

# The Honourable Richard Marles MP

Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister for Defence

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**Visit to Kiribati** <sup>s22</sup>

16-18 January 2025

Briefing Pack

**OFFICIAL**

**PLEASE RETURN THIS PACK TO THE DEFENCE  
MINISTERIAL INTERNATIONAL VISITS TEAM**

**ATTN: MINISTERIAL INTERNATIONAL VISITS OFFICER**

**LOCATION: s47E(d)**

**RUSSELL OFFICES**

**s47E(d)**

15/01/2025 18:34

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s22



## Official Delegation

### Official party


**The Honourable Richard Marles MP**  
**Deputy Prime Minister**  
**Minister for Defence**

Ms Laura Darlington  
Acting First Assistant Secretary Pacific Division

P: s47E(d) 


s47F 

Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister for Defence

M: s47F 


s47F 


Media Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister,  
Minister for Defence

M: s47F 


s47F 

Aide-de-Camp to the Deputy Prime Minister,  
Minister for Defence

M: s47F 

s47E(d) 

Defence Photographer

M: s22 

## Australian High Commission Kiribati

**Ms Karen Bray**  
**High Commissioner**

s47E(d)

Defence Adviser – South Pacific

M: s47E(d)

s22

### Accommodation Details

Australian High Commissioner's Residence  
Bairiki, Tarawa

P: s47F

### International Policy Contacts

#### *Based in Australia*

Ms Sue Bodell  
First Assistant Secretary Pacific Division

M: s22

Ms Katherine Ruiz-Avila  
Acting Director General Pacific and Timor-Leste  
Branch

M: s22

s47E(d)

Director Pacific East

M: s22

s47E(d)

Director International Visits and  
Attaché Management

M: s22

s47E(d)

Deputy Director Ministerial International Visits

M: s22

s47E(d)

Senior Ministerial International Visits Officer

M: s22



**Bilateral Briefs**

**Meeting with Dr Teuea Toatu, Vice President and Minister for Finance and Economic Development**

**Dr Teuea Toatu** (*Teh-where Tow-atu*)

Friday, 17 January, 1330 hrs, Australian High Commission Tarawa

**Context and objectives**

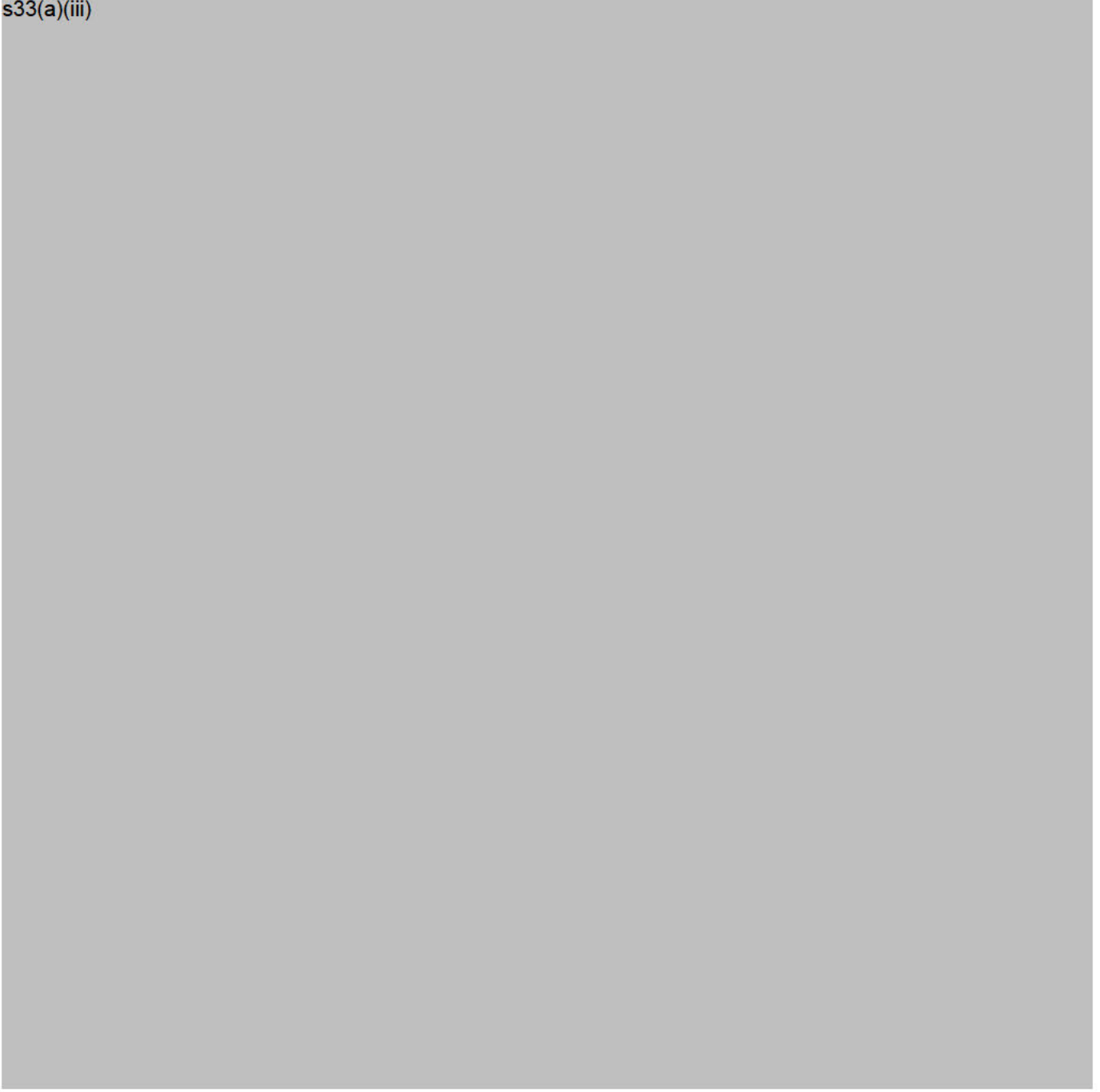
<b>Purpose of the meeting</b>
s33(a)(iii)
<b>What we want</b>
s33(a)(iii)
<b>What they want</b>
s33(a)(iii)
<b>Handling note</b>
s33(a)(iii)
<i>You last met the Vice-President during his trip to Melbourne on a Special Visitor Program in September 2023.</i> <i>Small gifts will be exchanged during the meeting.</i>



