

32^h session of the Human Rights Council

Item 6 – Universal Periodic Review of Solomon Islands

**Statement by the Allied Rainbow Communities (ARC)
International and Pacific Sexual Diversity Network (PSDN)**

*Delivered by Joleen
Mataele*

Mr. President,

We are pleased to see small Pacific Island Countries (PICs) like the Solomon Islands engaging actively with the UPR process. We appreciate the challenges for us in the Pacific to engage in these spaces, and encourage your government to engage with civil society in the region around implementing UPR recommendations.

We were disappointed that six recommendations concerning discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals did NOT enjoy your support during the working group review.

We know from our LGBTI colleagues in the Solomon Islands that they are active community members in the villages, helping with chores and the raising of children. They also help with many church activities, yet religion is a tool that is often used against them when they make a claim to equal and fair treatment. In addition, we know that many face violence and rejection in their families, in the most severe cases driving them to harmful behavior, including suicide.

We are extremely concerned that during your current constitutional reform process, due to end in late 2016, there is proposed language that would specifically exclude “sexual orientation” from constitutional protection. This is extremely dangerous, and in a climate of high rates of violence, to leave our communities vulnerable is unthinkable. As far as we know, that could make you the only country in the world to single out one community in their constitution as NOT entitled to protection. Protection which is, in fact, guaranteed under international law.

We urge you to accept and implement all UPR recommendations and ensure that any constitutional reform is inclusive and in conformity with international law

Thank you, Mr. President