



Prime Minister Hon Matthew Cooper Wale, CBE

Address on the Occasion of the

Forty-Eighth Independence Anniversary of Solomon Islands

7th July, 2026
Venue: National Stadium, KGV

Theme: "Our Nation, Our Responsibility and Accountability – Building a GREAT Solomon Islands"

SALUTATIONS;

- Your Excellency, the Governor-General of Solomon Islands, His Excellency Reverend Sir David Tiva Kapu, and Lady Kapu;
- The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia;
- Honourable Chief Justice, Sir Albert Rocky Palmer, and Lady Palmer;
- Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Francis Sade MP;
- Honourable Ministers of the Crown;
- Leader of the Official Opposition, Honourable Manasseh Sogavare MP;

- Leader of the Independent Group, Honourable Peter Shanel Agovaka MP;
- Honourable Members of Parliament;
- The Attorney-General;
- Acting Commissioner of Police;
- Constitutional Office Holders;
- Provincial Premiers and Members of Provincial Assemblies;
- The Lord Mayor of Honiara City, Councillor Eddie Siapu, and Honourable Councillors of the Honiara City Council;
- Heads and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Representatives of Development Partners;
- Representatives of International and Regional Organisations;
- Heads of Statutory Authorities and State-Owned Enterprises;
- Representatives of the Solomon Islands Christian Association, the Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association, and all Church Leaders and Clergy;
- Representatives of the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Representatives of Civil Society Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations;
- Senior Government Officials;
- Traditional Chiefs, Community Leaders, and Elders;
- My Fellow Solomon Islanders;
- Our Friends from Around the World;
- Distinguished Invited Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;
- Boys and Girls;

And my dear brothers and sisters throughout our beloved Solomon Islands and our fellow citizens living abroad.

Good morning one and all.

Today, under the grace of Almighty God and beneath the flag of our sovereign nation, we gather to celebrate the Forty-Eighth Anniversary of the Independence of Solomon Islands.

On behalf of the Government and my family, I extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt wishes to every Solomon Islander wherever you may be. Whether you are gathered in our villages, towns, churches, schools, places of work, or joining us from abroad, this day belongs equally to all of us.

Today is not simply another anniversary. It is not merely another public holiday. Today is a sacred moment in the life of our nation. It is a day when memory meets hope. When gratitude meets responsibility. When history meets destiny.

It is a day on which we pause, not only to celebrate how far we have come, but also to reflect honestly upon who we are, what we have become, and what, together, we are called to become.

Before all else, we give thanks to Almighty God. For forty-eight years He has watched over these islands, sustained us through seasons of peace and seasons of uncertainty, carried us through times of prosperity and times of hardship, preserved our democracy, strengthened our people and despite our imperfections, His faithfulness has never departed from us.

The Psalmist reminds us,

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain."

Those words are as true for nations as they are for families. As we celebrate our 48th Independence Anniversary today, let us never forget that every blessing we enjoy ultimately comes from God, and every blessing entrusted to us also carries a responsibility.

My fellow Solomon Islanders,

This year's theme, **"Our Nation, Our Responsibility and Accountability – Building a GREAT Solomon Islands,"** is much more than a theme for an anniversary. Our nation is our inheritance. Responsibility is our duty. Accountability is how we honour both. It is a call to national renewal. It is a reminder that the future of Solomon Islands will never depend upon Government alone. Neither will it depend only upon Parliament. Nor only upon the Public Service. Nor only upon our Churches. Nor only upon our Chiefs. The future of Solomon Islands depends upon every Solomon Islander. Every mother and father raising children with love and discipline. Every teacher shaping young minds. Every nurse caring for the sick. Every police officer protecting our communities. Every farmer cultivating the land. Every fisherman harvesting the sea. Every entrepreneur creating opportunity. Every public servant faithfully carrying out his or her responsibilities and every young person preparing to inherit the future.

These are the people who build nations. For nations are not built only inside Parliament. They are built around family tables, in villages, in churches, in classrooms, in offices and in the quiet

decisions ordinary people make every day to do what is right, even when no one is watching.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

Before we speak about where we are going, we must first remember where we have come from. Our national story did not begin in 1978. Nor did it begin in 1893. Nor even in 1568. Long before foreign ships appeared upon our horizon, these islands were already home to vibrant societies that had flourished for countless generations. Our ancestors crossed the vast Pacific guided only by the stars, the winds and the currents. They established communities of remarkable resilience. They developed systems of leadership founded upon responsibility rather than privilege. They governed themselves through customs that upheld justice, reciprocity and respect. They understood that the land was not simply property. It was inheritance. The sea was not merely a source of food. It was life. Leadership was not domination. It was service. Authority was never exercised for personal gain alone. It carried obligations to family, community and future generations.

