

**2012-
2016**

**National Parliament of Solomon
Islands Strategic Plan**



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Foreword

Since Solomon Islands became an Independent Parliamentary democracy in 1978, we have seen the Parliament take many important steps on the road towards becoming an increasingly efficient and modernised legislature that serves the people of Solomon Islands effectively. The development of the first comprehensive National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan is another important step along this road to maturity and the institutionalisation of the legislature.



The Constitution, which came into effect on 7 July 1978, provides for a parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster model with three arms of government - the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The Constitution and the Standing Orders of the Parliament clearly outline the role, function and powers of the Legislature in terms of composition, the legislative process, oversight of the Government and representation of the people.

In recent years, the role of Standing Select and Special Select Committees has become increasingly important to the work of the National Parliament and in 2011 a decision was taken to increase the number of Parliamentary Committees from five to eight.

The Parliament continues to play a central role in the governance system of the Solomon Islands and I have no doubt that the Parliament will continue to do so over the coming years. It is my belief that an increasingly effective Parliament can only be of benefit to improving governance and development in Solomon Islands. The clarity gained through the Strategic Plan will play an integral role in this strengthening and development process.

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan 2012-2016 outlines the objectives and activities that will guide us in deepening our parliamentary culture and improving the administrative mechanisms of our institution to better serve our citizens. The Plan contains a clear Vision, Mission and Core Values for the Parliament as well as a set of Strategic Objectives that Parliament will aim to achieve over the period.

Although this Strategic Plan is for the National Parliament, it belongs not only to the Parliament but is also owned by all the people of Solomon Islands. The period of the Plan means that it will likely span a general election but this only serves to strengthen this Plan as the development of Parliament as an institution and the need to strengthen and modernise the legislature remains constant regardless of election results. The Plan will be revised and developed when circumstances require; and in 2017 it will be followed by a successor Strategic Plan.

It is also important to note that the National Parliament has worked closely with international partners in developing this Strategic Plan. The Parliament would like to thank in particular the United Nations Development Programme and the New South Wales Twinning Project for their close and continued partnership and we hope that this cooperation will continue as we move to implement this Strategic Plan in the period 2012-2016.

On behalf of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, it is an honour and a privilege to present the National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan 2012-2016. I invite all the branches of Government, all citizens, Civil Society Organisations, the private sector and Development Partners to work in partnership with the National Parliament to achieve our Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives and to work with us to further develop and deepen democracy in Solomon Islands for the benefit of all.

**Sir Allan Kemakeza
Speaker of Parliament**

Preface

During the period 2008-2012 the National Parliament Office developed and implemented a Corporate Plan. The plan covered the role of Parliament staff in providing effective services to Parliament and Members of Parliament to allow them to fulfil their legislative, oversight and representation functions effectively.

The period 2008-2012 saw the general capacity of the National Parliament Office and the Parliament as a whole develop at pace. With the assistance of our National and International Partners, the Parliament staff have seen the development of new units and departments within the staffing organisation of the Parliament.

Whilst the Corporate Plan for 2008-2012 focussed on the role and functioning of the National Parliament Office, this Strategic Plan recognises that a more integrated approach to developing and strengthening Parliament as a whole is needed in order to strengthen the National Parliament of Solomon Islands over the next 5 years. This overarching approach to building the structures and systems in the Parliament and the capacity of Staff and Members can only be of benefit to the Parliament as an institution.

The Strategic Plan will be of particular benefit to the National Parliament Office staff as it provides us with a clear framework for our own development and outlines the expectations of Parliament as a whole of the National Parliament Office. We recognise that the staffing needs of the National Parliament will need to evolve to respond to the changing nature of work within the legislature in general and specifically in order to continue the strengthening of the Parliament in terms of its legislation, oversight and representation functions.

This Strategic Plan is accompanied by an Implementation Roadmap that outlines in greater detail the way in which the National Parliament Office will lead the process of implementing the activities outlined in this plan and agreed by Parliament. The National Parliament Office is committed to using this broad implementation framework to develop realistic annual workplans for the National Parliament Office as a whole as well as specific annual departmental workplans. The newly created National Parliament Office Strategy Support Unit, reporting directly to the Clerk, will ensure that the pace of strategy implementation is maintained to the timetable Parliament has agreed.

As Clerk of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands and on behalf of all staff serving the National Parliament Office it is my honour to commend the National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan 2012-2016.



Taeasi Sanga

Clerk of Parliament

Executive Summary

This is the National Parliament of Solomon Islands first Strategic Plan and is an important step on the road towards maturity and the institutionalisation of the legislature. This Strategic Plan outlines a framework for the development of Parliament as a whole and recognises that the capacity of the National Parliament Office staff and elected Members needs to be developed in the period 2012-2016 in addition to modernising the systems and processes used in Parliament.