## Key Messages

- Reinforce Australia's continued commitment to working with Kiribati on its security and development priorities.

s33(a)(iii)





## Background

Throughout 2024, s33(a)(iii) the Government of Kiribati (GoK) limited engagement with foreign partners, including Australia. Parliamentary elections concluded on 19 August and President Maamau's *Tobwaan Kiribati Party* was returned with an increased majority. Presidential elections on 25 October re-elected Maamau for a third and constitutionally mandated final term.

s33(a)(iii)

The official development assistance to Kiribati for 2024-25 is approximately AUD44 million. Australian support to Kiribati includes: budget support; underwriting Kiribati's education sector through the construction of 28 schools; extensive infrastructure at Betio port; construction of new police barracks (commenced); health sector support; and humanitarian assistance.

### *Guardian-class Patrol Boats (GPBs) and Maritime Security Cooperation*

Kiribati received its first GPB, RKS *Teanoai II* (*Tee-ah-noi two*) in June 2021. A second GPB, RKS *Tobwaan Mainiku*, (*Tob-wan MY-ni-koo*) was handed over in

s33(a)(iii)

## Point of contact

Bilateral brief	Susan Bodell, First Assistant Secretary Pacific, Ph: s22
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**Event Brief**

**Commissioning Ceremony of RKS Tobwaan Mainiku**

**EVENT DETAILS**

9.50am – 12.00pm

Commissioning Ceremony of RKS *Tobwaan Mainiku*  
(*Tob-wan MY-ni-koo*)

Delta Wharf, Betio Port

***[Handling note: In the event that the boat is unable to berth alongside, it will be moved to the Kiribati Port Authority wharf]***

**Minister's Role:**

You will be Australia's representative at the commissioning ceremony of Kiribati's second Australian-gifted Guardian class Patrol Boat.

You will deliver a speech, an opportunity to reaffirm Australia's commitment to Kiribati's maritime security. You will also tour the boat, giving you an opportunity to engage with the Commanding Officer and crew.

The event will conclude with refreshments. This is an opportunity to engage with dignitaries (including ministers) and attendees in a more informal setting.

**Has Minister met with this person/organisation in the past?** Yes.  
You met Dr Toatu (*Tow-atu*) in Melbourne on 22 September 2023.

**Dress:** Business attire.

**Setup:** This is an outdoor event. Chairs and marquees will be set up on the wharf in front of the boat. You will be seated for the official program and invited to the lectern to deliver a speech with a handheld microphone. The refreshments will be buffet style and you will be called to serve yourself before returning to your chair to eat.

**OFFICIAL****Attendees:**

Host: Acting Police Commissioner, Mr Eeri Aritiera (*Air-ree A-ri-seh-ra*),  
Host. Telephone s47F

Senior Government Representative: Dr Teuea Toatu  
(*Teh-where Tow-atu*). Telephone s47F

Other key VIPs:

Commanding Officer *RKS Tobwaan Mainiku* Inspector Ruka Ratieta  
(*Roo-ka Ra-si-eta*), Parade Commander and host for tour.

Acting Commander Police Maritime Unit and Commanding Officer of  
*RKS Teanoai II*, Superintendent Tom Redfern.