These truths remain among the greatest gifts our ancestors have entrusted to us. They remind us that stewardship has always been part of who we are as a people. We therefore honour our ancestors today. We honour their courage. Their wisdom. Their resilience. Their stewardship. Their enduring belief that every generation holds its inheritance only in trust for those who will come after.

The arrival of Europeans in 1568 and the establishment of the British Protectorate in 1893 introduced new chapters in our

history. Those chapters brought profound change. They also brought institutions that would eventually shape our modern State. Most significantly, Christianity spread throughout our islands and transformed the moral foundations of our society. Our churches became places of worship. But they also became schools. Hospitals. Centres of reconciliation. Communities of hope. They taught us that every human being possesses equal dignity before God. That justice must be impartial. That leadership is service. That forgiveness is stronger than revenge. That truth is stronger than falsehood. These Christian values remain among the strongest foundations upon which our nation continues to stand. We remain profoundly grateful for that legacy.

Then, on the Seventh of July 1978, our nation entered another chapter. The flag of Solomon Islands was raised before the family of nations. Our people assumed the responsibility of governing ourselves. That day was not simply the achievement of political independence. It was the beginning of a solemn national trust. Our founding leaders handed to us a sovereign nation. They entrusted to us democratic institutions. They entrusted to us the rule of law. They entrusted to us the responsibility of proving that we could govern ourselves with wisdom, justice and dignity.

Today, we honour them with gratitude. We honour those whose names appear in our history books. And we honour the countless ordinary Solomon Islanders whose names may never be recorded, but whose labour, sacrifice and faith made our Independence possible. Their generation gave us a nation. Our generation has inherited the responsibility to strengthen it.

That, my fellow citizens, is the unfinished work of nation-building. Independence gave us political freedom. Nation-building will determine what kind of nation that freedom becomes. Forty-eight years later, we can look back with gratitude. We have preserved constitutional government. We have strengthened our democracy. We have built schools, clinics and institutions. We have educated generations of Solomon Islanders. We have overcome conflict and hardship. We have remained one sovereign nation despite our extraordinary diversity.

These are achievements worthy of thanksgiving. Yet Independence also invites honesty. We know that our journey remains unfinished. Too many families continue to struggle with the rising cost of living. Too many young people still search for opportunities. Too many rural communities continue waiting for development that should already have reached them. Too many citizens have lost confidence that public institutions always serve the public interest.

These realities call us not to despair, but to responsibility and accountability. For every generation inherits unfinished work. The question before us is not whether challenges exist. The question is whether we shall have the courage, wisdom and humility to confront and overcome them together. That is the responsibility of our generation. That is our common national mission.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

Every generation must answer one question. Not merely what kind of economy it wishes to build. Not merely what kind of government

it wishes to elect. But what kind of nation it wishes to become. This is the question before us today.

History has entrusted to our generation a nation rich in natural resources, rich in cultures, rich in languages, rich in traditions and rich in faith. But history has also entrusted to us a nation whose work is not yet complete. Nation-building is not an event. It is a continuing journey. It did not end on the Seventh of July 1978. Indeed, in many respects, it began that day. The generation of Independence gave us political freedom. Our responsibility is to give deeper meaning to that freedom. Freedom is not merely the absence of external rule. True freedom is the capacity of a people to govern themselves wisely. To uphold justice. To respect the dignity of every citizen. To create opportunity for every child. To care for God's creation. To use public office for public service. Freedom without responsibility eventually destroys itself. Freedom guided by responsibility and accountability becomes the foundation of peace, progress and prosperity.

This is why today's theme speaks so powerfully to our circumstances.

Our Nation.

Not my nation. Not your nation. Our nation. A nation that belongs equally to every citizen, regardless of province, language, denomination or political persuasion. A nation entrusted to all of us.

Our Responsibility.

Responsibility that cannot be delegated to Government alone. Responsibility that belongs to every parent. Every chief. Every church. Every teacher. Every public servant. Every business owner. Every young person. Every citizen.

Our Accountability.

Not only accountability before the law. But accountability before one another. Accountability before history. And ultimately, accountability before Almighty God, who judges nations no less than individuals.

