



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA RELEASE

Minister Kumi concludes New Zealand visit to inform education reforms

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, 17 October 2026 — Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, Hon. Stephen Kumi, has concluded a week-long consultation and study visit to New Zealand to inform Solomon Islands' education reforms, with a focus on technical and vocational learning, STEM and higher education.

The programme, held from 10 to 18 October, included six education and training institutions and consultations with five government and education agencies. It explored how schools, training providers, universities and employers can create clearer pathways into further study and employment. Findings and recommendations will be formally submitted to the MEHRD Senior Management Team, relevant authorities and Cabinet for consideration.

In Wellington, Hon. Kumi met New Zealand's Minister for Tertiary Education, Hon. Penny Simmonds, at the Beehive, and Minister of Education, Hon. Erica Stanford, during the New Zealand Vocational Education and Training Research Forum, strengthening dialogue and bilateral cooperation.

Agency consultations involved the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Ministry of Education, New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and Education New Zealand. Discussions covered curriculum, assessment, literacy, numeracy, STEM, qualifications, quality assurance, careers guidance and transitions into tertiary study and work.

The six institutions were the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute at Te Puia; Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology; Auckland University of Technology (AUT), South Campus; Manurewa High School; Western Springs College; and Skills Trades Training at Highbrook. Visits demonstrated vocational and university pathways, school and industry partnerships, and learning connected to culture, communities and careers.

Key lessons included connecting academic and technical learning through recognised pathways, enabling progression from practical training to higher qualifications and degrees where entry requirements are met. Strong literacy and numeracy, practical Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), informed career choices and employer-supported work experience were also central to preparing students for further learning and workforce needs.

The consultations highlighted clear institutional responsibilities, credible qualifications, quality assurance, student support and community participation. Recommendations will consider how these approaches can be adapted to Solomon Islands' resources, geography and provincial needs.

The visit supports two major Government reforms: Free Education and the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education, Skills Development, Research and Innovation (MHESDRI). Lessons will inform efforts to improve access, education quality and sustainable delivery.

Groundwork for the new ministry is progressing, with full operation expected during the first quarter of 2027. It will provide a dedicated home for universities operating in Solomon Islands, post-secondary studies, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), research and innovation, strengthening coordination and alignment with national development priorities.

Concluding the consultations, Hon. Kumi visited communities in Waikato and Auckland, explained the delegation's mission and outlined the reform priorities. He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to better education opportunities and called on professionals living in New Zealand to share expertise and practices that could support learning pathways, skills training and higher education in Solomon Islands.

The Minister thanked the New Zealand Government, through MFAT, for making the visit possible; the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarships programme and Skills Group for facilitating it; and host institutions, agencies and communities for their welcome and exchange of knowledge.

ENDS///

Issued by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development

Education consultations in New Zealand



Photo 1 Hon. Stephen Kumi presents a token of appreciation to A senior officer at New Zealand's Ministry of Education, following consultations in Wellington.



Photo 2 The Solomon Islands delegation with senior executives of Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology in Rotorua during the education study visit.

Tertiary education and institutional partnerships



Photo 3 Hon. Stephen Kumi meets Joy Whiteman, Acting Chief Executive and Executive Director for People, Culture and Wellbeing at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology.



Photo 4 Hon. Stephen Kumi exchanges gifts with Auckland University of Technology Vice-Chancellor, Professor Damon Salesa, during the delegation's visit.



Photo 5 Hon. Stephen Kumi and the Solomon Islands delegation with senior staff of Auckland University of Technology during discussions on tertiary education and student pathways.

School pathways and community engagement



Photo 6 Hon. Stephen Kumi and the Solomon Islands delegation with staff and students of Western Springs College, which offers academic and STEM learning pathways for students in Years 9 to 13.



Photo 7 The Waikato community hosts Hon. Stephen Kumi and the Solomon Islands delegation for dinner and tok stori on the visit and Solomon Islands' education reform priorities.



Photo 8 The Waikato community hosts Hon. Stephen Kumi and the Solomon Islands delegation for dinner and tok stori on the visit and Solomon Islands' education reform priorities.