Other ministers TBC

**Arrival Details:**

Minister to arrive at (time): 9.50am

Location of arrival: Delta wharf, Betio Port

**[Handling note: location may change depending on the weather].**

To be met by: Acting Police Commissioner Mr Eeri Aritiera  
(*Air-ree A-ri-seh-ra*) and Australian Defence Adviser South Pacific,  
s47E(d)

Location of meeting: Delta wharf, Betio Port. In front of the  
Police Maritime Unit workshop and in front of the *RKS Tobwaan Mainiku*  
(*Tob-wan MY-ni-koo*) .

Where car to drop: Directly next to the marquee.

Is parking for Comcar available: Yes

Parking where: Driver will be directed to parking area on the wharf.

**Staff members accompanying Minister:**

s47F Adviser

Ms Laura Darlington, Assistant Secretary Indo-Pacific Infrastructure

s47F Media Director

s47F ADC

s47E(d) Defence Photographer

s47F

s47F

**OFFICIAL****Running Order:**

09.50am	The Minister arrives. - met by Acting Police Commissioner, Mr Eeri Aritiera [address as: Acting Commissioner] and Australian Defence Adviser South Pacific, s47E(d) - ushered to seat in the front row.
10.00am	Vice President arrives - seated next to the Deputy Prime Minister
10.03am	MC to deliver welcoming remarks
10.05am	Ship's blessing by Kiribati Uniting Church Minister
10.10am	Band plays national anthem - all upstanding
10.15am	The Deputy Prime Minister is introduced by the MC to give his remarks - Deputy Prime Minister moves to the podium and gives remarks
10.20am	The Vice President is introduced by the MC to give his remarks - Vice President moves to the podium and gives remarks
10.25am	MC Invites Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister onboard for a tour of the boat - hosted by Commanding Officer Inspector Ruka Ratieta (Roo-ka Ra-si-eta)
11.00am	Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister escorted to morning tea s47E(d)
11.55am	Vice President to depart
12.00pm	Deputy Prime Minister to return to the boat to take photos and record a video for public diplomacy/media use
12.20pm	The Deputy Prime Minister departs

**Contact:**

Ms Karen Bray, High Commissioner s47F

s47F Maritime Surveillance Adviser, s47F

## OFFICIAL

### Australian High Commission Official Opening EVENT DETAILS

3.30pm – 5.30pm

Australian High Commission Official Opening  
Bairiki, Tarawa

#### **Minister's Role:**

You will formally open the new Australian High Commission chancery. The chancery was completed in June 2024, but has not been officially opened.

You will deliver a speech, an opportunity to reinforce Australia's enduring commitment to Kiribati. You will also jointly cut the ribbon with the Honourable Vice President Teuea Toatu (*Teh-where Tow-atu*).

The event will conclude with refreshments. This is an opportunity to engage with dignitaries (including ministers) and attendees in a more informal setting.

**Has Minister met with this person/organisation in the past?** Yes.  
You met Dr Toatu (*Tow-atu*) in Melbourne on 22 September 2023.

**Dress:** Business attire.

**Setup:** This will be an outdoor event. Chairs and marquees will be set up out the front of the chancery. You will be seated for the official program and invited to the lectern to deliver a speech with a handheld microphone. The refreshments will be a buffet style and you will be called to serve yourself before mingling with the guests.

#### **Attendees:**

Host and MC: Her Excellency Karen Bray, Australian High Commissioner to Kiribati

Senior Government Representative: Dr Teuea Toatu  
(*Teh-where Tow-atu*).

Telephone <sup>s47F</sup>

Other key VIPs: TBC

Australians living in Kiribati will be invited to this event. There are approximately 20-30 Australians in country.



**OFFICIAL**

s47E(d)

**Arrival Details:**

*[Handling note: you will already be at the chancery due to the meet and greet with DFAT and Defence staff]*

To be met by: Her Excellency Karen Bray, Australian High Commissioner

Location of meeting: Australian High Commission

Where car to drop: n/a

Is parking for Comcar available: n/a

Parking where: n/a

**Staff members accompanying Minister:**

s47F [redacted] Adviser

Ms Laura Darlington, Assistant Secretary Indo-Pacific Infrastructure

s47E(d) [redacted] Defence Adviser South Pacific

s47F [redacted] Media Director

s47F [redacted] ADC




s47E(d) [redacted] Defence Photographer

s47F [redacted]

s47F [redacted]

**OFFICIAL**

**OFFICIAL****Running Order:**

3.30pm	The Deputy Prime Minister escorted by HOM to the seating area The Vice President arrives - The Deputy Prime Minister to greet Vice President
3.40pm	The MC (HOM) opens the event
3.45pm	Entertainment (garlanding) s47E(d) 
3.50pm	Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister - MC will introduce you and invite you to the podium
3.55pm	Entertainment (dance by Australian High Commission staff)
4.00pm	Speech by Vice President
4.05pm	Entertainment (local artist)
4.10pm	s47E(d) 
4.15pm	Blessing of the building
4.20pm	Official opening - MC will invite Deputy Prime Minister and Vice President to the front - Ribbon cutting - HOM and local staff member will be invited to cut the cake - Return to seat after photo
4.25pm	Closing and blessing of food
4.30pm	Refreshments - Mingling with guests - VIPs will be invited for a tour (which you may wish to join) s47E(d) 

**OFFICIAL**

**Contact:**

s47F

s47F

Deputy High Commissioner

s47F



## Key Messages

I would like to acknowledge the important guests here today.