Responsibility and accountability together form the moral foundation upon which enduring nations are built. Without responsibility, freedom becomes licence. Without accountability, authority becomes abuse. Without both, democracy loses its purpose.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

Earlier this year, our nation passed through one of the most significant constitutional moments since Independence. Political differences were intense. Institutions were tested. The High Court was called upon to interpret our Constitution. The Court of Appeal exercised its solemn responsibility. Parliament fulfilled its constitutional duty. This was not a victory for one side over another. It was a victory for constitutional order. Throughout that period, our democracy demonstrated something profoundly

important. That in Solomon Islands, political authority must always be exercised within the rule of law. Not above it.

The principle of majority rule prevailed through constitutional means. Not through force. Not through intimidation. Not through violence. This should give every Solomon Islander confidence. Our constitutional system proved itself resilient. Our institutions proved themselves capable. Our democracy proved itself worthy of protection. For that, we should all give thanks. Not because one political group prevailed over another. But because our Constitution prevailed. Because our democracy prevailed. Because Solomon Islands prevailed.

My fellow citizens,

When I stood before our nation following my election as Prime Minister, I spoke three simple words.

"Change is coming."

Those words have often been repeated. But I ask today that they be understood correctly. They were never intended to create uncertainty. They were intended to create hope. They were meant to set a higher standard of governance. Hope that Government can once again become worthy of public trust, that institutions can once again command public confidence, that integrity can once again become the standard expected of public life, that our children may inherit a stronger nation than the one entrusted to us. But I also said something else that day. Something which remains, for me, the very heart of public leadership.

I said: **"We are not your lords. We are your servants."**

Those words continue to define my understanding of the office I hold. Leadership is not ownership. Leadership is stewardship. Public office is not a privilege to be enjoyed. It is a trust to be honoured. Authority is never an entitlement. It is a responsibility. That understanding lies at the very heart of our national motto:

"To Lead is to Serve."

Those words are not intended only for Prime Ministers. Nor Ministers. Nor Members of Parliament. Nor Public Servants. They are the calling of every Solomon Islander entrusted with responsibility. Every chief who guides a community. Every pastor who shepherds a congregation. Every teacher who shapes a young mind. Every nurse who comforts the sick. Every police officer who protects the vulnerable. Every judge who upholds justice. Every public servant who faithfully administers the affairs of the nation. Leadership begins wherever responsibility begins. And leadership reaches its highest expression not in being served, but in serving others.

My dear fellow Solomon Islanders,

This understanding also explains the philosophy that guides my Government.

The Government for **Reform, Empowerment, Accountability and Transformation.**

These are not merely political aspirations. They are national responsibilities.

We pursue **reform** because institutions that no longer serve the people effectively must have the courage to improve. Wise nations are not those that refuse to change. Wise nations are those that possess the humility to recognise when change is necessary and the courage to pursue it.

We pursue **empowerment** because true development is achieved not by making people dependent upon Government, but by equipping them with the opportunities, education and skills to realise their God-given potential. The strongest nation is one whose people are empowered to shape their own future.

We pursue **accountability** because there can be no substitute for integrity. Where public money is entrusted, there must be public accountability. Where authority is exercised, there must be transparency. Where trust is given, honesty must follow. Accountability is not an obstacle to progress. It is the guardian of progress.

Finally, we pursue **transformation**.

Not transformation measured merely by new programmes or policies. But transformation measured by a new culture of governance. A culture where service replaces privilege. Where integrity replaces corruption. Where stewardship replaces exploitation. Where national interest consistently rises above personal interest. Where every citizen once again believes that Government exists to serve the people, and never the other way around.

Fellow Solomon Islander,

The work before us is greater than any Government. Greater than any Parliament. Greater than any political party. It belongs to the nation itself. It belongs to every generation. It belongs to all of us. That is why I say today with conviction: The GREAT Coalition is not the destination. The GREAT Government has its mandate, but Solomon Islands is greater than any government, any party, and any parliament. The destination is a greater Solomon Islands. A nation that is more just. More united. More prosperous. More compassionate. More accountable.

A nation where every child, in every province, can look to the future with confidence and say:

"This is my country. This is my home. And I have every reason to believe that tomorrow will be better than today."

My dear fellow Solomon Islanders,

Hope, however, cannot exist without trust. Trust is the invisible foundation upon which every successful nation is built. Families are built upon trust. Communities are built upon trust. Markets are built upon trust. Democracy is built upon trust. When trust is weakened, institutions become fragile. When trust is restored, nations become stronger. The first responsibility of every Government, therefore, is to earn the trust and confidence of its people. Confidence cannot be demanded. It must be deserved. Respect cannot be legislated. It must be earned. Authority cannot substitute for integrity. Only integrity creates lasting legitimacy.

