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New Correctional Centre Opens in Auki

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The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Fred Fono, today commissioned a progressive new Correctional Centre in Auki, capital of Malaita Province.

Built with the assistance of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), the Centre reflects the recent modernisation of Solomon Islands correctional system to focus on prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration.

Speaking at the commissioning, Mr Fono said the Centre would provide a much “more effective opportunity for healing of offenders from Malaita province” than was possible previously when the majority of prisoners had to serve their sentences In Honiara.

“It is Government policy to develop centres in locations such as this that allow offenders to keep in touch with family and support networks, such as church groups” who can encourage them and help prepare them to be better citizens.”

Mr Fono thanked RAMSI for funding the Centre as well as the contractors and workers for a job well done.

The Special Coordinator to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, (RAMSI), Graeme Wilson, said that the progress made in Corrections since RAMSI arrived in 2003 was one of the strongest success stories of the partnership between Solomon Islands and RAMSI.

“Six years ago, the Solomon Islands community was not able to count on the rule of law for protection; the courts were not sitting and in Honiara and Auki there were no functioning prisons,” Mr Wilson said.

“Today, it gives me great pleasure to witness a fine example of the successful modernisation of Correctional Services Solomon Islands (CSSI) which is being very firmly led by its Solomon Islands executive”.

“Today’s opening of the Auki Correctional Centre was another example of the great progress that the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI partnership has been able to achieve in building the capacity of the correctional system,” he said.

CSSI Commissioner, Francis Haisoma, said the Auki Centre was important in establishing a new, more positive correctional culture focused on the rehabilitation of prisoners.

“In a correctional centre, inmates are dealt with as individuals rather than a collective group of offenders and in this way officers can also work as teachers and advisers rather than simply having responsibility for security and containment.”

“These centres are also places where people can change behaviour and learn skills that reduce the likelihood of re-offending when released,” Commissioner Haisoma said.

The Deputy provincial secretary, Robert Kaua, said that by establishing the new Correctional Centre in Auki, there would be a much greater link between the work of Correctional Services in Malaita and the local community.

Already 15 local organisations and government agencies have signed agreements to provide services to the correctional centre.

“These programs are aimed at helping to increase skills specifically in Malaita province, and ensuring that, upon release, inmates have the ability to be integrated back into their own communities”, Mr Kaua said.

“The ongoing economic contribution to Auki and the province by the Centre would be quite significant,” Mr Kaua added.

“When the thousands of dollars that will be spent each week by the Centre on food and other goods and services in Auki, as well as the wages paid to staff are taken into account, the economic contribution of the new Centre is a major benefit to the people of Malaita,” he said.

The new Centre stands in stark contrast to the former Auki prison which was condemned for not meeting United Nations standards for either inmates or officers.

It has the capacity for up to 60 inmates including separate accommodation for women and juvenile offenders.

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