

***Steadfast partner and friend to the Republic of the Marshall Islands***

It is a special week for us at the Australian Embassy here in the Marshall Islands.

On 4 May, the Australian Embassy marked our kemem – one year of calling the Marshall Islands home. Our Embassy team has been so grateful for the warm welcome in Majuro and during our visits to Ebeye and neighbouring islands. It’s true that the Marshallese people are so incredibly friendly, generous and good humoured.

It’s clear we are bound together by our common values as democratic countries committed to peace, a rich spiritual life and a shared determination to give every individual, man, woman, girl and boy, the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our new Embassy builds on decades of cooperation on issues that matter deeply to both RMI and Australia. We are proud to have been one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with RMI in 1987, and especially so this week as we joined Constitution Day celebrations. Understanding each other’s culture and history brings us even closer – we were honoured that over 1300 children and adults visited our Torres Strait Island Mask exhibition in March.

Through joint membership of multilateral fora, we are working closely together to advance the interests of the Pacific and Small Island Developing States. This includes joint efforts to combat climate change, advance human rights, support our blue economy, and promote international security. We are impressed by the creative work of the RMI Government in Geneva, New York and Suva, and your climate envoys. Regionally and internationally, RMI always promotes unity and peace.

We work side-by-side with RMI to deliver meaningful projects which make a difference. We share ideas together and try to understand what matters to the Marshallese people. We’re pleased to partner with RMI to deliver outcomes on climate and disaster resilience, scholarships as well as women’s empowerment and youth engagement. It was an incredible feeling to see off several fantastic young scholars to Suva under our Pacific scholarship program last month.

In response to COVID-19, Australia is pleased to provide critical PPE supplies to RMI, with a delivery in Majuro just last week. We’ve stood steadfast with the Ministry of Health and Human Services to make sure vital vaccinations get to neighbouring atolls. We continue to support COVID-19 preparedness efforts across RMI to save lives and livelihoods.

We share strong interests in protecting our oceans, the source of so much life and our shared home. We are deepening cooperation under Australia’s Pacific Maritime Security Program, building on 30 years of the Australian Navy’s partnership with Sea Patrol. Australia’s AUD2 billion regional commitment over 30 years has already seen enhanced aerial surveillance of fishing operations across the Pacific and will soon include the delivery of a new Australian-built Guardian-class Patrol Boat to replace RMIS *Lomor 3*. Maritime security is a good example of how RMI’s other close partners such as the United States and Japan have all contributed significantly with us towards RMI’s goals.

We are marking the first year of the Australian Embassy in the Marshall Islands with an ongoing commitment to work as a partner, friend and family member in the Pacific. Thank you for a great first year. We have so much to be proud of together. I’m excited at what is to come.

**Brek Batley**

**Australian Ambassador to the Republic of the Marshall Islands**.