

Independent MPs, Political Party Legislation and Electoral Politics in Solomon Islands

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Abstract

Independent MPs have always determined formation of government in Solomon Islands. In an effort to limit the critical influence of independent MPs in forming governments, which has been a problem after almost all elections since 1974, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands debated and passed the Political Parties Integrity Act (PPIA) in 2014. The PPIA promises to limit the influence of independent MPs and prescribes how political parties are to be administered. It is also intended to establish fairer gender representation in Parliament. We noted with interest that most MPs who debated and passed the PPIA went on and contested as independent candidates. In this paper, we look at the 2014 and 2019 election results to assess the impacts, effectiveness, and weaknesses of the PPIA. We also explain why it may have failed, and highlight factors that determine voter behaviour, election outcomes, and government formation in the country. Lessons learnt from the loopholes and weaknesses of the PPIA and electoral politics more generally are then used to suggest ways forward for political party development, inclusiveness, integrity, and stability in Solomon Islands.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Independent MPs; Integrity; Political Parties; PPIA

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