

BLOODY RIDGE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Annual Report 2025



**Ministry of Culture and Tourism
Solomon Islands**

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 marked a significant phase in the continued development of Bloody Ridge National Historical Park (BRNHP). Building on the stabilisation efforts undertaken during 2024, the focus shifted towards strengthening day-to-day operations, environmental management, visitor infrastructure, and partnerships with communities, government agencies, and international stakeholders. The Park is gradually transitioning from a previously unmanaged and contested area into a structured national heritage site with growing recognition both within Solomon Islands and abroad.

Throughout the year, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism worked to balance heritage preservation with the practical realities of managing a protected area located close to expanding settlements and ongoing development pressure. Encroachment, informal access roads, and security concerns continued to present operational challenges. At the same time, the Park experienced increasing visitor numbers, expanded educational use, and stronger collaboration with institutions such as Solomon Islands National University and key government ministries. These developments demonstrate the evolving role of Bloody Ridge as not only a historic battlefield, but also a space for research, environmental restoration, community engagement, and national identity.

A major emphasis during 2025 was the gradual improvement of infrastructure and safety to support long-term visitation. UXO clearance, boundary marking, ranger training, and the introduction of structured patrols allowed previously inaccessible areas to be opened for development. Environmental initiatives, including reforestation and landscape rehabilitation, laid the groundwork for a more sustainable management approach, while partnerships with donors and local communities helped deliver tangible benefits beyond the park boundary.

This report provides an overview of achievements, challenges, partnerships, and future priorities for the year. It will be useful for government agencies, donors, and other partners with interest in the steady progression of Bloody Ridge National Historical Park toward becoming a nationally significant heritage and environmental asset.

2025 AT A GLANCE

- **3,524 total visitors**, including foreign tourists, students and local users
- **25,000 sqm of land** cleared through UXO operations and site preparation
- **3,500 trees** planted as part of environmental restoration initiatives
- **3 km of park boundary** marked and reinforced
- **32 security guards** deployed throughout the year
- **369 community members** employed for part-time labour
- **SBD 145,280** paid directly to local communities through park work



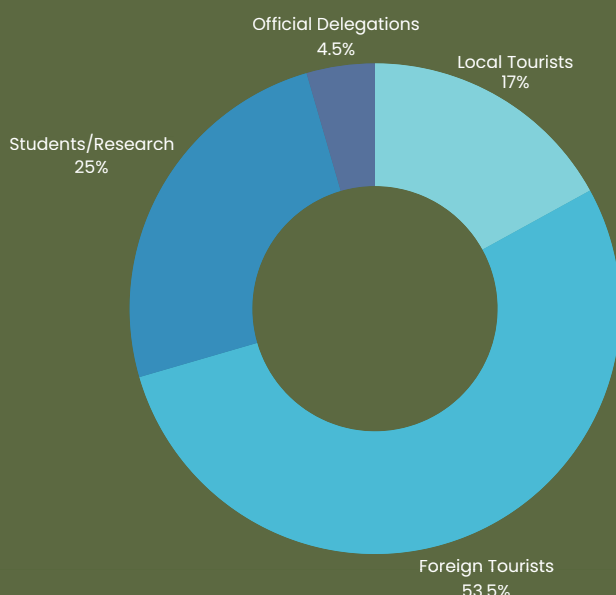
Cruise Ship visit at Bloody Ridge

These headline achievements reflect the scale of ongoing transformation at Bloody Ridge, transitioning from a previously unmanaged site into a structured National Historical Park.