- . Honourable Vice President
- . Honourable Speaker of Parliament
- . Other Honourable Ministers
- . Moderator of the Kiribati Uniting Church
- . Unimwaane (*oo-ni-mah-neh*) (Elders) of Bairiki
- . Diplomatic corps
- . Ladies and gentleman


## KAM NA BANE NI MAURI (*kam nah beh-neh ni mao-ri*)

- . I am delighted to be here in Tarawa, at the start of the new year, to open the new Australian High Commission premises in Kiribati.
- . The milestone today has been many years in the making
  - It started in 2018, with a vision to provide an enduring and fit-for-purpose Australian presence in Kiribati
  - There were a few bumps along the way, but we persevered and now we are all here today.
- . Australia's partnership with Kiribati is longstanding
  - Diplomatic relationships were established in 1979, and Australia was one of the first countries to do so
  - Our partnership has been nurtured on a foundation of cooperation, shared interests and mutual respect
  - With our new High Commission, Australia is even better placed to continue growing and enhancing the already strong Kiribati-Australia partnership.
- . This new chancery – as well as the broader property project which includes eight staff residences and a new Australian High Commissioner's residence – represents a significant investment
  - It symbolises the importance Australia places on our partnership with Kiribati.

## OFFICIAL

- . Earlier today, I participated in the commissioning of Kiribati's second Guardian-class Patrol Boat – the RKS *Tobwaan Mainiku* (*Tob-wan My-ni-koo*) which was delivered by Australia
  - the RKS *Tobwaan Mainiku* (*Tob-wan My-ni-koo*), along with its sister vessel the RKS *Teanoi II* (*Tee-ah-noy Two*), will support Kiribati and Australia's ambition for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Pacific region
  - it is just one thread of the many strands of cooperation and collaboration being delivered by the team at the Australian High Commission in Kiribati, working from the building behind me.
- . Australia's cooperation with Kiribati is extensive – it touches every island and every sector
  - we are proud to underpin the education sector, including through the construction of 28 primary schools across Kiribati
  - we are supporting quality employment opportunities, through skills development, tertiary scholarships and labour mobility pathways
  - our investments in transformational infrastructure – for your roads, ports and airports – are supporting the prosperity of Kiribati and its people.
- . These are just a few of the many examples of partnership between Kiribati and Australia.
- . We would not be at this milestone today without the support and contributions from those who have assisted with our property project
  - I want to thank those from the Government of Kiribati who have played a role, including those from
    - : the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy and
    - : the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development.

s47E(d)



## OFFICIAL

- . It is from this building that we will continue to work, with commitment and energy, to deepen the Kiribati-Australia partnership
  - through our substantial development assistance program, our security cooperation and our people-to-people links.
- . Let this new High Commission building be a symbol of Australia's enduring commitment to Kiribati for decades to come.

**KAM RABWA** (*kam-rabbah*)

## OFFICIAL

**Meet and greet with DFAT and Defence Staff at Chancery**

### EVENT DETAILS

2.40pm - 3.30pm

Meet and greet with DFAT and Defence Staff at Chancery

#### **Minister's Role:**

This is an informal event. The running order can be adapted if the program is behind schedule, or if additional time for Australia-based business is required.

This event is an opportunity for you to speak with staff (DFAT and Defence) working in Kiribati. You may wish to make short, informal remarks thanking everyone for their contributions.

It is also an opportunity for you to familiarise yourself with the new chancery, should you wish to, ahead of the official opening (there will be a tour during the opening).

You may wish to participate in a simple group song and dance with staff. This song and dance (*Ongo te bwana*) is often used to welcome guests and to celebrate a gathering. s47E(d)

An office at the chancery will also be available if required for Australia-based business.

