

A day in the life of a Solomon Islands MP

By James Batley

Rick Hou, a Solomon Islands Member of Parliament, visited ANU earlier this year, attached to the Coral Bell School's [State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program](#) (SSGM). SSGM has just published a Discussion Paper by Hou, titled '[A Day in the Life of a Member of Parliament in Solomon Islands](#)', based on a seminar he delivered during his visit.

The Discussion Paper provides a fascinating — and quite possibly unique — first-hand insight into the many demands and pressures which MPs face on a day-to-day basis in Solomon Islands, and how these can be managed. Hou also addresses the contested issue of constituency development funds — budgeted funds that are under the control of, and spent at the discretion of, Members of Parliament. Allocations for such funds have grown steeply in recent years in [Solomon Islands](#) (and in neighbouring Papua New Guinea). Hou argues that, provided suitable governance arrangements are put in place, the constituency can serve as an important vehicle in the delivery of government services (and overseas aid) to Solomon Islands' dispersed and largely rural population.

Rick Hou served as Governor of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands for over 15 years during the 1990s and the first half of last decade. He was elected to Parliament in 2010 to represent the constituency of Small Malaita and was re-elected in 2014. He served as Minister of Public Service from April to November 2011, and as Minister of Finance and Treasury from November 2011 to September 2014. He is currently the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of the Solomon Islands National Parliament.

About the author/s

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James Batley is a Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Australian National University's Department of Pacific Affairs. He served as Australian High Commissioner to Solomon Islands from 1997 to 1999 and as Special Coordinator of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands from 2004 to 2006.