In this Strategic Plan, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands outlines the guiding principles of the Parliament. The Vision of the Parliament is: *To be a modern Parliament that fulfils its constitutional duties and effectively serves the people of Solomon Islands.* The Mission Statement of the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands states that *As the democratically elected national legislature of Solomon Islands, our mission is to ensure that Parliament exercises its legislative, oversight, representation and outreach duties effectively and that Parliament remains the main forum for national political debate.* The Strategic Plan also outlines the Core Values of the institution.

During the period 2012-2016 the National Parliament of Solomon Islands will have four specific Strategic Objectives in order to allow the Parliament to follow a systematic approach in developing a comprehensive and long-term development strategy. The Parliament's Strategic Objectives for the period 2012-2016 are as follows:

1. To develop the general capacity of the Parliament and to enhance the institutional capacity of the National Parliament staff to serve Parliament
2. To improve the legislative process in Parliament to ensure enhanced scrutiny and quality of legislation
3. To improve the capacity of Parliament to provide effective oversight
4. To develop the education and outreach work of Parliament and the representative role of MPs

Under each of these Strategic Objectives, the Parliament has outlined a total of twenty nine activity areas in which the Parliament will need to be active in order to move towards achieving the agreed Strategic Objectives for the period 2012-2016.

It is also important to note that whilst this Strategic Plan outlines the general direction in which the National Parliament of Solomon Islands will develop over the coming years, it is accompanied by a detailed Implementation Roadmap that provides the framework and timeframe of implementation of the agreed activities

Finally, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan 2012-2016 contains a section that outlines in detail who takes overall responsibility for implementation of the plan and the mechanisms that the Parliament will use to monitor and evaluate the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Guiding Principles

In order to develop an effective Strategic Plan for the period 2012-2016 and in order to provide the Parliament with a framework for development, the first step for the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is to clarify the guiding principles of the legislature. Before moving into outlining specific Strategic Objectives and activities for the period, the Parliament recognises that these Objectives should be within the overall framework that outlines the Vision, Mission and Core Values of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands.

Our Vision

This National Parliament of Solomon Islands Vision outlines our constant aim of where we believe the National Parliament should be in the future and all our actions and activities should be within the context of reaching this Vision. We believe that our Vision is one which all sections of society and individuals of all political persuasions can unite behind. The Vision of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is:

To be a modern Parliament that fulfils its constitutional duties and effectively serves the people of Solomon Islands

Our Mission

In order to work towards achieving our Vision for the legislature, we have developed a Mission Statement for the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. When developing our Mission Statement we drew on the views gathered from Members and staff within the Parliament, from the Executive, from the Judiciary as well as from other key stakeholders in society such as Civil Society Organisations, the business sector and the media.

Our Mission Statement provides the National Parliament of Solomon Islands with a starting point on the road towards realising our Vision. The Mission Statement of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands for the period 2012-2016 is:

As the democratically elected national legislature of Solomon Islands, our mission is to ensure that Parliament exercises its legislative, oversight, representation and outreach duties effectively and that Parliament remains the main forum for national political debate.

Our Core Values

Whilst moving towards achieving the Vision and Mission of the legislature, the Parliament as a whole, both the elected Members and the National Parliament Office staff, must be guided by the Core Values of the Parliament. As a democratically elected Parliament, we recognise that we are here to serve the people and we must hold and follow the highest ethics and values in order to serve the people of Solomon Islands. The Core Values of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands are:

Independence and Integrity

Openness and Transparency

**Mutual Respect by treating all people,
communities and groups with respect and courtesy**

Supremacy of National Interest

Professionalism in fulfilling our duties

The Parliament's Strategic Objectives for the period 2012-2016

During the period 2012-2016 the National Parliament of Solomon Islands will have specific Strategic Objectives in order to allow the Parliament to follow a systematic approach in developing a comprehensive and long-term development strategy for the Parliament. The activities that the Parliament will implement during this period are designed with the aim of ensuring that the Parliament moves towards achieving its Objectives during the period 2012-2016.

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan 2012-2016 will have four specific Strategic Objectives. These Objectives will be based on the need to develop the Parliament as an institution and also to ensure that the Parliament continues to enhance its capacity in terms of legislating, providing oversight and ensuring effective representation and outreach.

In deciding on the key Strategic Objectives for the next five years, the Parliament undertook an analysis of the current workings of Parliament and made a comparison to the agreed recommended benchmarks for democratic legislatures in the Pacific Region that have been developed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. During this analysis process particular areas of growth and areas where development is needed in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands were highlighted. The Strategic Objectives for the period 2012-2016 stem from this analysis.

