regionally. I would suggest that the way forward is to establish a committee at the national level and another at the regional level to which RAMSI is accountable. At the local level, the Solomon Islands Intervention Task Force (SIITF) could continue but with new terms of reference. It is the issue of partnership and accountability that must be encouraged in RAMSI to avoid unnecessary criticism of the good work it is doing.

## **Conclusion**

Solving conflicts and rebuilding the country means finding solutions to the ‘known’ longstanding issues. The outstanding issues are there and we simply need to find solutions by listening to what the people are saying and learning from history. It is a concern that RAMSI and the Solomon Islands government have, so far, not addressed the underlying causes of the social unrest. The country’s priority should be to solve the root causes of the social unrest.

However, Solomon Islanders cannot expect outsiders or the educated elite to solve their problems. They could be facilitators but it is Solomon Islanders who understand their problems better than anybody because they have lived with these problems and know their contexts. If the leaders slowly find their way through these problems, citizens will realise that that they themselves have the solutions with the help of good neighbours through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

Ultimately the future of Solomon Islands is in the hands of Solomon Islanders. The work of RAMSI in assisting Solomon Islanders to overcome its law and order problems is to be saluted. For a politically legitimate engagement in state-building, in the future RAMSI’s approach will, however, need to be rooted in the participatory approaches that were asserted in the ‘helpem fren’ statement. If the leaders and people helping Solomon Islands could nurture an attitude of partnership, and if RAMSI is genuine in its efforts, the developing misconceptions and misunderstandings could be eliminated in the joint struggle to build a better Solomon Islands.

## Notes

1 *Solomon Star* (17 May 2005), p. 2.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Solomon Star* (16 February 2005), p. 5.

4 Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, 'Australian foreign policy: making the most of it for Solomon Islands', paper presented at 'Beyond Intervention' workshop, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Honiara, 15-17 June 2004, p. 3.

5 John Roughan, 'Put the "R" into RAMSI', *Solomon Star* (9 February 2005), p. 7.

6 *Solomon Star* (10 May 2005), p. 1.

7 The MMF and MSM are two separate entities. MMF is a leaders' forum which is concerned with the future welfare of Malaita province, while MSM is a militant group which aims to influence political processes through threat of force.

8 *Solomon Star* (11 May 2005).

9 Solomon Islands National Parliament, *Facilitation of International Assistance Act* (no. 1 of 2003), Honiara, 17 July 2003, p. 56, [www.pacii.org/sb/legis/num\\_act/foiaa2003386/](http://www.pacii.org/sb/legis/num_act/foiaa2003386/) (accessed 8 August 2006).

10 *Solomon Star* (15 October 2004), p. 5.

11 Local police officers at the time of writing testified to these disparities in facilities and equipment. Indeed, it is visible when observing police officers on the streets. The same concern was highlighted by a former accountant in the Accountant General's office and now a RAMSI employee.

12 Cabinet Office, 'Report of the Cabinet Committee to Review "Intervention Taskforce Report on RAMSI"', Honiara, December 2004, p. 16.

13 Elsin Wainwright, 'Our failing neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands', ASPI policy report (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2003).

14 Ashley Wickham, 'Islands in a slipstream', paper presented at University of Queensland, Brisbane, March 2005, p. 12.

15 Karlyn Tekulu, 'Methods matter: societal experiences of RAMSI', paper presented at University of Queensland, Brisbane, March 2005, p. 5.

16 *Solomon Star* (17 May 2005), p. 5.

17 An example of this was reported in *Solomon Star* (19 January 2005). Two Vanuatu officers were requested to have their time in the country extended because of their outstanding performance in dealing with community issues.