This is why my government has begun the work of restoring confidence in public institutions. Not because institutions

themselves are our destination. But because institutions are the means through which justice, opportunity and development reach our people. The measure of Government is not how much authority it possesses. The measure of Government is how faithfully it serves.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

One of the greatest responsibilities entrusted to our generation is the stewardship of the extraordinary blessings God has placed within these islands. Few nations have received what Solomon Islands has received. Our forests. Our rivers. Our fertile land. Our fisheries. Our minerals. Our oceans. Our biodiversity. These are not merely economic resources. They are part of the inheritance of our nation. They belong not only to us. They belong equally to our children and grandchildren. We therefore have no moral authority to consume recklessly what belongs equally to future generations. Our nation is our inheritance. Responsibility is our duty. Accountability is how we honour both.

Our ancestors understood this. Land was never merely something to possess. It was something to protect. The sea was never merely something to exploit. It was something to respect. The forest was never merely timber. It was life. It was identity. It was responsibility. Modern Solomon Islands must rediscover that wisdom. Development and stewardship must never become opposing ideas. The true measure of development is whether we improve the wellbeing of our people while preserving the inheritance entrusted to us.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

For many years our forestry sector has been at the centre of our national economy. It has also been at the centre of malfeasance and callousness. There can be little doubt that forestry has contributed significantly to government revenue and economic activity. Yet there can also be little doubt that the benefits have too often fallen short of the hopes of our people. Too often, immense wealth has departed our shores and squandered by a few while communities have remained without lasting development. Too often, forests that took centuries to mature have disappeared within a single generation. Too often, public confidence has been weakened by practices that placed private gain ahead of the national interest.

This must change. Not because we oppose investment. Quite the opposite. Solomon Islands welcomes genuine investors. We welcome those who come as partners in our national development. We welcome those who respect our laws. Who honour our people. Who recognise customary landowners as partners. Who understand that sustainable investment creates lasting prosperity. Such partners will always find Solomon Islands open for cooperation.

But let me also say respectfully and clearly: The time has passed when the wealth of this nation could be extracted without adequate responsibility to the people from whom that wealth ultimately comes. Our natural resources must increasingly benefit Solomon Islanders. They must contribute to stronger provinces. Stronger communities. Better schools. Better health services. Better

infrastructure. Greater opportunity. And a stronger national economy.

The same principle applies equally to the development of our mineral resources. Mining offers enormous opportunity. It also demands enormous responsibility. History has taught many nations that mineral wealth can either become a blessing or a burden. The difference lies not beneath the ground. The difference lies in governance. The difference lies in integrity. The difference lies in stewardship. My government is determined that Solomon Islands will not repeat mistakes that have impoverished resource-rich nations elsewhere.

Our mineral wealth must increasingly remain a blessing for our people. Its development must be transparent. It must be environmentally sound. It must provide equitable participation for customary landowners. It must contribute fairly to provincial development. And it must strengthen the prosperity of the nation as a whole.

For this reason, my government will continue pursuing reforms that increase national participation in our resource sectors and strengthen the long-term benefits flowing to Solomon Islanders. This includes our commitment to establishing a Sovereign Wealth Fund. This is far more than a financial policy. It is an inter-generational expression of justice. Natural resources are temporary. The wellbeing of future generations must not be. The revenues of today should become opportunities for tomorrow. The blessings entrusted to us today should continue blessing Solomon Islanders long after our generation has passed. This is the wisdom

of stewardship. This is the responsibility of leadership. And this is the covenant we owe to those who will one day inherit these islands.

My fellow citizens,

A nation cannot build lasting prosperity unless it invests first in its people. Our people have always been, and will always remain, the greatest resource of Solomon Islands. The greatest wealth of our nation is not found beneath the ground, above the ground and in the sea. It is found within the minds, hearts and hands of Solomon Islanders. That is why education remains one of the highest priorities of my government. Education is not simply another government programme. Education is the great equaliser. It is the bridge between potential and opportunity. It is the pathway through which a child from the most remote village can one day become a teacher, a doctor, an engineer, a scientist, an entrepreneur, a judge or a national leader.

Education is one of the most powerful expressions of justice that any nation can provide. That is why my government has committed itself to progressively introducing free education from Early Childhood Education through Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the Solomon Islands National University starting in January 2027. This is not merely an investment in students. It is an investment in the future of our Nation. We believe that no child should be denied education because of financial hardship. Talent belongs to every province. Opportunity must therefore reach every province. Potential belongs to every family. Opportunity must therefore reach every family. The future belongs to every child.