Therefore, during the period 2012-2016, the four Strategic Objectives of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands are:

- 1. To develop the general capacity of the Parliament and to enhance the institutional capacity of the National Parliament staff to serve Parliament**
- 2. To improve the legislative process in Parliament to ensure enhanced scrutiny and quality of legislation**
- 3. To improve the capacity of Parliament to provide effective oversight**
- 4. To develop the education and outreach work of Parliament and the representative role of MPs**

In the Strategic Plan, under each Strategic Objective the Parliament outlines specific activities that will be implemented by the Parliament during the lifetime of the plan in order to move towards achieving the Strategic Objective. Whilst this Strategic Plan will briefly outline the intended activities, the details and proposed timeframe for the implementation of specific activities will be included in an Implementation Roadmap that has been developed in conjunction with this Strategic Plan.

Strategic Objective 1 - To develop the general capacity of the Parliament and to enhance the institutional capacity of the National Parliament staff to serve Parliament

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises that in order to deliver the agreed Vision and Mission of the legislature, the Parliament needs to ensure that the National Parliament Office has effective capacity in order to ensure that Parliamentary business proceeds smoothly and in order to provide a high level of support to Members of Parliament when carrying out their duties. In order to implement the Strategic Plan and in order to ensure that the legislative, oversight and representation functions of the Parliament are achieved, the institutional capacity of both the National Parliament staff and the Parliament as a whole needs to continue to develop.

In addition to the need to develop the general capacity of Parliament, there is also recognition that the Parliament's infrastructure and facilities need to continue to modernise during the 2012-2016 period in order to ensure that the National Parliament of Solomon Islands remains a modern and effective Parliament.

Therefore, in light of the recognition that the capacity of Parliament and the National Parliament Office need to develop in order to attain the Vision and Mission of this Strategic Plan, the first Strategic Objective of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan for the period 2012-2016 is to develop the general capacity of the Parliament and enhance the institutional capacity of the National Parliament staff to serve Parliament.

Specific areas of activity over the next five years needed to achieve this Strategic Objective are outlined below.

1.1 Parliamentary Autonomy

A key issue in terms of allowing Parliament to develop and become increasingly self sustaining over the next 5 years will be ensuring that Parliament is in a position to become increasingly autonomous from the Executive. In line with the agreed benchmarks for Pacific Parliaments and in line with the principles of international best practice, the Parliament needs to move towards becoming autonomous from the Executive in terms of taking responsibility for Parliamentary staffing, budget and work planning. In addition to the central principle of good governance, the move towards autonomy will be an important step in terms of developing the capacity of the Parliament and creating a cadre of specialised Parliamentary staff. Therefore, during this period the Parliament will draw up plans and implement a staged process of moving towards Parliamentary autonomy. However, the Parliament recognises potential risks in terms of budgetary implications of Parliament being an autonomous body and will work closely with the Executive to put in place clear and transparent rules that will ensure prudent financial management and a smooth transition towards autonomy for Parliament.

1.2 Strengthening the Corporate Services of the National Parliament Office to respond to a changing Parliamentary environment

The Parliament recognises that for a legislature to operate effectively the National Parliament Office needs to be responsive to changing needs. Therefore, during the 2012-2016 period, the Parliament will continue to capacitate the National Parliament Office Strategy Support Unit to ensure that it is in a position to adequately implement the Parliament's Strategic Plan. In addition, the Parliament will keep under review the organisational structure of the National Parliament Office to ensure that the departments correspond to the needs of the Parliament's changing work programmes. In order to strengthen the corporate professionalism of the National Parliament Office, the National Parliament Office's Strategy Support Unit will ensure that annual workplans are drawn from the Implementation Roadmap for this Strategic Plan and that each department has their own annual workplan which will be regularly monitored and evaluated.

The need to respond to the demands of a modern Parliament will lead to the further consolidation of the Procedures Office to provide legal and procedural advice to the Office of the Speaker and the Office of the Clerk and the creation of a Media Office to work with the Education Unit to ensure increased communication and outreach capacity for the Parliament.

1.3 Strengthened Human Resources

Key to the development of a modern and strengthened Parliament will be the staffing of the National Parliament Office. Therefore, the development and implementation of a new Human Resources policy for the National Parliament Office will be central to achieving the strengthening of the general capacity of the Parliament. This Human Resources policy will be a comprehensive policy that will include sections on staff recruitment and retention, the National Parliament Office leave policy, Occupational Health and Safety and Equal Employment Opportunities.