VISITOR STATISTICS AND PARK USE

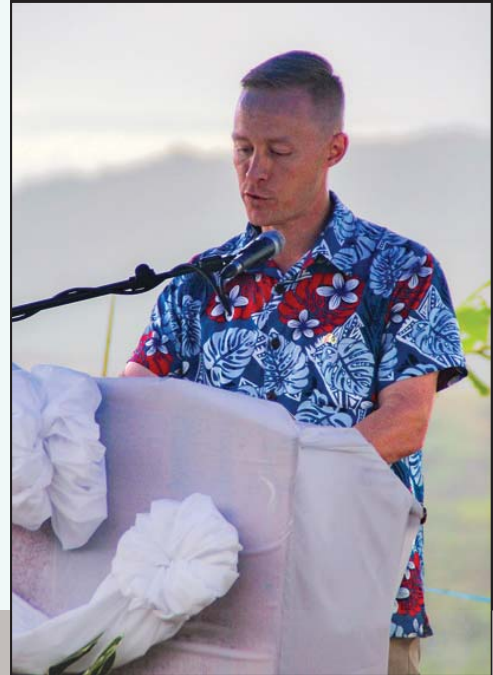
Visitor numbers continued to grow during 2025, reflecting increasing national and international awareness of Bloody Ridge National Historical Park as a key World War II heritage site. A total of 3,524 people visited or used the Park during the year. This figure includes tourists, students, official delegations, commemorative events, and local recreational users, highlighting the Park's role as a multi-purpose national space.

Of the total visitation:



- **1,873 were foreign tourists**, demonstrating strong international interest in the Guadalcanal campaign.
- **602 were local tourist**; Solomon Islanders who visited the park as domestic tourists.
- Combining both foreign and local visitors there were **2,476 tourists**, 70% of all park users.
- **876 visitors** were local **students and researchers**, mainly forestry students from Solomon Islands National University (SINU).
- **159 visitors** were part of official delegations or work activities.

An important milestone during 2025 was the introduction of the first commemorative event held on the actual anniversary of the Battle of Bloody Ridge, taking place between 12–14 September. Previously, commemorations had been aligned with the 7 August landings on Guadalcanal, but the shift to the September battle dates has helped strengthen historical accuracy while reducing overlap with other national events. The commemoration attracted a range of high-profile participants, including ambassadors, foreign ministers, Members of Parliament, and several visiting military delegations, further reinforcing the international significance of the site.



