

Constitutional Reform Unit

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MINISTER AND CABINET**



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PRESS RELEASE

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RenBel eager to start Federal Statehood process

Premier for Rennell Bellona province Hon. Collin Tesuatai reiterated sentiments echoed during the weeklong awareness on the 2nd 2014 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands, about the province's eagerness to start work on its State Constitution.

During the awareness program in Tingoa, participants pointed out that they are aware that other provinces have already started some consultations for their States-to-be.

Though it was cautioned that such processes should come after the Federal Constitution receives popular and official ratification, it is clear that there is a growing eagerness to begin the Statehood process.

Premier Tesuatai repeated these sentiments during his official closing remarks of the awareness program on Friday 17th July 2015.

"I am aware that the people of Rennell Bellona Province have spoken clearly about the Draft Federal Constitution," he said.

He said that this was demonstrated on Thursday 16th July 2015, when participants endorsed all chapters and schedules in the Draft Federal Constitution with very little amendments.

"Such popular endorsement demonstrates the continued support and endorsement of the people of Rennell Bellona for Federalism," the Premier said.

He added that his government and the Provincial Assembly fully support the 2nd 2014 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands. He said his government intends to appoint a taskforce to oversee State and Community government consultations.

"I call on the National Government, through CRU to support my province to conduct its own process to develop both State and Community governments' constitutions as soon as possible," Premier Tesuatai said.

The Premier acknowledged the consultations undertaken by Constitutional Reform Unit (CRU), which resulted in the popular endorsement of the final Draft.

Premier Tesuatai also acknowledged the work done by Rennell Bellona Constitutional Congress team, particularly the former team leader Late Fr. Francis Taupongi.

He said that under Late Fr. Taupongi's leadership, the people of Rennell Bellona have had their valued input reflected in the final Draft Federal Constitution.

The Premier assured the current team members John M. Tuhaika (team leader) and Brian Saoba that the province will still need their experience in carrying out the State Constitution-making process.

About 50 participants attended the awareness, which included community leaders, elders, women, youth representatives and Rennell Bellona's Provincial Assembly Members (MPAs).

Rennell Bellona's Awareness on the *2nd 2014 Draft Federal Constitution* was held at the Women's Centre in Tingoa, Rennell Bellona Province from 13th to 17th July 2015.

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