

Success depends on you: NZ High Commissioner

BY JENNIFER KUSAPA

THE New Zealand High Commissioner to Solomon Islands Don Higgins has told judges and magistrates yesterday during the opening of the Solomon Islands Judicial Orientation Course that success depends on you.

High Commissioner Don Higgins said to successfully deliver fair justice system depends on the Judges and Magistrates.

"You are the leaders in this process and its success depends upon you.

"It is not an easy task particularly for lay magistrates who do not have a background and training in the law. And it is a huge responsibility without access to Justice Countries descends into lawlessness. We have seen the results of that in Solomon Islands and I'm sure it is not a situation that anyone wishes to return to," Mr Higgins said.

The course which funded by the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade under the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative (PJSI) will be going on for five days for Judges and Magistrates.

Mr Higgins said the goal of the New Zealand MFAT-funded Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative (PJSI) is to build fairer societies by strengthening the capacity of Pacific Island Courts to develop more accessible, just, efficient and responsive justice

services.

It is a three year period around AUD\$6million with a possibility of extending another two years-another AUD\$2.5m and is delivered across 14 countries in the Pacific, Mr Higgins said.

Mr Higgins said it is an excellent example of donor partner cooperation and NZ is delighted that they can combine with our most important development partner to deliver this programme.

"But while NZ & AUS can combine to deliver this programme we are reliant on the governments and the judiciary systems of each Pacific Country to actually deliver justice.

"It is a fundamental right of every citizen in every Pacific country to have access to justice. It is the duty of every Pacific government to ensure that its justice system is impartial, professional and efficient," the High Commissioner said.

He said PJSI will address numerous and diverse needs of the courts that relate to three major development challenges.

These are expanding access to justice to and through the courts, building competent provision of substantive justice outcomes, and increasing efficient delivery of procedural justices' services.

He further said to address the challenges; PJSI will focus on supporting two long-term objectives or components.

A) Judicial Leadership-so that courts are capable of leading and managing change.

B) Performance so that court services are accessible, responsive fair and efficient.

The PJSI will also deliver measurable improvements in the substantive and procedural quality of justice across the region, which aims to bolster public trust and confidence in partner courts.

The PJSI complements New Zealand's Pacific policing support to strengthen judicial knowledge and skills in human rights and gender based violence issues, Mr Higgins said.

Meanwhile Chief Justice Sir Albert Palmer said that the judiciary has been benefitting on trainings provided by the New Zealand Government.

He said this is not the first time this type of training has been undertaken, there have been many other trainings that have been conducted in Solomon Islands and regionally.

"I might add as well that through this generous funding your government has been able to reach out in a very effective and sustainable way through the very able and capable management team of the International Division of the Federal Court of Australia to other judiciaries of the Pacific Islands Countries about 14 countries in total.

"I cannot emphasise enough how our judiciaries have been equipped and empowered to carry out our duties and responsibilities in a more effective and efficient manner," Sir Albert said.