

CONVENTIONS KICK OFF ON HIGH NOTE

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM UNIT



REFORM NEWS



Honiara City Convention participant Mr. Evan Gereia making a point during the Convention held in March at Tandai Seafront Motel, Honiara. Photo: Marilyn Maeta'a, CRU


Three Conventions have been held so far in this quarter for the Provincial/Honiara City conventions reviewing the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution, bringing a total of seven more conventions to be carried out in this final phase of the program.

Honiara City, Choiseul and Rennell Bellona provinces held their conventions early this year, for representatives from each of the Conventions to make final comments on the Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands.

Seven other provinces, namely Western, Isabel, Malaita, Guadalcanal, Central Islands, Temotu and Makira/Ulawa are yet to hold theirs, however the teams have submitted tentative dates to the Constitutional Reform Unit (CRU) for their conventions.

Honiara City Convention was assisted by Consultant Lawyer Mr. Reginald Teutao.

Choiseul province was assisted by experienced legal person, also a member of Congress Mr. Jack-

son Piasi. Unfortunately Rennell Bellona could not be assisted technically, however noted that any legal queries will be brought to the 3rd Joint Plenary session before the draft goes through professional drafting. 

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Youths value participation in Convention

Young people attending Honiara City's Convention commented positively and further talked about youths' participation in this very important meeting discussing the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands.

In a brief interview with CRU's Media Section, the group of young people attending the Convention jointly gave their observation on youths' participation in this constitution-making process.

One youth Mr. Harry James said that their involvement shows that the young generation's participation is being valued.

"This is also an opportunity for us to learn what is in the constitution of our country," he said, applauding the fact that they were involved in this very important level of decision-making.

He quoted from the United Nation's General Secretary that "young people should never be seen as a burden in any society but as its most precious Asset".

"This convention recognizes that. That we are assets in the development of our country," Mr. James reiterated.

Another youth representative Mr. Wayne Sade said that this is an im-



Youth participant Mr. Solomon Rakei contributing to discussions during the Honiara Convention.

portant privilege that has been given to them to exercise responsibility that most young Solomon Islanders wouldn't otherwise have. He said that it would be good to look into a process that would be more participatory, so that young people can contribute better to discussions.

A youth advocate Mr. Elwin Talo highlighted that youths have to effectively participate in this constitution-making process.

"In this convention, there are people with different calibers debating the constitution here and I believe for youths it creates a feeling that doesn't allow them to voice out their opinion," Mr. Talo said.

Another youth Mr. Paul Patrick Amao


also spoke along the same lines that there are factors affecting young people debating important matters; and one is that having an environment of strong debates with more experienced people may cause reservation among youths to join in discussions.

Mr. Talo on another note added that an avenue should be created for young educated Solomon Islanders studying related areas of the constitution such as economics, development studies, social and political sciences should be able to contribute further in discussions on the federal Constitution of Solomon Islands.

"We can get constructive comments on these areas from students currently studying in universities as well," he said.

Youth participant Mr. Felix Naitoro added that it is good that young people are involved in this process.

"Maybe because in the future we will be the ones to implement this constitution," he said.

Constitutional Congress' Honiara City team invited a total of ten (10) young people along with 40 other participants to its Convention. Nine out of ten youths actively attended the Honiara Convention. 



Some of the youth participants posing with Congress' youth representatives Harry Alick (far right) & Phyllisca Rihumana (front).

New PS works closely with CRU to support Reform in final phase



New Permanent Secretary CRU Mr. Ronald Unusi gets busy with work.

Since taking up office, Constitutional Reform Unit's (CRU) new Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) Mr. Ronald Unusi is now keenly working with the Secretariat to provide the Constitutional Reform Project, all the support it requires to deliver according to the 2012/2013 Work Plan.

Mr. Unusi who was appointed PS/CRU in mid March said that maintaining the good work carried out under the previous management is important, in that managing the finance and resources of the program, and ensuring through CRU that the work gets all the support necessary to bring it to a successful conclusion.

According to the Constitutional Reform Work Plan/Timeline, three major activities will take place, the Provincial Conventions, a final Joint Plenary, and the National Convention, before the final draft will be professionally drafted as the completed version of the Federal Constitution, which will go through Cabinet by the end of the year, and for Parliament by early 2013.