US Charge d'Affaires during the 2025 Commemoration



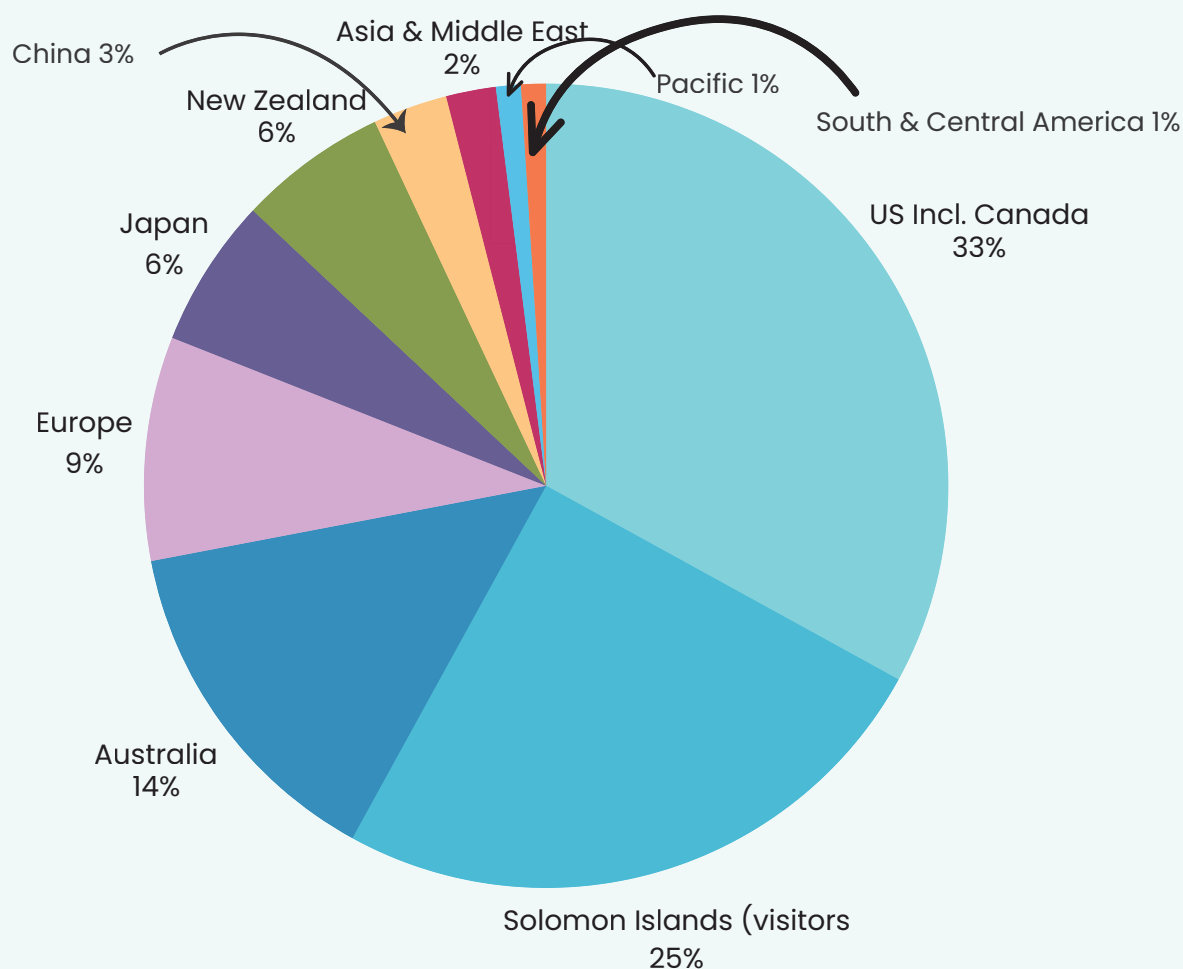
Battle Commemoration 2025

The Park also hosted a growing number of organized activities and events throughout the year. These included community runs such as the Hash Harriers and larger sporting initiatives like the Solomon Airlines Peace Marathon, demonstrating the expanding role of Bloody Ridge as a recreational and national gathering space in addition to its heritage function.



Hashhouse Harriers Running Event

Top visitor regions, with visitors from 44 countries:



Top visitor source countries:

- United States (812) – 32.8%
- Solomon Islands (visitors) (636) – 25.7%
- Australia (344) – 13.9%
- Japan (158) – 6.4%
- New Zealand (143) – 5.8%
- France (89) – 3.6%

While US and Japan nationalities represent only a small proportion of overall tourism arrivals to Solomon Islands, their prominence at Bloody Ridge demonstrates the strong niche appeal of WWII heritage tourism. Many visitors have direct historical or family connections to the campaign, including descendants of veterans and specialist tour groups.

Local Solomon Islander visitors also formed a significant portion of overall attendance. Community members, students, runners, and local organisations regularly used the Park for recreation, training, and events. Distinguishing between tourists, students, and local users is therefore essential to understanding how the Park contributes not only to tourism development but also to education, recreation, and national heritage awareness.

SECURITY, SAFETY AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Security operations remained one of the most demanding aspects of managing Bloody Ridge National Historical Park during 2025. The operational environment continues to be challenging, with incidents linked to illegal access roads, alcohol-related disturbances, encroachment, and vandalism. The security log for 2025 recorded a total of 135 incidents across all categories, illustrating the scale of day-to-day management required to maintain control of the Park.

The majority of incidents were related to disturbances and anti-social behavior at gates, roads and monument sites. In total:

- 63 disturbance-related incidents were recorded, including drinking in the park, quarrels at the gate, loitering, and refusal to comply with entry rules.
- 26 crime and security incidents were logged, including vandalism, threats, violence, and theft.
- 24 encroachment and environmental damage incidents were recorded, such as illegal land clearing, littering and fly-tipping.
- 18 EOD-related callouts were carried out, reflecting the continued presence of unexploded ordnance within the Park.
- A smaller number of incidents involved infrastructure damage, accidents, and requests for assistance.

