



Solomon Islands Government

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CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM UNIT

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Bar Association eager to progress the Draft Federal Constitution

The Solomon Islands Bar Association (SIBA) has indicated its interest to further progress the proposed federal constitution, after its review of the 2nd 2014 Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands with the Constitutional Reform Unit (CRU).

Speaking on behalf of the association during the closing of the consultation, Vice President Mrs. Katalaini Ziru said her colleagues have seen the past two weeks as an interesting two weeks.

She made these closing remarks as SIBA's response to the Honorable Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare's official closing statement on the consultations of the current Draft Federal Constitution.

Mrs. Ziru said that the association as a whole and as a collective body has considered this consultation, a most important one.

"They have been two weeks of detailed discussion on the Draft Federal Constitution," she said, "we have had the opportunity of looking at the draft from a legal, as well as from a practical perspective."

In addition to this, she said that SIBA as an association has, during this consultation collectively raised issues in relation to the need for certain further thought to be put into the current draft.

"We have raised in particular the need for a cost benefit analysis," she said, "we have also expressed but are not suggesting a change to the basic federal structure, certain comments that represent our views as a whole."

One of those views is that while the current draft contains many aspirational statements, Mrs. Ziru said that there is a proposition by the association that these will be dealt with in the form of principles.

She said that the general proposition from SIBA is that their views expressed will be collated in a report and presented to CRU, after it has been deliberated on and adopted by the Bar Association.

CRU understands that SIBA's submission will be ready in time for the experts on federalism and constitutional drafting. The experts will be present in early 2017 for the anticipated final Joint Plenary of Constitutional Congress and Eminent Persons Advisory Council (EPAC).

“There is a consensus by the association that while the draft in its current form, is a document that can be taken by the government to run with, that a lot more work still needs to be done,” she said.

She said that from the association's point of view, they appreciate that they are now being consulted and the weight that has been granted to views and opinions presented by SIBA members during the consultation.

Mrs. Ziru said that SIBA requests that it be further consulted collectively in any further drafting by CRU.

“As a result of this consultation, some of us who have either not seen the draft or were not aware or not convinced by what it contains, can now convincingly say we have now the opportunity to assist the executive government to put forward a constitutional framework that best represents good policy, sound principles and the desires of the people,” she said.

To this degree, SIBA aims for a constitution that is relevant and can be fully effected.

In addressing the Prime Minister, Mrs. Ziru said that SIBA implores that he continues to consider, engage and interact with the members of the association regarding the proposed constitution.

“It's an association that comprises Solomon Islanders, and non-Solomon Islanders who carry this nation and its future in their hearts,” she said.

CRU's consultation with the Bar Association officially ended on Friday 24 June 2016.

Constitutional Reform Unit (CRU) is a division established within the Prime Minister's Office to oversee the completion of the Solomon Islands' Constitutional Reform program.

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