In addition the Parliament will ensure that all staff have clear and up to date job descriptions, personal development plans / staff career plans and that there is a programme of professional development for staff based on a revised system of performance appraisal.

1.4 Developing the Parliament's infrastructure

In order for Members of Parliament and Parliament staff to carry out their duties effectively there must be a suitable working environment. Significant progress has been made over recent years in developing an infrastructure worthy of a 21st century legislature and this success needs to be built upon. During the period of the plan, the exterior and interior of the Parliament building will be adequately maintained and new and fully equipped offices for MPs will be made available. In addition, the Parliament is committed to providing new

fully equipped Committee rooms in order to ensure that there are no barriers to Committees playing a central role in the work of the National Parliament.

The general security measures in place in the Parliament complex will be improved during the 2012-2016 period, specifically by developing and implementing an admissions policy, improving perimeter security, improving building security and providing regular training for Parliament security staff.

1.5 Creating an e-Parliament

In modern Parliaments, the move towards the creation of e-Parliaments and the central place of ICT in the work of Parliament is becoming increasingly prominent. Having systems and standards for managing documents in digital formats is an essential element for improving Parliament's operations and also in increasing transparency and accessibility. Within this context, the Parliament will develop and implement an ICT policy and will utilise the latest ICT technology in order to ensure working processes and procedures in Parliament become more effective over the next 5 years.

The Parliament will develop an intranet system for Parliament staff and Members to facilitate the sharing of documentation and improving work processes; and also new buildings within the Parliament complex will be networked and fully equipped with the necessary ICT hardware.

The Parliament also recognises that the provision of hardware and systems needs to be complemented with a continuing programme of professional development for Parliament staff and Members in terms of utilising the latest ICT in their work.

1.6 Institutionalising a Parliamentary Calendar

In addition to the increased autonomy outlined in 5.1, the Parliament recognises that in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency there is a need to develop a Parliamentary Calendar for each year which aims to confirm at the beginning of each year the dates of regular plenary sessions, outlines timetables for Committee meetings between plenary sessions and major Parliamentary activities and conferences throughout the year. Parliament recognises the importance to a fully effective Calendar of incorporating the Executive's programme and consequently commits to work closely with the Executive to include this.

In addition to ensuring a clear and transparent Parliamentary Calendar for each year, the Parliament will strengthen the work of the House Committee in ensuring that time allotted for Government and backbenchers within sessions is planned effectively to ensure that sufficient time is given to considering Auditor General Reports, Public Accounts Committee Reports, the reports from other Committees and other relevant issues.

1.7 Effective Reporting of Parliamentary Proceedings

Accurately and efficiently recording proceedings in Parliament both for record keeping purposes and to assist Members of Parliament and staff with their work is a central requirement in any legislature. Within this context, the Parliament will aim to ensure that a Daily Hansard of every plenary and committee meeting will be available by a specific and stipulated time prior to the subsequent meeting. The reason for this timeframe is that the creation of regular Daily Hansard for reference by MPs by the next sitting is an integral part of a modern Parliament. In order to ensure openness and transparency, the Parliament will also make sure that the Hansard reports will be made available to the public on the Parliament's internet page.

1.8 Developing the capacity and professional skills of MPs

Following an election to Parliament, there are often new Members of Parliament elected. The Parliament recognises its duty to ensure that elected Members of Parliament receive a comprehensive induction and orientation course on the roles, duties and responsibilities of Members of Parliament. Following the last election, the Parliament organised a successful induction and orientation programme for MPs, and Parliament is committed to ensuring that the success of this programme is built upon in the future. Following the next election, Parliament will provide a more in-depth orientation programme for MPs with the aim of both familiarising Members with the workings, systems and procedures used in Parliament and also in providing information to develop skills to engage in effective scrutiny, amendment and development of legislation, oversight and representation.

The Parliament recognises that, in addition to initial orientation, Members of Parliament should expect support from the National Parliament in order to increase their general skills and capacity, for example on issues such as ICT, research skills and the use of the library, and stay abreast of developments both in Parliament and in terms of general policy developments and issues. Therefore, the Parliament will develop an annual rolling programme of professional development support and assistance for Members of Parliament.

1.9 Developing and Sustaining International links

The Parliament of Solomon Islands is an outward looking institution and over the next five years the Parliament will build upon the strong international partnerships and links that have been developed and sustained over recent years. Specifically, the Parliament will look to continue its close working relationship with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the New South Wales Parliament through the Twinning Project, the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) and the New Zealand Parliament.

Parliament also commits to membership of, and actively participating in, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) and the Forum of Presiding Officers and Clerks (FPOC).