Mr. Unusi said that he is quite impressed with the progress of the process by the Constitutional Congress (CC) and the Eminent Persons Advisory Council (EPAC), in creating

a new Constitutional arrangement under the careful guidance of the Consultant Lawyer Mr. Reginald Teutao with the Secretariat's (CRU) support.

He said that he thinks the decision by government to make the Federal constitution-making a process driven approach is good, adding that it is carried out on a democratic participatory approach. He further acknowledged the commitment and active participation of those involved.

"The process is built on decades of reviews, it is focused on producing a home-grown new compact for the popular expectation, a 'federal democracy'," he said, "This should instill a sense of ownership and responsibility for custodianship of the final document on Solomon Islanders."

Mr. Unusi said that it is also praiseworthy that NCRA government has continued the political commitment given to this very important government business started and maintained by its predecessors.

"The government is committed to this important task and like CC and EPAC, is keen to bring a closure to the current phase of the project," he said.

Mr. Unusi was introduced as PS to staff of CRU by outgoing PS Dr. Frederick Isom Rohorua. Since taking up office, he has also attended Honiara and Isabel conventions in his capacity as PS.

He was transferred from PS post at the Ministry of Forestry to replace Dr. Fred Rohorua who now serves as PS for the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

NEWS IN BRIEF

New CIP Team leader

Central Islands Congress team will be lead by a female Congress Member, Mrs. Catherine Pule.

This came after former leader Mr. George Saemane relinquished duties due to work commitments as School Principal of Florence Young Christian School. Mr. Saemane remains a CIP Congress nominee.

Parl committee meeting

Constitutional Reform Unit will be briefing the Parliamentary Constitutional Review Committee and the Bills & Legislation Committee early April 2012.

PS/CRU Mr. Ronald Unusi and Consultant Lawyer/CRU Mr. Reginald Teutao will be briefing the two committees on the progress of the Reform Program.

Temotu Vattu Feedback

Team leader Temotu Mr. Johnson Levela has indicated feedback on the Draft Federal Constitution in Temotu's Vattu region will commence April 16 2012 on Duff Islands.

This consultation is part of catch up Provincial Feedbacks, which were supposed to be held last year, however did not eventuate due to budgetary limitations.

Encouraging People's Input into the Federal Constitution

One of the essential aspects of the Constitutional Reform Program is getting people's input into the Federal Constitution, which is currently in its draft form.

This round of consultations this year is the final activity Constitutional Congress will get the public's contributions of ideas on the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution, mainly through the Provincial/Honiara Conventions.

In this issue PS/CRU Mr. Ronald Unusi acknowledged the commitment and active participation of all those involved in the reform process. Reflecting on this, he highlighted the great effort put in by CC, EPAC and the broad cross-section of community representatives and leaders of Solomon Islands both in civic and traditional capacities; working tirelessly and sacrificially within a tight budget most of the time.

So getting final views from the conventions and putting them into the

next and final draft will be a job Congress will work tirelessly on to achieve, together with the wisdom of EPAC and legal guidance from the Consultant Lawyer.

In Issue 7 we highlighted the drastic changes 2011 Draft Federal Constitution took, after the Provincial/Honiara feedbacks on 1st 2009 Draft Federal Constitution.


In this draft you will find major changes that have come about after much consideration on ideas and feedbacks from the Provinces and Honiara City; notably the Chapter on Fundamental Rights & Freedoms, the two options of the Executive Arm of Government, and Parliament's composition.

The 2011 Draft is the outcome of various ideas people contributed during the Provincial/Honiara feedbacks, and now the Conventions are in a way to cross-check if their ideas on the 2009 Draft were well catered

for in the 2011 Draft.

As well as getting views from the provinces and Honiara City, the Constitutional Reform Unit is also encouraging people to submit their comments on contents of the 2011 Draft or the changes done to it.

In the last feedback CRU had only two detailed commentaries other than the feedback results. They were from Peter Kenilorea Jnr and Raymond Hite. There was also a submission in September 2008 from the Ministry of Women, Youth & Children Affairs' Stakeholders Roundtable Meeting. As far as we are concerned, this is the only Ministry that has made its submission.