Opportunity must therefore belong to every child. That is the nation we are determined to build.

My dear fellow Solomon Islanders,

Education must also prepare our young people for the world they will inherit. The world is changing with extraordinary speed. Science and technology continue to reshape the global economy. Artificial intelligence is transforming industries. Digital innovation is creating new opportunities while rendering old skills obsolete. Climate change demands new ways of thinking. The future will reward nations that invest not only in knowledge, but in creativity, innovation and lifelong learning. For this reason, my government has begun important reforms within our education sector. Work is afoot to separate the responsibility for school education from higher education, technical and vocational education, research and innovation. This reform recognises that the challenges and opportunities of higher education require dedicated leadership and strategic focus. We will also be introducing Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Innovation, or STEMI, beginning with pilot initiatives that will prepare our students for the industries of tomorrow.

But let me say this clearly. As we embrace modern knowledge, we must never abandon timeless wisdom. Progress must never require us to lose our identity. Our children should graduate not only with technical competence. They should also graduate with integrity. With compassion. With discipline. With humility. With a deep appreciation for our cultures, our languages and our Christian values. Education must prepare them not merely to earn

a living. It must prepare them to live honourably. To serve faithfully. And to lead wisely.

My fellow citizens,

Economic transformation must also become a defining feature of our national journey. For too long, our economy has depended heavily upon exporting raw materials while importing finished products. We have exported logs. We have exported fish. We have exported cocoa. We have exported copra. We have exported other primary commodities. Then we have purchased back products manufactured elsewhere, often at many times the value of the raw materials we originally sold. This pattern limits opportunity. It limits employment. It limits national wealth creation. And it limits our economic independence.

The time has come to move steadily from an economy of extraction to an economy of production. From exporting raw materials to creating value here in Solomon Islands. Our fisheries should increasingly support processing industries located within our own country. Our cocoa should increasingly become premium chocolate produced by Solomon Islanders. Our coconut industry should continue expanding into high-value products that create skilled employment. Our agricultural sector should increasingly support food security, exports and domestic manufacturing. Our tourism industry should continue growing in ways that protect our environment while creating sustainable livelihoods for our people.

Economic transformation is not merely about increasing national income. It is about creating opportunities that allow our own

people to participate fully in building the future of their own nation. It is about ensuring that prosperity reaches villages as well as towns. Provinces as well as the capital. Women as well as men. Young people as well as established businesses. This is inclusive development. This is nation-building.

Fellow citizens,

A strong economy also depends upon strong indigenous enterprise. Across our islands there are countless Solomon Islanders with remarkable talent. Farmers. Fishers. Tradespeople. Artisans. Small business owners. Young innovators. Entrepreneurs with ideas and determination. What many require is not charity. What they require is opportunity. Access to finance.] Access to markets. Access to training. Access to infrastructure. Government therefore has a responsibility to create an environment where indigenous enterprise can flourish. Not by replacing private initiative. But by enabling it. When local businesses succeed, local families benefit. When local businesses expand, local employment grows. When local businesses invest, communities prosper. When communities prosper, the nation prospers. This is why we remain committed to creating a business environment that rewards initiative, encourages innovation and removes unnecessary barriers to enterprise. The prosperity of Solomon Islands will ultimately be built not only by Government expenditure, but by the creativity, industry and resilience of its people.

My fellow Solomon Islanders,

One of the greatest concerns shared by families across our nation is the rising cost of living. I know many families are feeling this pressure every week and I understand those concerns. Government understands those concerns. Every increase in the cost of electricity. Every increase in transport. Every increase in essential goods. Places additional pressure upon household budgets. These are not abstract economic statistics. They affect real families. Real communities. Real lives. Among the most significant long-term challenges is the cost of energy. Affordable electricity is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity. Without affordable energy, businesses struggle to expand. Manufacturers struggle to compete. Young entrepreneurs struggle to innovate. Families struggle to improve their quality of life.

For this reason, my government has committed itself to reducing the long-term cost of electricity through strategic investment, reform and partnership. Reliable and affordable energy is essential to industrial development. It is essential to food processing. To fisheries. To tourism. To digital innovation. To education. To healthcare. To every modern economy. Lower energy costs will not simply reduce household expenses. They will unlock investment. Create employment. Expand opportunity. And strengthen national competitiveness.