1.10 Code of Ethical Conduct

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises that as the democratically elected national legislature of the Solomon Islands it must lead on the issue of good governance and transparency. The Parliament is committed to ensuring that the legislature has the highest levels of ethical conduct and integrity. In line with modern good practice in a Parliament, a Code of Ethical Conduct for Members will be developed adopted and the necessary systems and processes put in place within the Parliament to ensure that the Code can be effectively implemented. In addition, the Parliament House Committee will consider and promote a Parliamentary Privileges Bills and the National Parliament will also liaise with the Parliamentary Entitlements Commission and the Executive to review the system for administration of MPs' allowances in order to make it more effective, streamlined and transparent.

1.11 Developing new Standing Orders

The Standing Orders of Parliament govern the way in which the Parliament operates and the way in which it conducts its business. It is therefore of central importance to the functioning of the Parliament that the Standing Orders be effective and fit for purpose in a modern Parliament. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands will ensure that new Standing Orders are developed that facilitate improved working process in the Parliament and are transparent and comprehensible to Members and the general public. In order to avoid disruption, over the course of the lifetime of the current Parliament, relevant new Orders will be introduced tranche by tranche in order to ensure a progressive modernisation of the Standing Orders. When new Orders are introduced, the newly established Procedures Office will lead a process of orientation for Members and staff on the content and implications of the new Standing Orders.

1.12 Mainstreaming gender

Gender will be mainstreamed throughout the activities of the Parliament both in terms of the work of National Parliament staff and the work of Members of Parliament. In addition to the specific gender related activities outlined in Strategic Objective 4, the Parliament will ensure that training is provided for Members and staff to ensure that gender is seen as a crosscutting issue that affects the whole of society, is the responsibility of all and is relevant to the legislative, oversight and representation duties of Parliament.

Strategic Objective 2 – To improve the legislative process in Parliament to ensure enhanced scrutiny and quality of legislation

One of the key functions of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is the legislative function. According to section 59(1) of the National Constitution, “Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament may make laws for the peace, order and good government of Solomon Islands”.

Therefore, in order to ensure that the National Parliament is able fulfil effectively and transparently the legislative responsibilities outlined in the Constitution, a key Objective for the period 2012-2016 will be to improve the legislative process in Parliament to ensure enhanced scrutiny and quality of legislation.

Specific areas of activity over the next five years needed to achieve this Strategic Objective are outlined below.

2.1 Timetable for the legislative process

The Parliament recognises that in order to arrange the Parliamentary calendar it will need to develop a legislative timetable for Parliament. As in most Westminster model Parliaments, the majority of legislation considered by the Parliament is initiated by the Government. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands will work with the Government in order to move towards the development of new procedures for cooperation and communication between the Parliament and the Government so that the Parliament is able to plan the Parliamentary calendar and the work to be undertaken both in plenary and in the Bills Committee. Parliament recognises that, in line with international best practice, the Parliament’s Bills Committee needs sufficient time to scrutinise the proposed content of draft Bills, consult on the likely impact of the proposed Bills, draft Committee reports and ensure that Members have time to reflect on the Committee’s findings before Bills are voted upon on the floor of the House.

2.2 Procedures office

The Parliament recognises that complex legal advice on procedural issues is often sought by the Offices of the Speaker and Clerk during the legislative process and currently the National Parliament Office does not have sufficient capacity to provide this advice. The Parliament will therefore create and staff a new Procedures Office in Parliament that will be responsible for providing the Speaker and Clerk with dedicated legal and procedural advice and analysis. The creation of this Office will facilitate the smooth running of the core work of Parliament.

2.3 Increased and improved legislative scrutiny by Committee

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises that, in order to provide enhanced in-depth scrutiny of proposed legislation, the Bills Committees needs to play a more active and effective role during the legislative process. Therefore, in the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will move to develop and strengthen the capacity of the Bills Committee to ensure that it has the capacity, expertise and sufficient time within the Parliamentary Calendar to scrutinise draft legislation in detail. This increased capacity will include the development of an annual calendar of work for the Bills Committee based on the Government's legislative agenda, training, the development of a guidebook for Committee Members on the legislative process and training for Committee Members on the scope and remit of the Committee.

2.4 Consultation during the legislative process

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises the need for the legislative process in Parliament to be as open and transparent as possible and recognises that outside organisations such as Civil Society Organisations, the business community and the Churches can provide Members of Parliament with useful information during the legislative process. Therefore, Parliament is committed to strengthening the capacity of the Bills Committee to interact and receive information from civil society and the general public through public hearings and calls for evidence during legislative deliberations. In addition, the Parliament is committed to ensuring that there is adequate time within the Parliamentary Calendar for the Bills Committee to lead the process of consultation with outside organisations on draft legislation.