So far Rennell Bellona, Choiseul and Honiara have had the opportunity to contribute. 2011 Draft is in the process of review and it is the final opportunity for public contributions. You can access this Draft Constitution on website www.sicr.gov.sb. 

CHOISEUL COMPLETES CONVENTION

Choiseul Province was the first to hold its Provincial Conventions early this year to make final comments on the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands.

Choiseul Provincial Nominees of Constitutional Congress Mr. Simmy Vazarabatu (team leader), Ms. Viola Malasa and Dr. Glynn Galo were in Taro for this undertaking for two weeks and completed it on February 10.

Chiefs, provincial members and representatives of various stakeholders around Choiseul were part of this convention.

The provincial team is currently writing up a report on the convention

detailing discussions and amendments participants suggested to be included in the final draft Federal Constitution.


According to the Constitutional Reform work plan, Provincial teams in Congress will be holding conventions in the provinces for representatives there to have their final say on the draft Federal Constitution.

Though this activity is dependent on the weather and steady processing of funds from the Ministry of Finance, Congress expects to complete the provincial conventions by July this year.

All nine provinces including Honiara City will hold respective conventions

before the draft is put together in one final form for the National Convention also anticipated later this year. These are part of the consultation process in gaining greater public awareness and consensus on the Constitutional Reform of Solomon Islands.

Contents of the 2011 Draft derives from provincial and Honiara City feedbacks on the 1st 2009 Draft Federal Constitution, which the 2nd Joint Plenary of Congress and EPAC (Eminent Persons Advisory Council) reviewed and put into a constitution format for final public review.

2011 Draft version is available on the Constitutional Reform website. 

Reform in Pictures



Participants of Choiseul Convention (above) and Honiara Convention (Right) during respective conventions held this quarter.



Cr. Ronald Fugui makes a point during Honiara Convention.



Team members of Honiara City Congress (from front) Phyllisca Rihumana, Catherine Adifaka and Judith Fangalasu.



Dr. Ronald Ziru (Honiara City Convention participant) making a point during the discussion of clauses in the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution.



Youth participants Mr. Elwin Talo (front) and Harry James listening to discussions during Honiara City Convention.

CONSULTANT LAWYER APPLAUDS PARTICIPATION OF HONIARA CITY CONVENTION



Participants of the Honiara City Convention during the Convention in March.

Consultant Lawyer of the Constitutional Reform Program Mr. Reginald Teutao congratulated participants of the 2012 Honiara City Convention for enduring and successfully completing the review of the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution, in his closing remarks on Friday 23 March.

“To all distinguished participants of this Convention, on behalf of the


[Office], I would like to sincerely thank you all for attending the final Convention [of Honiara City] on the 2011 Draft for the last two weeks until today,” he said.

Mr. Teutao said that their participation in this process is a hallmark in the history of the federal constitution’s making, when it comes into effect.

He made remarks on youths’ participation in this convention, adding that youths are the future leaders of Solomon Islands and that their involvement in the process is extremely important.

He also noted that most of the women invited to this convention didn’t attend, however he thanked the only female participant Mrs. Margaret Aihunu who participated through till the final day of the Convention.

On behalf of the participants Deputy City Mayor Mr. Eric Tema also thanked Constitutional Congress’ Honiara team for the good organization of the Convention, and especially Mr. Teutao for his patience through the discussions and debates of several clauses in the draft, explaining the clauses carefully and giving understanding on technical issues.

Other participants who also gave their remarks during the Convention’s closing were Mrs. Aihunu, Councilor Jacob Ramoli, Mr. Waita Ben Tabusasi, Mr. Casper Fa’asala and Mr. Ronald Fugui. 

RENNELL BELLONA SUCCESSFULLY ENDS CONVENTION

Rennell Bellona provincial team for Constitutional Congress have successfully completed the Provincial Convention on the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands, which was held for two weeks, from 18th of February to 2nd of March 2012.

