

SOLOMON ISLANDS - DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION PARTNERSHIP MOU SIGNED

The Government takes a further step to improve information flow from Honiara to the rural communities nation-wide after signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the award winning People First Network (PFNet) to use its rural email stations to supply a government weekly news bulletin.

Director of Government Communications Unit (GCU) Alfred Maesulia and PFNet Manager Randal Biliki signed the MOU in Honiara. The joint understanding allows GCU in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to disseminate a weekly government news bulletin through PFNet's more than 20 rural email stations across the country. Ten copies of the 5 page news bulletin will be printed free with five copies posted at strategic positions within villages hosting email stations and five other copies to nearby villages on a weekly basis. Villagers will also be able to comment on the news bulletin which will be sent back to the GCU via the rural email stations free of charge.

"This is another historic step forward for the Government Communications Unit in its effort to reach out to people living in remote rural areas to have quick access to information. "The amount of time it takes to disseminate government information to those living far from us today is a thousand times faster than 50 years or even 10 years ago," Mr Maesulia said. Mr Maesulia said PFNet has created an environment which allows people in remote settings access information faster than it was before. The joint initiative plays an important role in networking via information technology within the country. "We cannot just avoid by-passing information technology," Mr Maesulia said; "It should become part of us in our workplaces. "Networking is important in nation building. "We should share what we know with others and this is networking," he said. Mr Maesulia strongly believes the initiative will greatly empower our rural people through knowing what is happening within the government and give them an avenue to effectively communicate their feedbacks to the government.

The \$40,000 project is generously funded under the RAMSI Government Machinery Programme for the next six months. GCU has already benefited from previous funding involving high technology equipment, office supplies and many other communication activities. PFNet is the only rural email service provider in Solomon Islands which has developed an effective communication system across the country.

Source: George Herming, Solomon Islands Government Press Release