



Australian High Commission  
Solomon Islands

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **BUALA MARKET CELEBRATED FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION**

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Buala residents say they're proud that their soon-to-open market sets a new standard in accessible, disability-friendly infrastructure.

A total of 52 vendors and community representatives have taken part in disability awareness sessions aimed at strengthening inclusion and accessibility at the soon to be open market.

The new Australia-supported Buala Market is the first in Solomon Islands to be designed and built with low height market stalls for wheel-chair users, and disability-friendly toilets, showers, pathways and ramps.

Buala Market representative, Mrs Grace Hebala, said the awareness sessions strengthened vendors' understanding of disability inclusion and highlighted the important role the market can play in supporting all customers.

"Buala Market is proud to lead the way. When it is complete, we will be the first market in Solomon Islands with purpose-built inclusive and accessible infrastructure," Mrs Hebala said.

"This is a big step for us, because everyone - including people with disabilities - deserves to use our market safely, comfortably and with dignity."

The awareness sessions helped build community understanding of disability, including physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments, and how environmental barriers can limit participation. Community attitudes, as well as physical, communication and transport barriers faced by people with disabilities were also discussed.

According to the 2019 Census, around 10 per cent of people aged five years and above experience some difficulty with seeing, with many others experiencing challenges with hearing, mobility or communication.

Australian High Commissioner Jeff Roach said the built environment plays a key role in enabling social and economic opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

“Markets are vital public spaces for people to connect with each other and improve their livelihoods and food security,” High Commissioner Roach said.

“By improving both infrastructure and awareness, Australia is ensuring that no-one is left behind in the development of new community assets – so that the social and economic impact can flow to all members of the community.”

The new market has space for up to 150 vendors, including solar lighting, water storage, and separate toilets and shower facilities for men, women and people with disabilities. A seawall is designed to protect the new market from rising sea levels.

The project has been 100 per cent built and delivered by Solomon Islanders under the Solomon Islands-Australia Partnership’s approach to locally-delivered infrastructure.

The market is set to open as part of Isabel Province’s Second Appointed Day celebrations.

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PHOTOS:



**Photo 1** - Market vendors and community members attend a disability awareness session ahead of the opening of the new Buala Market, supported by the National Disability Forum Solomon Islands.



**Photo 2** - Market representative, Mrs Grace Hebala, says Buala is proud to have the first market in Solomon Islands with purpose-built accessible facilities for people with disabilities.



**Photo 3** - The soon-to-open Buala Market is Solomon Islands' first market purpose-built to be inclusive and accessible, as well as featuring a climate resilient seawall and solar power.



**Photo 4** - Buala Market vendors and community members learn about the needs of people with disabilities and ways to make their new market more inclusive for all.