**Has Minister met with this person/organisation in the past?** No

**Dress:** Business Attire

**Setup:** Everyone will be standing at a location outside

#### **Attendees:**

Ms Karen Bray, High Commissioner to Kiribati

DFAT s47E(d)

Defence s47E(d)

**OFFICIAL**

**Arrival Details:**

Minister to arrive at (time): 2.40pm

Location of arrival: Australia High Commission, Bairiki

To be met by: s47F (Senior Administration Officer)

Location of meeting: Australia High Commission, Bairiki

Where car to drop: In front of High Commission

Is parking for Comcar available: Yes

Parking where: Outside of High Commission

**Staff members accompanying Minister:**

s47F, Adviser

Ms Laura Darlington, Assistant Secretary Indo-Pacific Infrastructure

s47E(d), Defence Adviser South Pacific

s47F Media Director

s47F ADC

s47E(d) Defence Photographer

s47F

s47F

**Running Order:**

1440	The Deputy Prime Minister arrives (5 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- met by s47F, Senior Administrative Officer</li><li>- guided to a location where staff are gathered</li></ul>
1445	Meet and greet with staff (15 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- short remarks by Deputy Prime Minister thanking staff</li><li>- group song and dance</li><li>- opportunity to talk with individual staff</li></ul>
1500	<i>Optional: Short tour of the chancery (10 minutes)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- guided by s47F</li></ul>
1510	Free time (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Australia-based business</li><li>- debrief on previous engagement</li><li>- prepare for next engagement</li></ul>

**Contact:**

s47F DHOM Tarawa, s47F

**Key Messages**

Informal remarks to Australian and locally engaged staff inquiring about their role and thanking them for their work.

Official Reception

EVENT DETAILS

6.30pm - 8.30pm

Official Reception

President's State Guest House [TBC]

**Minister's Role:**

You will be the guest of honour at an Official Reception hosted by the Honourable Vice President Teuea Toatu (*Teh-where Tow-atu*) [TBC]. You will make a speech, exchange a gift and may be invited to dance.

The event will include a sit-down buffet dinner and is an opportunity to engage with Dr Toatu in a relaxed setting.

**Has Minister met with this person/organisation in the past?** Yes.  
You met Dr Toatu in Melbourne on 22 September 2023.

**Dress:** Pacific formal: casual collared, button down shirt, long pants and open toe shoes (e.g. sandals).

**Setup:**

This will be an outdoor event. You will be seated at the head table. When called upon, you will be invited to the lectern to deliver a speech with a handheld microphone. Your audience will be seated at individual tables facing you. The meal will be a buffet style and you will be called to serve yourself before returning to the table to eat.

**Attendees:**

Host and Senior Government Representative:

Vice President and Minister for Finance and Economic Development,  
Dr Teuea Toatu (*Teh-where Tow-atu*).

Telephone s47F

Other key VIPs: [TBC]



**OFFICIAL**

**Arrival Details:**

Minister to arrive at: 6.40pm

Location of arrival: President's State House, Bairiki

To be met by: GoK official [TBC]

Location of meeting: Outdoor function area, President's State House

Where car to drop: At end of driveway, President's State House

Parking where: At end of driveway, President's State House

**Staff members accompanying Minister:**

s47F [REDACTED], Adviser

Ms Laura Darlington, Assistant Secretary Indo-Pacific Infrastructure

s47E(d) [REDACTED] Defence Adviser South Pacific

s47F [REDACTED] Media Director

s47F [REDACTED] ADC

s47E(d) [REDACTED] Defence Photographer

s47F [REDACTED]

s47F [REDACTED]

**OFFICIAL**

**Running Order:**

6.30pm	Non-VIP attendees arrive and take their seats
6.40pm	<p>The Deputy Prime Minister arrives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- met by GoK official [TBC]</li><li>- escorted to seat at head table (attendees will stand at your arrival)</li><li>- welcomed by Vice President Teuea Toatu (also seated at head table)</li></ul>
6.45pm	<p>State reception formalities commence (times are approximate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- opening prayer (5 mins)</li><li>- garlanding dance (15 mins)</li></ul> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Keynote speeches and gift exchange [TBC] (20 mins)</li></ul> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Grace (5 mins)</li><li>- Dinner (45 mins)</li></ul> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
8.30pm	<p>The Deputy Prime Minister departs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Escorted from seat by a GoK official (attendees will stand at your departure)</li></ul>

**Contact:**

s47F [REDACTED] s47F [REDACTED]  
s47F [REDACTED], Deputy High Commissioner s47F [REDACTED]

## Key Messages

- . Can I begin by thanking you, Honourable Vice President, for your warm sentiments and for your gracious hospitality tonight and throughout my visit to your beautiful island home.
- . I also want to acknowledge the other distinguished guests here tonight:
  - Honourable Ministers and their good spouses
  - Honourable Speaker of the Parliament and his good spouse
  - Honourable Chief Justice and her good spouse
  - Religious and local government leaders
  - Members of the diplomatic corps

## Kam na bane ni mauri [*kam nah beh-neh nee mao-ree*]

- . It is my great privilege to be here with you and once again experience the hospitality of i-Kiribati culture.

s47F

- . As Parliamentary Secretary, I had the pleasure of visiting Kiribati twice – in 2010 and 2011 – before returning again in 2022. During those visits, I had the opportunity to see some of the Australian funded projects in Kiribati. I saw firsthand the challenges, but also the commitment from the Government of Kiribati and the i-Kiribati to develop their country.
- . Australia has been a steadfast partner of Kiribati. Since Kiribati's birth as a strong, independent and sovereign nation, Australia has been there to support Kiribati's own development vision. From 1979 until now, Australia has invested more than AUD740 million to help Kiribati achieve its development objectives.
- . Australia's development partnership with Kiribati is broad, it is extensive and it stretches across the vast distances of this large oceanic country.

