



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## CORAL SEA CABLE CEREMONY - MONDAY 15 JULY 2019

### Remarks

Thank you MC,

I would like to acknowledge:

Prime Minister, the Honourable Manasseh Sogavare

His Grace the Most Reverend Chris Cardone, the Archbishop of the Catholic Church and Solomon Islands Christian Association

Ministers of the Solomon Islands Government

Members of the SISSC Board

Vice Chair and CEO of NPF

Honourable Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corp, Permanent Secretaries, Private Sector Representatives, Distinguished Guests.

I would also like to acknowledge the traditional landowners, some of whom are here with us today.

I am delighted to represent the Australian Government at this important event, which marks a major milestone in the delivery of the Coral Sea Cable and the Solomon Islands Domestic Network.

The Coral Sea Cable, which will connect from Australia to Solomon Islands and PNG, will deliver faster, affordable and more reliable communications infrastructure.

And as the Prime Minister mentioned, the domestic network will connect Honiara to Noro, Auki and Taro - extending the development benefits and economic opportunities that the cable will bring beyond Honiara.

Today we mark the commencement of the installation of the cable in Solomon Islands, and as we stand here today, the Coral Sea Cable is being laid in Solomon Islands waters.

Over the weekend, some of you may have seen the cable being hauled ashore to this very site and today technical divers continue working to ensure the cable is secured on the seabed.

The Golden Bouy that was handed over today, represents this significant milestone – the first time an undersea cable has reached the shores of Solomon Islands. What is even more significant is the transformative impact the cable will have on Solomon Islands.

Investments like this cable will be game-changing for the economic development of Solomon Islands. It is a critical infrastructure project for Solomon Islands and a high priority for Australia. The cable has the potential to change the way Solomon Islands businesses, conducts business, governments deliver services, and the way the Solomon Islanders connect with the world.

Investment in telecommunications infrastructure can serve to create jobs, increase productivity and grow the economy.



Improved internet connectivity can encourage digital entrepreneurship and open up global e-commerce opportunities for the tourism, agriculture and fisheries industries.

The cable also has the potential to make government services more effective and efficient, and improve health and education services for Solomon Islanders, particularly in improving access to those living in rural areas.

Australia is working closely with the Solomon Islands Government and the private sector to help prepare for, and maximise the benefits of the cable, as well as mitigate the risks of the increased connectivity.

We are providing technical assistance to the Prime Minister's office and Solomon Islands Government ICT Support Unit to support the government's preparedness for the improved connectivity that the cable will bring, and implementation of national ICT initiatives.

We are also funding the World Bank to help identify ways to leverage the improved connectivity to enhance digitisation of government services and the economy

And we expect to have an Australian Volunteer placed with the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry to support local businesses to prepare themselves to make the most of the improved internet connectivity the cable will bring.

Australia is also committed to working with Pacific island countries to support an open, free and secure Internet that drivers economic growth, protects national security and promotes international stability.

The Boe (*boy*) Declaration, endorsed by Pacific Island Forum Leaders highlights cyber security as an emerging security challenge for the region and recognises the need to maximise the protections and opportunities Pacific Island countries in the digital age.

Strengthening cyber resilience in the Pacific is a key goal of Australia's Cyber Cooperation Program - a \$34 million investment over eight years to support Australia's broader international cyber engagement, which champions an open, free and secure cyberspace.

The Coral Sea Cable project is a tangible symbol of Australia's commitment to stepping up its engagement in the Pacific, supporting greater economic development. Australia's looks forward to supporting more transformative infrastructure across the Pacific, including through the new Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific.

Before I finish, I want to acknowledge the support of Solomon Islands Submarine Cable Company and Solomon Islands Government, as well as a range of other partners like NPF, landowners, Vocus and ASN in the delivery of this project. The project is on schedule to be completed by the end of this year, and I look forward to having an even bigger celebration to mark the project's completion with everyone then.

Tagio Tumas,