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands will also develop a good practice guide on engaging civil society in the legislative process for use by the Bills Committee and training for Committee Members and staff serving the Committee will be provided. The Parliament will also ensure that information on the legislative process, including the Bills Committee meetings times and work programme, and draft laws under consideration is widely disseminated to civil society and the general public through the Parliament website and through the media.

2.5 Clarity on the potential impact of draft legislation

The potential social and economic impact of draft legislation should be a key consideration by Parliament when scrutinising draft legislation. The Parliament will aim to work with the Office of the Attorney General and other centres of expertise to ensure that summaries of the potential social and economic impact of draft legislation under scrutiny are made available by the Executive to MPs during the legislative process. The Bills Committee will use these Regulatory and Social Impact Assessments that will accompany draft Bills as part

of its deliberations on draft legislation and these Assessments will also be made available to all MPs through the Bills Committee Reports.

2.6 Increasing the capacity of Members to engage in the legislative process

In addition to developing improved mechanisms within Parliament for scrutiny of legislation, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is committed to providing increased information and support to all Members of Parliament during the legislative process. During the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will move to put in place measures to expand the capacity of Members of Parliament to amend draft legislation and propose backbench bills. Such measures will include the provision of training, orientation and detailed guidance to Members as well as the provision of materials based on this training. The Parliament will also build the capacity of the National Parliament Office staff to assist Members of Parliament and the Bills Committee during the legislative process in Parliament.

Strategic Objective 3 – To improve the capacity of Parliament to provide effective oversight of the Executive Branch

In addition to legislating, another key function of any Westminster model of Parliament is oversight of the Executive branch of Government. Ministers of the Solomon Islands Government are drawn from the National Parliament of Solomon Islands and remain accountable to the Parliament.

This oversight function covers not only the budget plans of the Government and scrutiny of public expenditure but also overseeing the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of policy and legislation. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands is committed to building on current procedures and practices in place in Parliament, and in particular the Committee system, to improve the capacity of the National Parliament to provide effective oversight.

Specific areas of activity over the next five years needed to achieve this Strategic Objective are outlined below.

3.1 Strengthening Parliamentary Committees

In 2011 the National Parliament of Solomon Islands voted to increase the number of Parliamentary Committees from five to eight. This decision highlights the central role that Committees play within Parliament and that Committees should prove to be one of the key drivers in improving the capacity of the Parliament to provide effective oversight of the Government. Therefore, within this context, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is committed to ensuring that all Parliamentary Committees develop their own workplans that tie into the agreed Parliamentary calendar and that Committees meet regularly in between Parliamentary plenary meetings. Included in these Committee workplans for the year will be timetables for inquiries that also take into account the need to engage widely with groups, associations and individuals outside Parliament as part of these inquiries. The Parliament will also make an effort in ensuring that Committees undertake their inquiries and public hearings throughout Solomon Islands and not only in Honiara.

During the period 2012-2016, the Parliament Secretariat will continue to provide a high level of technical expertise to Committees to assist them with their duties and provide Members with regular subject briefings as well as develop a roster of external experts who can be called on by Committees when undertaking specific inquiries.

3.2 Effective Financial Scrutiny

A key responsibility of the Parliament is to provide effective financial scrutiny of plans for public spending and accountability for public expenditure. During the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will build on the work undertaken over recent years to make the Public Accounts Committee more effective. The Parliament will ensure that there is a clear work

programme for the Public Accounts Committee and that the Committee meets regularly throughout the year.

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands also recognises that there is a requirement for lessons to be learned from past expenditure decisions in order to ensure improved stewardship in future spending. In addition to the annual work on the Government's Estimates, therefore, Parliament will encourage the Public Accounts Committee to take evidence on reports on specific expenditure and value for money issues produced by the Auditor General.

Parliament further recognises that all modern legislatures play a key continuing role in scrutinising the Government's financial and budgetary policy in order to strengthen financial planning policy and accountability for future planned public expenditure. Therefore the National Parliament of Solomon Islands House Committee will be asked to examine how best this role can be implemented in Parliament, either through the establishment of a new Finance Select Committee, or by extending the remit of Public Accounts Committee as appropriate.

3.3 Increase the oversight capacity of Parliament through improved library and research services

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises that professional and detailed research is essential to Members of Parliament in order for them to fulfil their oversight duties effectively. Therefore, Parliament is committed to ensuring that funds are made available to the library in the Recurrent Budget of the National Parliament.

Parliament will also ensure that library, research and committee staff receive professional development in order to ensure that they can develop research papers for Members in easily accessible formats, and that Members of Parliament receive as part of their rolling programme of professional development regular orientation sessions on the use of the library and undertaking research.