Many incidents were directly linked to vehicle traffic using illegal shortcut roads through the park, which placed additional pressure on ranger teams and infrastructure. Despite these challenges, the expansion of patrol routes, first aid training, and EOD awareness training strengthened the capacity of the ranger force and improved overall safety for visitors.



Closure of illegal shortcut road

The presence of trained security staff remains essential to maintaining order, protecting heritage sites, and enabling ongoing development activities throughout Bloody Ridge National Historical Park.

ENCROACHMENT, ACCESS AND ROAD MANAGEMENT

Illegal access roads through the park continued to present a major management challenge during 2025. Shortcut traffic from surrounding settlements contributed to a large proportion of environmental damage, littering, and disturbances recorded during the year. Heavy vehicle use also caused road erosion, safety risks, and additional strain on ranger operations.

The Ministry implemented several measures to manage access while maintaining community stability, including the introduction of resident vehicle permits, awareness campaigns, and the gradual closure of certain routes. These actions were necessary to protect the integrity of the park, although they occasionally resulted in community tensions and security incidents.

A significant complication has been the need to identify alternative access routes for surrounding communities when closing illegal roads through the park. In many cases, the proposed alternative roads are located outside park boundaries and fall under the responsibility of other ministries responsible for road planning and infrastructure. As a result, it has been difficult for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to justify involvement under existing government procurement systems, as it is difficult to use park resources for works beyond the park boundary.

Despite these constraints, the park team was required to dedicate substantial time, funding, and operational resources toward facilitating or constructing alternative access routes. These interventions were necessary to reduce community backlash and allow enforcement measures to proceed safely. However, the costs were significant and placed additional pressure on the park's limited budget, diverting funds that were originally intended for core conservation and development activities within Bloody Ridge National Historical Park.

A key lesson from 2025 was that road closures cannot be implemented in isolation. Effective encroachment management requires coordinated planning across multiple government agencies to ensure that alternative access solutions are identified and supported at the national level.

Alternative access road built by rangers and the Bloody Ridge community.



ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Environmental management progressed significantly during 2025 through the establishment of strong partnerships with Solomon Islands National University (SINU), the Ministry of Forestry and Research (MoFR), and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM).

Activities during the year included:

- Reforestation initiatives led by SINU students and local communities
- Planting of screening trees along boundaries affected by encroachment
- Development of long-term environmental restoration plans
- Community participation in environmental activities

876 students visited the Park during the year to take part in reforestation, research and practical field activities. Bloody Ridge is increasingly being used as an accessible outdoor classroom for Solomon Islands National University, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in forestry, environmental management, and field research. The visibility of local students working in the Park has had a positive impact on surrounding communities, reinforcing the message that Bloody Ridge is a national asset for Solomon Islanders — not only a site for foreign tourists.

The growing presence of students has strengthened local support for conservation efforts and helped demonstrate the broader national value of protecting the remaining battlefield landscape. The Ministry intends to build on this partnership in the coming years by expanding collaboration with SINU into additional areas of study, including heritage management, tourism, and environmental science.

These efforts laid the foundation for a formal Memorandum of Understanding signed in early 2026 between MCT, SINU, MoFR and MECDM, strengthening conservation, research and education within the park.



SINU students during the International Day of Forests

PARK INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT



Water Tower under construction



Visitor shelter at Hill 1

Infrastructure development accelerated during 2025 as the park began transitioning toward a more structured visitor experience. Major works included:

- Construction of two visitor shelters at Hill 1 & 2
- Initiation of work on a combined guardhouse and Park headquarters to strengthen operational presence at the entrance area
- Initiation of trail improvements and stair construction around Hill 2
- Development of designated parking areas
- Installation of fencing around vulnerable heritage sites
- Borehole drilling and water tower construction to support future facilities
- Completion of boundary markers and planted boundary areas to clearly define the park limits

These improvements are part of a broader vision to make Bloody Ridge comparable to national parks internationally while maintaining authenticity as a historic battlefield. Boundary marking is also closely linked to encroachment management, helping both visitors and surrounding communities clearly understand where protected land begins.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL IMPACT

Community engagement remained central to the management approach at Bloody Ridge. The park team worked closely with surrounding communities to balance Park development objectives with local needs.