This is an investment not merely in infrastructure. It is an investment in the future productivity of our nation. We are also engaging constructively with our financial institutions and State-Owned Enterprises. Our objective is simple. Essential services

must remain financially sustainable. But they must also remain responsive to the needs of the people they exist to serve. Commercial success and public responsibility should never be viewed as competing objectives. The strongest institutions are those that achieve both.

My dear people,

Everything I have outlined today is guided by one simple conviction. The economy exists to serve people. People do not exist merely to serve the economy. Economic policy has meaning only when it improves lives. When it expands opportunity. When it strengthens families. When it restores hope. That is the measure by which my government wishes to be judged. Not only by economic growth. But by whether that growth reaches the lives of ordinary Solomon Islanders. For development that benefits only a few is not true development. True development is shared. It is inclusive. It is sustainable. And it strengthens the dignity of every citizen.

My dear fellow Solomon Islanders, while our future depends upon what we do here at home, it is also shaped by the friendships we build abroad. Since independence, Solomon Islands has been blessed by enduring partnerships with nations across the Pacific, Asia, Europe, the Americas and beyond. Many have stood beside us through times of need. Many have contributed to our schools, hospitals, infrastructure, security, governance and economic development. To all our development partners, I express, on behalf of the people and Government of Solomon Islands, our sincere appreciation. Your friendship has mattered. Your partnership

continues to matter. Our government believes that Solomon Islands should be a confident, respected and constructive member of the international community.

We seek friendship with every nation. We seek cooperation based upon mutual respect. We seek partnerships founded upon equality, sovereignty and shared benefit. Our foreign policy is therefore guided by a simple principle. We will be friends to all and enemies to none. As a sovereign nation, our decisions will always be guided by the interests of the people of Solomon Islands. We welcome engagement. We welcome investment. We welcome cooperation. But every relationship must ultimately strengthen the wellbeing of our people, respect our sovereignty and contribute positively to our national development. That is the responsibility entrusted to every independent nation.

My dear brothers and sisters,

As Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Solomon Islands has the privilege and responsibility of contributing to the future of our Blue Pacific Continent. The Pacific Ocean has never separated us. It has always connected us. Long before modern maps were drawn, our ancestors navigated these waters with extraordinary skill and courage. The ocean sustained our lives. Connected our communities. And shaped our identity. Today, the Pacific faces new challenges. Climate change. Illegal fishing. Transnational crime. Cybersecurity threats. Economic uncertainty. Increasing geopolitical competition. None of these challenges can be addressed by one nation alone. They require cooperation. They require trust. They require Pacific leadership. Solomon Islands

remains committed to working closely with our Pacific neighbours to ensure that our region remains peaceful, stable and prosperous. We believe that the future of the Pacific should always be determined by Pacific peoples. Our voice matters. Our sovereignty matters. Our unity matters. And together, we can continue building a region that is secure, resilient and hopeful.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

Strong nations are not built by political leaders alone. They are built by strong institutions. Among the greatest strengths of our Republic is our Public Service. Every day, thousands of Solomon Islanders quietly serve this nation. Many do so without recognition. They prepare lessons for our children. They care for patients. They maintain roads. They administer justice. They protect our borders. They keep public records. They advise ministers. They deliver services to communities throughout our provinces. They are the quiet custodians of the State.

To every public servant across our nation, I offer my sincere gratitude. Your work matters. Your integrity matters. Your professionalism matters. The confidence that citizens place in Government depends largely upon the quality of your service. You are not simply employees of Government. You are servants of the people. Never underestimate the dignity of that calling.

At the same time, our people rightly expect excellence. They expect integrity. Efficiency. Professionalism. Respect. Public service exists to serve the public. Every unnecessary delay. Every careless decision. Every misuse of public resources. Ultimately affects the

lives of ordinary Solomon Islanders. That is why my Government remains committed to strengthening performance, accountability and implementation across the whole of Government. Policies must become programmes. Programmes must become results. Promises must become reality. Our people deserve nothing less.

My dear fellow citizens,

Throughout this address I have spoken about our economy. Our democracy. Our institutions. Our resources. Our partnerships. Our future. But ultimately, the success of Solomon Islands will not be determined by these things alone. It will be determined by our character. No Constitution, however well written, can replace integrity. No law, however comprehensive, can substitute for honesty. No Government, however capable, can build a great nation without citizens who accept responsibility for the common good. The future of Solomon Islands therefore depends not only upon the quality of its leadership. It depends upon the character of its people. The nation we build tomorrow begins with the choices we make today. When we choose honesty over dishonesty. Service over privilege. Justice over favour. Truth over convenience. Stewardship over exploitation. Hope over cynicism. We strengthen the Nation.