The Parliament further recognises that electronic documents are becoming increasingly important and the National Parliament of Solomon Islands will focus the development of the library on providing an effective e-library of up to date documents and resources for Members. The Parliament will train staff and Members of Parliament in using these new electronic resources.

In order to make the library more accessible and user-friendly to Members of Parliament, during the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will consider the options available to relocate the library within the Parliament building to provide more space for resources, staff and reference materials.

3.4 Increased dialogue with stakeholders

The Parliament recognises that in order for Members of Parliament to be in a position to provide effective oversight it is important that MPs have access to the latest information both from official sources and also through a programme of continuing interaction with Civil Society Organisations, the business community and other key stakeholders in society. The Parliament will build on the success of its 2011 stakeholder's forum by ensuring that similar events take place during 2012-2016 as well as ensuring that regular information sharing meetings and briefing sessions between Parliament and key groups and individuals in society are implemented.

3.5 Interaction with Independent Oversight Institutions

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands has an important relationship in terms of liaison and interaction with a number of Independent Oversight Institutions in the Solomon Islands including the Audit Office, the Leadership Code Committee and the Ombudsman. In the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will undertake a review of its working relationship with these Independent Institutions including a review of all relevant legal and policy documents and develop options that could improve the interaction between, and strengthen further, the National Parliament and Independent Institutions.

Strategic Objective 4 – To develop the education and outreach work of Parliament and the representative role of MPs

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands has an important educational role in terms of educating citizens on the role of the legislature within the governance structures of the country and an informational role in terms of keeping citizens informed of the latest developments and activities in Parliament. In addition, aside from their legislative and oversight responsibilities, Members of Parliament are important leaders and representatives both in their constituencies and nationally. The Parliament is committed to supporting Members in fulfilling their leadership and representative roles effectively.

The Parliament also recognises the need for the national elected democratic Parliament of the country to be a representative institution that reflects all groups and communities in the nation. The Parliament is therefore committed to leading the national debate in Solomon Islands on the representative nature of the National Parliament.

This Strategic Objective builds on work the Parliament is already undertaking in terms of civic education as well as the leadership and representative work of Members of Parliament; and therefore in the period 2012-2016 the National Parliament of Solomon Islands will continue to develop the education and outreach work of Parliament and the representative role of MPs.

Specific areas of activity over the next five years needed to achieve this Strategic Objective are outlined below.

4.1 Increased Outreach and Community engagement

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands is committed to building on the success of existing programmes in taking the Parliament to the people through a number of initiatives. While Parliament's outreach activities will continue throughout the year, the Parliament will also conduct an annual "Parliament week" upon which outreach activities will focus. The aim will be to use this "Parliament week" to provide increased information to citizens through the media on the role of the Parliament, ensure an increased number of visits to Parliament during this week and using this week to open Parliament to the people.

During the period 2012-2016 the Parliament will also give a specific focus to ensuring that citizens outside Honiara receive information on the role of Parliament and the way it operates. In order to ensure that this is realised, the Parliament will seek to enhance its programme of Provincial visits led by the Speaker.

4.2 Engaging Young People in the work of Parliament

The Parliament recognises that a key feature of any outreach programme should be engaging with and educating the next generation of voters and political leaders. Therefore, during the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will continue to build on the success of its schools programme to ensure that there are regular visits by schools to Parliament and that a formalised agreed programme of activities is put in place for such school visits. Parliament will also work with the Ministry of Education to develop curriculum materials for schools for both the Primary and Secondary level and keep the content of these materials under revision in the period 2012-2016.

The Parliament will undertake discussions with the Executive with the aim of taking the lead in arranging for a Youth Parliament to be held on an annual basis. This will build on the success of the Youth Parliament held in 2009.

4.3 Ensuring a close relationship between Parliament and the Media

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises that in order to provide information to citizens on the work being undertaken in Parliament, a close working relationship between the Parliament and the media is important. In the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will create a specific Media Unit within the National Parliament Office and will also provide training courses for the Media outlining the way Parliament operates, the roles and functions of staff and on Parliamentary procedures. In addition, the Parliament will develop a press gallery system with accreditation for the Media and adequate facilities for the Media to report proceedings from Parliament.

The Parliament will also ensure close coordination and cooperation with the Media when Parliament and Committees are not sitting in terms of developing public information programmes on the work of Parliament.

As the work of Parliament expands and Committees meet regularly in between plenary sessions during the Strategy period, the Parliament recognises that it will need to develop its radio and TV presence, including consideration of Parliament channels. This will allow the Parliament to ensure that plenary sessions and committee meetings are broadcast to the nation; and will also allow the Parliament to develop educational programmes that can be transmitted when plenary and committee meetings are not being held.