Key achievements included:

- **Employment of 369 local workers** through casual labour programs resulting in payment of SBD 145,280 directly into surrounding communities.
- **Support for a SBD 100,000 water project** benefiting Aelama village and local school
- **Collaboration with local women's groups** on landscaping and restoration



Community members doing casual labour in the park.

These initiatives helped build local ownership of the park while reducing tensions associated with enforcement activities.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNED EXPANSION

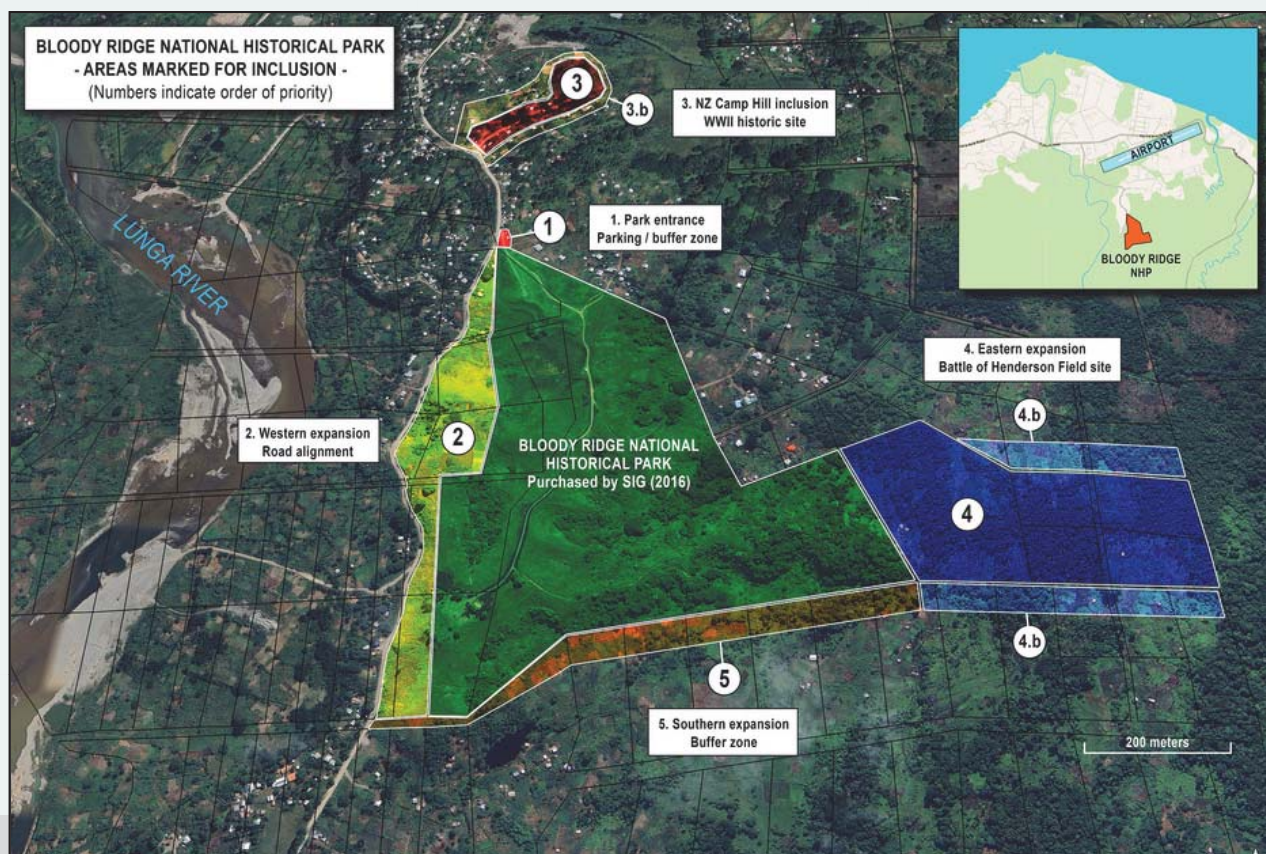
Bloody Ridge National Historical Park was originally conceived as part of a much larger protected landscape, with the current park boundary representing only the first phase. During 2025, planning work continued to expand the park to include historically significant areas such as NZ Camp Hill, Coffins Corner and sections of the Henderson Field battlefield.

