



DUNCAN KERR SC MP



Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs

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Parliamentary Secretary travel to Solomon Islands, Niue and Tonga

I will travel to Solomon Islands, Niue and Tonga for a series of regional and bilateral meetings, from 14 to 24 May 2009.

On 14 and 15 May, I will travel to Honiara to attend the third meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Ministerial Standing Committee (FMSC) on the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The FMSC was established to enhance regional coordination and oversight of RAMSI's operations. The FMSC currently comprises the Foreign Ministers, or designated representatives, of Tonga, Niue and Australia as well as the Solomon Islands Foreign Minister.

At the 15 May meeting, the FMSC will discuss the Solomon Islands Government-RAMSI Partnership Framework, with a view to its full endorsement.

The Partnership Framework will be a living document outlining timelines to reduce RAMSI's engagement in critical areas of government, as the capacity of the Solomon Islands Government grows.

I will also meet the Acting Solomon Islands Prime Minister Fono, his Ministerial colleagues and other MPs to discuss Australian support for Solomon Islands Government development priorities, under the Australia-Solomon Islands Partnership for Development.

From 17 to 20 May, I will attend the 70th Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) Ministerial meeting in Niue. The ministerial-level Committee meets once a year to review the status of fisheries in the Pacific and work towards a Monitoring Control and Surveillance Strategy. An additional priority this year will be new approaches to legal frameworks for fisheries management in the Pacific region. While in Niue I will also meet with the Acting Niuean Premier.

I will then travel to Tonga from 21 to 23 May to further bilateral discussions and engagement with the Tongan Government. I will meet with the Acting Prime Minister and hold talks with the Finance Minister and the Governor of the Reserve Bank on the impact of the global economic crisis and open an AusAID funded water supply project at Fahefa village.

Australia is providing \$1.5 million to support electoral reform initiatives and the work of Tonga's Constitutional and Electoral Commission. During the visit, I will have the opportunity to hear first-hand how Tonga is moving towards constitutional and electoral reform prior to general elections in 2010.