4.4 Developing user friendly publications on Parliament

In order to inform citizens of the role of Parliament and the work being undertaken in Parliament, during the period 2012-2016, the Parliament will continue to develop user friendly leaflets on Parliament, its structures, its place within the governance system and the way it operates. These materials will be made available to the general public when they visit the Parliament and will also be distributed to interested groups in society.

The Parliament will develop a regular Parliament newsletter and e-newsletter in order to inform partners such as Government, Civil Society Organisations and other key partners in the country of the work being undertaken during the year. In addition the e-newsletter will be available on the Parliament website. All materials developed and produced by the Parliament will be made available for distribution by Parliament staff and will also be made available to Members of Parliament for distribution in their constituencies.

4.5 Investigate options to increase the representative nature of the Parliament

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises the need for the national elected democratic Parliament of a country to be a representative institution. The Parliament is aware that currently there are no female elected Member in the Parliament and recognises that this is an issue that the Parliament as an institution should discuss.

Therefore, during the period 2012-2016, the Parliament Education Department will continue to undertake programmes under the theme 'Working Together to Develop a Democratic Legislature for All' for a wide range of groups in society, such as the Young Women's Parliament Discussion forum designed to generate debate on the issue of female leadership and representation in Parliament. These activities will be in addition to general outreach and education activities in which gender will be mainstreamed.

In addition to playing a key national role in generating debate and bringing stakeholders together, during the period 2012-2016 the Parliament recognises that it needs to lead the national debate on the representative nature of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. Therefore during this period, the Parliament will create a Speaker's Reflection Group in order to investigate the representative nature of the institution and make proposals for consideration by the Parliament as a whole.

4.6 Building on links with Provincial Legislatures

The Parliament notes the initial success of the programme to create links between the Speakers and Clerks in the Provincial Legislatures and the National Parliament. During the period 2012-2016 the Parliament undertakes to continue to develop this close professional working relationship. In addition, the Parliament will, taking into account the time and financial constraints of the National Parliament, work to develop a realistic programme of Technical Assistance exchanges between the Provincial Legislatures and the National Parliament with a focus in particular on modernising parliamentary and Assembly procedures, the work of the Secretariat and the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Resource Mobilisation

This first five year Strategic Plan for the National Parliament of Solomon Islands has outlined the key areas of strategic development that the Parliament will prioritise in the period 2012-2016. The Parliament is acutely aware that while this Strategic Plan is ambitious, the reality of the impact of the plan and progress made towards achieving the Parliament's Vision will lie in the need for effective implementation. It is for this reason that the Parliament has developed an Implementation Roadmap that broadly outlines how and when the activities outlined in this Strategic Plan will be implemented.

Whilst the Strategic Plan has outlined the general direction in which the National Parliament will develop over the coming years, the Implementation Roadmap provides the framework for this development. However, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is aware of the challenges of long term planning and implementation in a legislative setting that can be unpredictable due to the nature of political events. Therefore the Implementation Roadmap should be seen as a flexible document that is a guide that can be amended to better overcome any implementation challenges that may arise in the period 2012-2016.

The Parliament will draw from the Strategic Plan and Implementation Roadmap to produce an annual workplan for Parliament that will reflect the Parliament's Strategic Objectives. The National Parliament Office has committed to ensuring that departmental workplans are also produced. The annual workplans and annual departmental workplans will include specific indicators of success for actual activities.

Overall responsibility for the implementation and delivery of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands Strategic Plan 2012-2016 lies with the Office of the Speaker. The National Parliament Office Strategy Support Unit led by the Deputy Clerk is responsible for administering the Strategy and for reporting to the National Parliament Office Executive Group weekly on overall progress. The National Parliament Office Management Group will provide the Office of the Speaker with monthly verbal and written updates on progress made in implementing the Strategic Plan on both a corporate and departmental basis. An annual written report outlining progress made in implementing the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan will be developed by the Strategy Support Unit of the National Parliament Office supported by the Secretariat on behalf of the Office of the Speaker and the Parliamentary House Committee, and this annual report will be tabled in Parliament.

The Parliament welcomes the close cooperation and support given to the National Parliament of Solomon Islands by the International community. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands recognises that in order to deliver this ambitious but realistic Strategic Plan, the continuing support of International Partners will be vital to the success of the plan. The Parliament is confident that the International Community will continue to recognise the important work that the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is undertaking and support

the specific efforts of Parliament in implementing a Strategic Plan that will lead to the development of a more effective, efficient and relevant Parliament to serve the people of Solomon Islands.