Throughout the year, however, expansion efforts were significantly affected by ongoing land ownership disputes and legal uncertainty. The Government has indicated its intent to take back sections of land within the proposed expansion zone due to the leaseholder's failure to fulfil key obligations under the existing Fixed Term Estate. As part of this process, a stop order was issued to prevent further land transactions within the affected area. Despite this, development activity has continued, and reports indicate that the company holding the lease has proceeded with actions that appear to disregard the stop order.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has repeatedly requested intervention from the Ministry of Lands, the Attorney General's Chambers and Guadalcanal Provincial authorities. To date, however, limited progress has been made while all parties await the outcome of court proceedings. This prolonged uncertainty has created a governance vacuum, during which rapid and often unregulated development has taken place in areas earmarked for future park expansion.

A particularly concerning trend has been the emergence of informal land sales and new settlements, with some squatters claiming to have purchased land from customary landowners despite the land being under registered title. These developments complicate future conservation efforts and risk further loss of historically significant terrain. NZ Camp Hill has been especially affected, suffering extensive damage to heritage features due to illegal construction and land clearing during the year.

Despite these challenges, mapping, planning and stakeholder engagement continued throughout 2025 to ensure readiness once legal conditions allow progress. The Ministry remains committed to protecting the broader battlefield landscape and advancing the long-term expansion of Bloody Ridge National Historical Park in line with national heritage objectives.



Bloody Ridge National Historical Park –Planned Expansions Map

BRANDING AND IDENTITY

During 2025 the Park adopted the name “Bloody Ridge National Historical Park”, replacing the earlier “Peace Park” terminology. The revised name reflects a clearer focus on heritage protection and aligns more closely with international naming conventions used for historic battlefield landscapes. The change was introduced to reduce confusion among international visitors, researchers and partner organisations, many of whom associated the previous name primarily with memorial or reconciliation sites rather than an active heritage and conservation area.

The updated branding supports the Ministry’s broader objective of positioning Bloody Ridge as a nationally significant historic site with strong international relevance, particularly within World War II heritage tourism networks. The new identity also strengthens communication with key visitor markets such as the United States, where historical recognition of Guadalcanal remains strong.



Bloody Ridge National Historical Park – New Logo

Alongside the name change, a new visual identity and logo were introduced which will be rolled out across signage, uniforms, communication materials and online platforms. This will help create a more professional and recognizable presence for the Park and reinforce its status as the Solomon Islands' only formally managed national park site.

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management remained a core operational priority throughout 2025. In addition to managing security incidents and encroachment pressures, the Ministry continued to address hazards associated with the battlefield landscape. UXO clearance operations were a critical component of improving visitor safety and enabling infrastructure development. During the year, clearance activities covered approximately 25,000 square metres of land and resulted in the removal of more than 16,000 explosive remnants of war, including small arms ammunition, grenades and other hazardous items. These operations allowed new trails, shelters and visitor areas to be developed with reduced risk to staff and visitors.

The gradual improvement of walking tracks and the construction of defined paths and stairs has also contributed to safer movement throughout the Park. Clearly marked routes help prevent visitors from entering hazardous areas and reduce the likelihood of accidents on steep or eroded sections of terrain. As visitation increases, structured trail systems will remain an important safety measure.

Another significant safety issue has been the presence of deep treasure-hunting holes left by illegal relic digging in previous years. These holes posed a serious hazard to visitors, rangers and students

moving through the landscape, particularly in areas with tall grass or poor visibility. A systematic backfilling programme began in 2024 and continued throughout 2025, with the most dangerous excavations now filled and stabilised.