The character of a nation is not formed only in Parliament. It is formed in our homes. In our villages. In our churches. In our schools. In our workplaces. It is formed every day by ordinary people making extraordinary choices to do what is right. That is the Solomon Islands we seek to build. Not merely a wealthier nation. But a better nation. A nation respected not only for what it

possesses. But for what it represents. A nation known for justice. Known for integrity. Known for compassion. Known for faith. Known for keeping its word. That is true greatness. And that is the greatness to which we aspire. That is the Solomon Islands we seek to build.

As I come to the close of this address, allow me to leave you with one final reflection. Every generation receives two gifts. The first is an inheritance. The second is an opportunity. We did not choose the history we inherited. We inherited the wisdom of our ancestors. We inherited the Christian faith that has shaped our national conscience. We inherited the sacrifices of those who secured our Independence. We inherited the Constitution that has preserved our democracy. We inherited the hopes of those who believed Solomon Islands could become a peaceful, just and prosperous nation.

These are precious gifts. But inheritance alone does not determine destiny. What determines destiny is what each generation chooses to do with the inheritance it receives. That is the opportunity before us today. History will not ask whether our generation possessed challenges. Every generation has faced challenges. History will ask something far more important.

What did we do with the nation entrusted to our care?

Did we strengthen it? Did we unite it? Did we govern it wisely? Did we protect its natural inheritance? Did we educate its children? Did we honour the dignity of every citizen? Did we preserve

democracy? Did we leave behind stronger institutions than those we inherited?

These are the questions that history will answer long after every government represented here today has passed into history.

My fellow Solomon Islanders,

The future of our nation will never be built by Government alone. It will be built by every citizen who understands that nation-building is not someone else's responsibility. It is our shared responsibility. The farmer who rises before dawn. The fisherman who goes out before sunrise. The mother who sacrifices daily for her children. The father who works honestly to provide for his family. The teacher who inspires hope in a classroom. The nurse who comforts the sick. The doctor who saves a life. The police officer who protects our communities. The pastor who proclaims reconciliation. The chief who restores peace. The entrepreneur who creates employment. The public servant who faithfully performs his or her duties. The student who studies diligently because they dream of serving their nation.

These are the true builders of Solomon Islands. These are the citizens whose quiet faithfulness shapes the destiny of our Republic. Never underestimate the value of ordinary service. Great nations are rarely built by extraordinary events alone. They are built by ordinary people faithfully doing ordinary things extraordinarily well.

To our partners and friends,

In an increasingly globalised world, partnerships and collaboration are indispensable. No nation can realise its fullest potential in isolation, and Solomon Islands deeply values the enduring friendships and cooperation we have built with countries, regional organisations, multilateral institutions and development partners across the world.

To you all, we express our sincere gratitude for standing with Solomon Islands through our seasons of challenge and our moments of progress. Your friendship, support and cooperation have contributed significantly to our national development, and for that we thank you.

As a sovereign nation, however, we believe that the strongest and most enduring partnerships are those founded on mutual respect, trust and shared responsibility. Effective partnerships must respond to the priorities of Solomon Islands, empower our people, strengthen our institutions, respect our sovereignty, and be pursued with responsibility, transparency and accountability to the Government and people of Solomon Islands.

As we look to the future, we warmly invite you to continue walking alongside us. We ask that our partnerships be guided by the development priorities identified by Solomon Islands itself, recognising that lasting progress is achieved when national ownership is respected and support is aligned with the aspirations, needs and long-term vision of our people. Together, through genuine partnership and mutual respect, we can build a stronger,

more resilient and more prosperous Solomon Islands for this generation and those yet to come.

2026 Solomon Islands Independence Honours

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

Before I conclude my remarks, it is my privilege to perform one final duty on behalf of the Government and the people of Solomon Islands.

Each year, on the anniversary of our Independence, our nation pauses to recognise men and women whose lives of dedicated service have enriched our country and strengthened our communities. Through their commitment, sacrifice and exemplary conduct, they remind us that nation-building is not the work of governments alone, but of citizens who quietly and faithfully serve others.

Following careful consideration by the Honours Awards Committee, and in accordance with the established national honours process, I advised His Excellency the Governor-General to approve the conferment of the 2026 Solomon Islands Independence Honours.

His Excellency has graciously approved these recommendations.

It is therefore my honour to announce the recipients.