## OFFICIAL

- . Generations of i-Kiribati children, in Tarawa but also on every single island in Kiribati, have benefited from Australia's investment into Kiribati's education sector. Our support has meant new classrooms, better trained teachers and the rollout of a new curriculum.
- . Australia is also pleased to support the next generation of i-Kiribati leaders to reach their full potential. More than 300 i-Kiribati – and I understand this includes many of you here tonight – have gained tertiary qualifications through the Australia Awards program, and over 60 are currently studying in Australia.
- . Kiribati has a clear vision of how to become a wealthier and more prosperous nation and Australia is proud to support you in achieving this vision. We have invested in critical infrastructure projects such as the South Tarawa Road and the East Micronesian Cable to improve internet connectivity. We have also committed to supporting the development of Betio (Bey-so) Port.
- . These are just a few examples of the many ways we are working with Kiribati to achieve your development objectives.
- . But the Kiribati-Australia partnership is much more than just development cooperation.
- . Our enduring relationships and genuine people and cultural connections link us as a community of nations with distinct identities, but with a common purpose and understanding.
- . The i-Kiribati cultural values of family, collectivism, consensus, respect, reciprocity and spirituality, resonate in dynamic and diverse multicultural Australia, because of who we are, what we share, and because of the region we are part of.
- . As Pacific nations, we share an ocean and a future, as custodians of the vast Blue Pacific Continent. We have a responsibility to protect and sustainably manage our shared ocean.
- . This morning, I was proud to be able to attend the commissioning of the RKS Tobwaan Mainiku (Tob-wahn my-nee-koo), the second of two Guardian-class Patrol Boats provided by Australia. The commissioning this morning builds on decades of security and law enforcement cooperation. It is a symbol of Australia and Kiribati working together as Pacific nations to advance our respective security priorities.
- . The Kiribati-Australia partnership is rich. It is diverse and it is enduring.

