



Australian High Commission
Solomon Islands

MEDIA RELEASE

GIRLS IN ICT DAY DRAWS 200 PARTICIPANTS IN HONIARA, SPOTLIGHTING AI FOR DEVELOPMENT

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As Solomon Islands recovers from the destruction of Tropical Cyclone Maila, more than 200 young women gathered in Honiara this week with a clear message: the tools to help respond to the next crisis should be built in the Pacific.

The event, marking International Women and Girls in ICT Day 2026, brought together students, teachers, and technology professionals from 32 schools and institutions under the theme “AI for Development: Girls Shaping the Digital Future.” It was organised by Women in Technology Solomon Islands (WITSI).

The Australian Government, through the Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Justice (ASIPJ), was the event’s major sponsor.

Addressing participants, Acting Minister Counsellor at the Australian High Commission, Nicole Smith, linked the day directly to the recent Category 5 cyclone, which struck Western Province, Choiseul and Isabel with winds of up to 215 kilometres per hour.

“Maila reminded us that nature doesn’t wait. Neither should you,” Ms Smith said. “The next generation of tools that protect Solomon Islands needs Solomon Islands voices - and yours can be one of them.”

She pointed to the growing role of artificial intelligence in disaster preparedness and response, including analysing satellite data and ocean temperatures to improve early warning systems, and enabling remote medical diagnosis in communities cut off by extreme weather.

“AI isn’t some kind of magical robot — it’s a tool built by people like you, to be used by people like you,” she said. “Someone has to build and improve these tools for the Pacific, and it should be people who live in the Pacific and know what’s at stake here.”

Australia's support for the event forms part of a broader ICT and cyber partnership with Solomon Islands, aimed at strengthening national capability across digital systems, platforms and services. Programs such as the Next Gen Junior Professional Program are creating pathways for young Solomon Islanders to enter the ICT and cybersecurity workforce.

The event featured a virtual keynote from Perth-based software engineer and founder Nina Karisik, alongside a panel discussion with women working in technology, an "AI for Good" team challenge, and a cybersecurity awareness session delivered by Solomon Islands CERT.

WITSI President Letitia Masaea was recognised for her leadership in advancing women's participation in ICT, including representing Solomon Islands at regional and global internet governance forums.

In a closing message, organisers encouraged participants to pursue careers in technology and help shape the country's digital future.

"To every young girl who joined us - keep dreaming big, stay curious, and never doubt your place in technology," WITSI said in a statement. "The future is yours to shape."

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PHOTOS:



Caption 1: Attendees and facilitators of the Women and Girls in ICT Day



Caption 2: Acting Minister Counsellor Nicole Smith addresses the attendees



Caption 3: WITSI President Letitia Masaea chairs a panel of women ICT experts at the event