1. Cross of Solomon Islands (CSI)

The Cross of Solomon Islands, our nation's highest civilian honour, is awarded to Mr. Joseph Pitakia, for his long and outstanding services in education development and administration, and community services.

2. Solomon Islands Medal (Silver)

The Solomon Islands Medal (Silver) is awarded to the following

- Honourable Lence Tangosia, for political services, commerce and community development.
- Mr. Reginald Keith Rabete Douglas, for services to infrastructure development, maritime services, development and community services. and
- Mrs. Bernadine Manuia, for telecommunications administration and sports development.

3. Solomon Islands Medal (Bronze)

The Solomon Islands Medal (Bronze) is awarded to Mr. Cornelius Kirisi, for his dedicated service in upholding the dignity and reputation of State House, reflecting the integrity and honour of the people of Solomon Islands.

4. Solomon Islands Medal (Meritorious)

The Solomon Islands Medal (Meritorious) is awarded to Dr. Melitta Jones, for services to field of education and training, and community development.

To each of our recipients, I offer, on behalf of the Government and the people of Solomon Islands, our sincere congratulations and profound appreciation.

Your achievements remind us that true greatness is measured not by status or position, but by faithful service to others. Your lives stand as an inspiration to every Solomon Islander, especially our young people, that through integrity, perseverance and selfless commitment, each of us can make a lasting contribution to our nation.

Please join me in congratulating the recipients of the 2026 Solomon Islands Independence Honours.

Fellow Solomon Islanders,

In closing, I offer these words for our reflection

One day another generation will gather beneath this flag. They will celebrate not forty-eight years of Independence, but perhaps seventy-five years. Or one hundred years. They will sing our National Anthem. They will remember the names of those who led the nation before them. But far more important than remembering our names will be the nation we leave in their hands. May they inherit forests that still stand. Seas that continue to sustain life. Air that resuscitates life. Communities that still care for one another. Churches that continue to proclaim hope. Schools that continue to open doors of opportunity. Hospitals that restore health with dignity. Courts that continue to uphold justice without fear or favour. Public institutions that deserve the confidence of the people. A democracy strengthened by integrity. An economy

that creates opportunity for all. And a nation whose greatest strength remains the character of its people.

May they say of our generation: **"They inherited a nation with hope. They left us a nation with greater confidence. They received freedom. They deepened its meaning. They inherited democracy. They strengthened it. They inherited God's blessings. They became faithful stewards."** If history can truthfully say those things about us, then our generation will have fulfilled its calling.

Today, I invite every Solomon Islander to renew a covenant. A covenant with Almighty God, whose providence has guided our nation. A covenant with our ancestors, whose sacrifices gave us this inheritance. A covenant with one another, that we shall treat every citizen with dignity, fairness and respect. And a covenant with our children and grandchildren, that we shall leave them a Solomon Islands stronger, fairer and more hopeful than the one entrusted to us.

Let this be our common national mission. Let this be our solemn responsibility. Let this be our enduring promise.

For Independence was never the end of our journey. It was the beginning of our responsibility. The unfinished work of nation-building now belongs to us. Together, let us walk that path with humility. Together, let us govern with integrity. Together, let us pursue justice with courage. Together, let us protect the blessings God has entrusted to these islands. Together, let us build a Nation

worthy of the sacrifices of those who came before us and worthy of the hopes of those who will come after us.

As our national flag flies proudly today over every province, every island and every community, may it remind us that although our languages are many, our destiny is one. Although our customs are diverse, our future is shared. Although our opinions may differ, our love for Solomon Islands must always unite us.

May we remain one people under God. One nation under the Constitution. One family committed to justice, peace and reconciliation. One generation determined to leave a better Solomon Islands than the one we inherited.

May Almighty God grant us wisdom greater than our ambitions. Integrity greater than our authority. Compassion greater than our success. Courage greater than our fears.

May He bless our children. May He bless our families. May He bless our churches. May He bless our customary leaders. May He bless our provinces. May He bless those who faithfully serve this nation. May He bless our friends throughout the Pacific and around the world. And may He continue to watch over these beautiful islands that He has entrusted to our care.

Together, let us continue the unfinished work of nation-building.

Together, let us build a Solomon Islands that reflects the highest ideals of faith, justice, service, stewardship and hope.

As we commemorate forty-eight years of Independence and look with confidence to the future, let us be guided by the timeless wisdom of Holy Scripture:

"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

May Almighty God continue to build our nation, watch over our people, guide our leaders, and forever bless our beloved Solomon Islands.

**Happy 48th Independence Anniversary.
God bless Solomon Islands.**