UXO Clearance Operations

While some smaller areas may still require attention in 2026, the work carried out to date has significantly reduced the risk of accidents associated with legacy treasure-hunting activities.

Fire risk remains an ongoing concern, particularly during dry periods. While grass fires have historically affected the area, the increasing presence of infrastructure such as signage,

shelters and future visitor facilities requires more active vegetation management. Rangers are now required to regularly clear grass and maintain buffer zones around infrastructure to reduce the risk of fire damage. Preventative measures, including awareness campaigns and removal of glass waste, continue to be implemented to minimise ignition sources within the Park.



Stair & walking track around hill 2



Clearing grass during dry season with fire in the background.

FUNDING, INVESTMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

The progress achieved during 2025 was supported by a combination of government funding and external partnerships. Continued investment in equipment, infrastructure and operational capacity enabled the Park to maintain daily activities while expanding development work.

Key investments and financial contributions included:

- **SBD 600,000** infrastructure funding through the Strongim Bisnis program, including Park office, water tower, visitor toilets and two visitor shelters.
- **SBD 262,946** park development activities funded through New Zealand's Grant Funding Agreement with MCT.
- **SBD 109,650** allocated to UXO clearance operations – SIG
- Purchase of tools and operational equipment valued at approximately **SBD 75,000**, strengthening ranger capacity for maintenance, boundary work and environmental activities – SIG
- **SBD 50,000** from Tourism Solomons supporting staff uniforms
- **SBD 20,000** BLP grant assisting with security equipment and operational needs
- Additional fundraising initiatives by WWII heritage associations supporting monument preservation and interpretation

Security operations remained one of the largest recurring expenses for the Park. The government spent approximately SBD 384,648 in security salaries during 2025, reflecting the high level of staffing required to manage access control, patrol duties and incident response across the site.



Bloody Ridge National Historical Park – Security Guards Patrol Training

The main external funding partners supporting Bloody Ridge National Historical Park remain Australia and New Zealand. Overall contributions to both development and recurrent costs have been broadly comparable between the Solomon Islands Government, New Zealand, and Australia, including New Zealand's support for a Technical Advisor and project management provided by MCT officers.

No entry fees were introduced during 2025, as the Ministry prioritised improving facilities before implementing a visitor revenue model. Entry fees are anticipated to begin once infrastructure upgrades and visitor amenities are sufficiently established.

NEXT STEPS - PRIORITIES FOR 2026

The 2026 work plan outlines the transition from consolidation to full development of the park. Priority activities include:

- Continued UXO clearance focusing around Hill 1 (Japanese monument)
- Expansion of trails, shelters and interpretation features
- Implementation of environmental restoration programs
- Strengthening of ranger capacity and security systems
- Progress toward legal resolution of expansion areas
- Installation of signage, interpretation panels and development of stronger storytelling throughout the park landscape

In addition to physical infrastructure, a greater emphasis will be placed on interpretation — not only through signage but through guided narratives, heritage storytelling, and improved visitor understanding of the Guadalcanal campaign. The Ministry aims to enhance how history is presented on site so that visitors, students and local communities can better understand the significance of Bloody Ridge within both national and global contexts.

The Ministry also intends to expand the use of the Park for events, commemorations and organised sporting activities. Building on successful runs, memorial ceremonies and community gatherings held during 2025, future programming will aim to strengthen national ownership of the site while increasing visitor engagement in a controlled and sustainable manner.



These steps aim to further position Bloody Ridge National Historical Park as a world-class historic battleground site that balances heritage preservation, environmental stewardship, and community benefit.

CONCLUSION

The achievements of 2025 demonstrate the continued transformation of Bloody Ridge from a contested and unmanaged landscape into a structured National Historical Park with growing national and international significance. While challenges remain — particularly related to security, encroachment and legal constraints — the progress made during the year reflects strong partnerships, dedicated staff, and increasing support from communities and stakeholders.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism remains committed to advancing the long-term vision for Bloody Ridge as a protected heritage site that honours history while contributing to education, research, and sustainable tourism development in Solomon Islands.