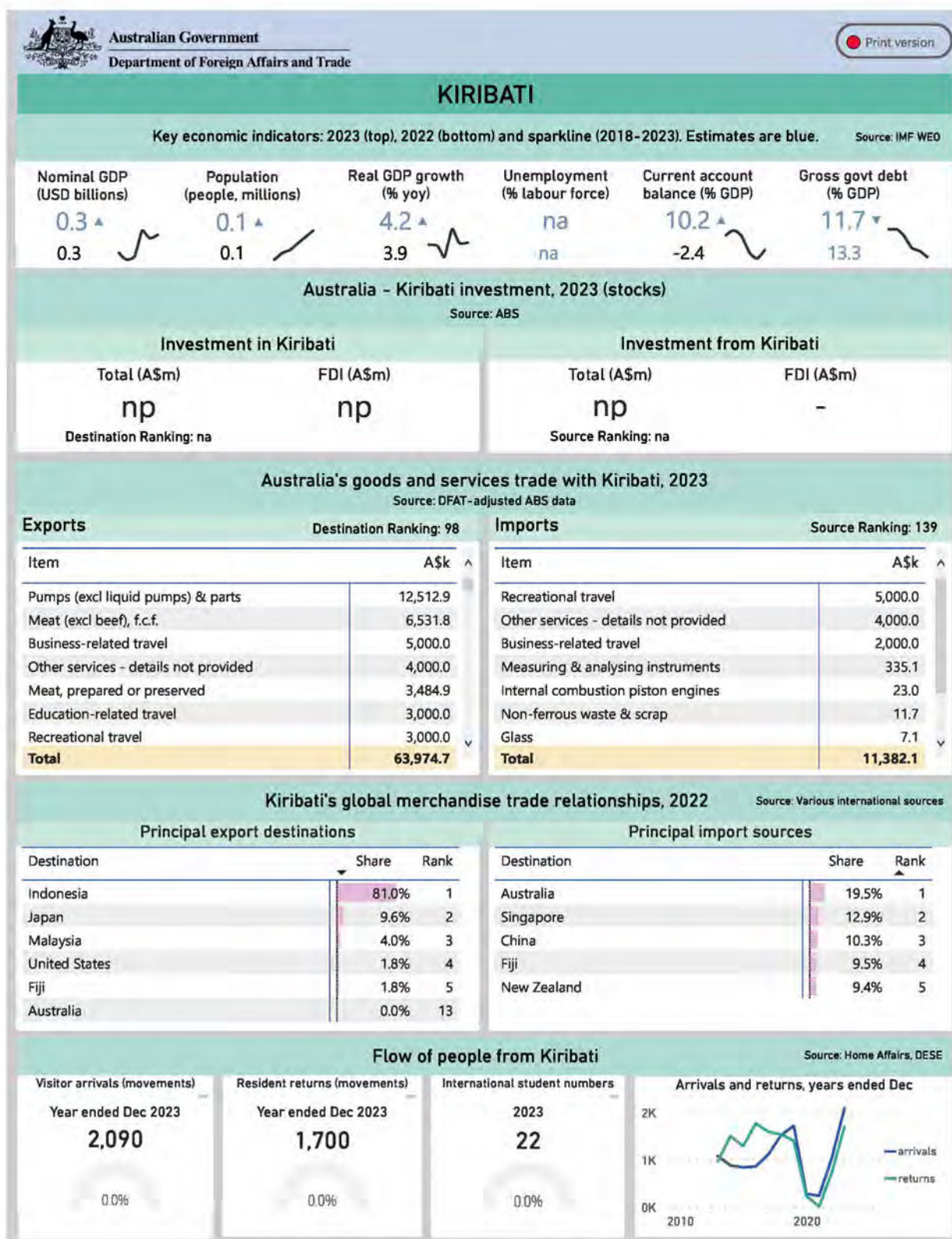
## OFFICIAL

- . Across the region, Australia has elevated our partnership with our Pacific partners – Tuvalu, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea to name a few. These arrangements are transformational and nation changing.
- . Australia stands ready to further grow and expand our relationship with Kiribati.
- . Thank you again for your kindness and hospitality in welcoming me to your home. I hope to visit your beautiful country again soon.

**Kam Rabwa** [*kam rah-bah*]



## DFAT Country Brief



Compiled by the Trade Data Section, DFAT, using the latest data from the ABS, the IMF and various international sources.

IMF data may include forecasts or projections for recent years.

Merchandise trade data may exclude confidential items of trade. Totals may not add up due to rounding. Investment data is stocks as at end December. All data may be subject to future revisions.

GDP – Gross Domestic Product. na – Data is not available. np – Data is not published. f.c.f. – Fresh, chilled or frozen. nes – Not elsewhere specified.

Defence Relationship Factsheet



Australian Government  
Department of Defence

OFFICIAL

Defence Relationship Factsheet

Current as at: 9 January 2025

KIRIBATI [Ki-ri-bus]



KEY MESSAGES

- Australia has proudly partnered with Kiribati on maritime security for the last three decades.
- We remain committed to development of the Kiribati Police Maritime Unit.
- Australia provided Kiribati with a second Guardian-class Patrol Boat in July 2024.

KEY LEADERS

**President & Minister for Foreign Affairs:**  
His Excellency Taneti Maamau [tah-nes mao-mao]  
**Acting Commissioner of Police:**  
Mr Eeri Aritiera [eh-ree ah-ree-see-air-rah]  
**Acting Officer Commanding Police Maritime Unit:**  
Mr Tom Redfern



KEY AGREEMENTS

- Tobwaan Te Reitaki [Nurturing the Partnership] Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (2023).
- Australia-Kiribati Guardian-class Patrol Boat MOU (2021).



STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Consisting of 32 atolls and one raised coral island, the Republic of Kiribati is a 'big ocean state' with the largest exclusive economic of Pacific island countries and twelfth largest in the world. Kiribati's livelihood relies heavily on its maritime zones. Protecting and preserving its vast ocean territories from illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing remain of its highest priorities.

BILATERAL DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP

Australia has proudly partnered with Kiribati on maritime security for the last three decades, beginning with the gifting of a Pacific-class Patrol Boat in 1993. Kiribati does not have a defence force. Our partnership is primarily with the Kiribati Police Maritime Unit (KPMU), a sub-section of the Kiribati Police Service.

Defence provides Kiribati with maritime capabilities and supports development infrastructure works and the training and development of KPMU officers, through the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP).

FAST FACTS

	<b>Police Service Budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AU \$11.2 million</li></ul>
	<b>Police Service Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximately 500, including 60 in the KPMU.</li></ul>
	<b>Australia's Regional Defence Cooperation Program Budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pacific Region FY 24/25: \$308 million</li></ul>

KEY AREAS OF COOPERATION

Maritime security

Defence, through the PMSP, has gifted two Guardian-class Patrol Boats to Kiribati: RKS *Teanoai II* in 2021 and RKS *Tobwaan Mainiku* in 2024. The vessels are supported by ongoing maintenance, training and two in-country ADF advisers.