Team leader for Rennell Bellona Congress Nominees Fr. Francis Taupongi verbally relayed to the Constitutional Reform Unit that they were satisfied with what they’ve covered in the draft and that participants were happy with the overall organization of the convention.


The team comprising provincial



nominees Fr. Francis Taupongi and Mr. Brian Saoba undertook this task.

Though there were no legal assistance provided by the Constitutional Reform Unit at the time, it is understood that any matters brought up in the convention for legal explanation will be brought before the 3rd and

final Joint Plenary of the Constitutional Congress and Eminent Persons Advisory Council (EPAC), where Consultant Lawyer will be present to clarify.

Rennell Bellona was the second province to hold its convention following Choiseul province early this year. 



Convention participant Mrs. Margaret Aihunu interviewed by CRU Media Officer.

What are your general comments on the review of this draft?

I thank the Honiara City team; it's a very important two weeks for participants representing Honiara residents to look through this third draft of the Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands. As this is the last review before the final draft is done, we feel that it is very good that as residents of Honiara City were selected to participate, be able to look through, and give our opinions on any changes, and also add on anything that has been missed from the two last drafts. So to me, it has been a very important two weeks where commitment was given to those of us selected.

I also feel that it is challenging especially to look right through and complete reviewing this Draft Federal Constitution in two weeks.

From a participant's perspective, what's your view on the representation in this Convention?

Though a wide invitation has been given out, many did not turn up. Most people who should be here, were not able to come maybe because of work commitments. But I see that those of us who did turn up for these two weeks, we come from all differ-

ent walks of life, which I feel well represents the Honiara people in this review.

What organization/sector do you represent?

I represent Education, the Primary Division.

Are you satisfied with this review?

Yes. I believe that since the first two reviews and consultations carried out in the provinces, I think the draft represents all the thoughts of the people of Solomon Islands, when it is passed as the constitution of Solomon Islands.

As a Solomon Islander, do you look forward to a "Federal Solomon Islands"?

I would be really happy if we become a Federalism. Because there are a lot of good things out of this. I think before I also had the thinking as some people do, that when we hear this "Federal system", we have doubts and fears. But after going through this review, I see that there are lots of good things inside where I believe people will be happy about. So I would favor the Federal system, we are embarking on. 🇸🇴

Honiara City Convention Participants

Names of participants who actually attended the two-week Convention held at Tandai Seafront Motel conference.

- Cr. Isreal Maeoli (City Mayor)
- Cr. Eric Tema
- Cr. Andrew Mua
- Cr. David Deva
- Cr. Jonathan Zama
- Cr. Jack Maeli
- Cr. Bonggi Darlingi
- Cr. Charles Kira
- Cr. James Su'umi
- Cr. Jacob Ramoli
- Cr. Abel Aramboli
- Cr. Ronald Fugui
- Jackson Vaikota (Surveyor General)
- Margaret Aihunu
- Evans Gereia
- John Ratu
- Peter Hauia
- Dr. Ronald Zirur
- Gideon Row
- Waita Ben Tabusasi
- Jim Sevesi
- Chris Alu
- Harry James
- Solomon Rakai
- Wayne Sade
- Jenta Tau
- Paul Patrick Amao
- Elwin Talo
- William Gua
- Rev. Sam Pedero
- John Paul Filiau
- Casper Fa'asala
- Felix Naitoro
- Mathias Meabir



Solomon Islands Government

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ABOUT CRU

The Constitutional Reform Unit (CRU) is the body responsible for the management and coordination of Constitutional Reform Project.

It is an established division within the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and it is the Secretariat for the Constitutional Congress.

CRU has staff that carry out administrative, media, legal and financial related undertakings for the Constitutional Reform Programme.

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For more information:

If you would like to know more about these & other documents, contact CRU EPS Ms. Stella Pitiveke on spitiveke@pmc.gov.sb.

This Quarter's Calendar



Choiseul Provincial Congress start two-week long Convention hosted in Taro, Choiseul Province.



Rennell Bellona Congress team commence two weeks of Convention on the 2011 Draft at Tinggoa, Rennell Bellona Province.



Honiara City Congress team starts two weeks of Convention, reviewing the 2011 Draft Federal Constitution.