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RAMSI Invites Honiara Youth to Learn Exciting New Sport

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RAMSI is getting involved with youths in Honiara to promote peace, and healthy and positive living.

Every Saturday, RAMSI personnel including the Special Coordinator, are teaching people to play a new and exciting sport - Australian Rules Football.

People from Namoliki Community and Honiara High School have already been coming together each weekend with RAMSI military and civilian personnel to get fit and learn a new sport.

RAMSI Special Coordinator and ex-Australian Rules Football professional, Graeme Wilson, said he was very impressed by the enthusiasm and skill of the players, and the spirit of goodwill among everyone.

“Those who have been participating are showing signs of real talent and I congratulate the commitment of these young Solomon Islanders to getting involved, learning about the game and having fun.”

Australian Rules Football was introduced to the Namoliki community in 2003 by members of RAMSI’s military and has continued ever since. Now Honiara High School which has a long history of sports achievement has joined the program

The headmaster, Jimmy Mekabota, is encouraging all students to join in the fun.

“We see that sport does not discriminate against anyone,” Mr Mekabota said.

“We believe sport enhances peace by bringing together young people from different ethnic backgrounds and denominations to see each other as brothers and sisters.”

Australian Rules Football is an action-packed game which is easy to learn. It uses a ball like a rugby ball, involves high scoring and has less physical contact than rugby.

Local representative, Mr Luda, says he used to play soccer but then started playing Australian

Rules Football which looked new and interesting, and not as rough as rugby.

“Anyone can play, no matter what your skill level is,” Mr Luda said.

He said the new sport was having a positive impact in their community.

“Instead of spending their time drinking, everyone spends Friday night preparing for Saturday’s game.”

During the week, Mark Lennox works with RAMSI military’s community outreach team, but on Saturday he uses his Pijin language skills as an Australian Rules Football coach and referee. He says he is concentrating on working with both the school and the nearby community to train teachers to carry on the sport when they are gone.

“You can see that everyone has such a good time so we’d like to see the sport continue and grow,” Mr Lennox said.

He said AusKick in Australia had donated balls and equipment and the players had also been provided with team shirt.

AusKick - Australian Rules Football – is played every Saturday at 1.30pm at Honiara High School. Everyone is invited to come and join in the fun.

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