In February 2023, Foreign Minister Wong and Kiribati President Taneti Maamau signed the Tobwaan Te Reitaki [Nurturing the Partnership] MOU formalising Australia's commitment to support the Kiribati Maritime Police Unit (KPMU) with a second patrol boat.

Infrastructure

As part of Defence's commitment to developing Kiribati's maritime capability, infrastructure works are being scoped to increase berthing capacity at Betio [bay-so] Port, to accommodate a second patrol boat and upgrade the existing workshop facility. This will enhance the KPMU's ability to maintain and sustain maritime vessels.

Multilateral engagement

Kiribati and Australia are both members of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the region's premier political and economic policy organisation.



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#### RECENT ENGAGEMENT

- DFAT led Special Visitor Program for Kiribati Acting Commissioner of Police, inclusive of meeting with Commander Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Christopher Smith, AM, CSM (2 Feb 24)
- Kiribati Vice President meeting with DPM Marles (22 Sep 23).
- Defence Cooperation Talks (annual – last held Jun 23).
- DFAT led Senior Officials Talks (annual – last held Nov 22).

#### KEY EXERCISES, OPERATIONS & SHIP VISITS

- ADV *Reliant* Port Visits (Jan 25, Jan 24).
- Ex LONGREACH, supporting HADR efforts in addition to future preparedness and responses (Jul 23).
- Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) coordinate annual maritime surveillance activities through Operations RAI BALANG, ISLAND CHIEF and KURU KURU (OP SOLANIA 23).
- ADF contributions to WoAG drought relief efforts, including deliveries by RAAF aircraft (Jul 22) and ADV *Reliant* (Nov 22).
- OPIKA MOANA: Maritime surveillance, fisheries protection, law enforcement activity (annual – last participated in Nov 19).

#### AUS DEFENCE FOOTPRINT IN KIRIBATI



Defence Adviser: s47E(d)  
s47E(d)

##### Other personnel

Defence Cooperation Program

- s47E(d)

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[REDACTED]  
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To: s33(a)(iii)

Info: s33(a)(iii)

Originator: AUSTCOM TARAUA

MRN: s33(a)(iii)

MI: s33(a)(iii)

DTG: 021716Z JAN 25

Precedence: ROUTINE

Classification: [REDACTED]

Special  
Handling:

Privacy  
Markings:

Title: Kiribati: 2025 Development budget: s33(a)(iii)

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SUBJ: Kiribati: 2025 Development budget: s33(a)(iii)

ODIN TYPE: CATA

MRN: s33(a)(iii)

LONG TITLE: Kiribati: 2025 Development budget: s33(a)(iii)  
s33(a)(iii)

START OF SUMMARY

Australia s33(a)(iii) the largest bilateral donor to Kiribati (\$44 million). China (\$37 million) has overtaken New Zealand (\$24 million) as the second largest bilateral donor, s33(a)(iii)  
s33(a)(iii)

END OF SUMMARY

Australia (\$44 million) s33(a)(iii) the largest bilateral donor to Kiribati. Other major donors include the World Bank (\$52 million, up \$15 million against the 2024 Budget), the Asian Development Bank (\$48 million, up \$27 million), China (\$37 million, up \$19 million), New Zealand (\$24 million, down \$15

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[REDACTED]  
s33(a)(iii)

million), United States (\$11 million, nil reported in 2024, s33(a)(iii) refer s33(a)(iii) ), and the European Union (\$4 million, down \$3 million).

2. China's large increase is driven by a new \$8.6 million contribution towards a second, long-awaited Embraer aircraft, s33(a)(iii) s33(a)(iii) Minister of Information, Communications and Transport, Alexander Teabo, confirmed in parliament the aircraft is scheduled to be delivered in quarter one of 2025. The 2025 Budget also confirms the funding (\$37.5 million) for China's South Tarawa roads project, for which the implementation agreement was signed in July.

3. s33(a)(iii)  
s33(a)(iii)

4. The United States' major investment is an new MCC grant (signed September 2023) supporting labour migration, youth camps and scholarships. The European Union's flagship Kiritimati Island WASH program continues in 2025. The ADB's large infusion of funds is to the education sector, primarily for school construction (refer s33(a)(iii) ), s33(a)(iii)

The World Bank's largest project in 2025 is its ongoing Kiribati Outer Islands Transport Infrastructure Investment Project (KOITIIP), which focuses on island access points, causeways and institutional strengthening.

5. The Development Budget donor figures do not include donor general budget support, which feature in the 2025 Recurrent Budget, totalling \$33.1 million. s33(a)(iii)

s33(a)(iii)

6. Post cabled separately on the 2025 Recurrent Budget (refer s33(a)(iii) ).

FROM:  
TWAA/s47F

[REDACTED]  
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References: s33(a)(iii)

TOPICS:

- \* POLITICAL-ECONOMIC/Domestic Political
- \* POLITICAL-ECONOMIC/General Economic

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s33(a)(iii)