



# AUSTRALIA PROPOSES TO SUPPORT THE ELECTION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

A controversial law to postpone the poll due to financial difficulties was advanced by the leader of the Pacific island nation of Solomon Islands on Tuesday. Australia said that it has offered to provide funding for the 2023 election.

Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare has argued that the government cannot afford to host the 2023 Pacific Games and change the constitution at the same time. He has also attempted to postpone the election by several months.

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However, detractors claim that by hurrying the law through parliament, Sogavare is trying to "bulldoze" democracy.

The financial proposal, according to Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong, "reflects our longstanding and historical commitment to promoting democracy and democratic processes in the Solomon Islands."

Although the offer has not yet been accepted, Wong stated in an interview with national television station ABC that it was "up to Solomon Islands to decide if they would reply and how they desire to respond."

Although the sum provided by Australia was not made public, Jimmie Rogers, Sogavare's secretary, earlier told the Solomon Islands official radio that the election would cost more than US\$49 million.

A request for comment has been made to Sogavare's office.

Domestically contentious, Wong noted, "but that's ultimately an issue for their parliament to settle," the bill to postpone the election had its first reading on Tuesday.

She made reference to Australian backing for the most recent elections in Papua New Guinea in an attempt to dispel any notions that the financing was unique.

John Maneniaru, a member of parliament for the Solomon Islands, stated on Tuesday that he was "extremely dismayed" by Sogavare's choice to fast-track the bill while omitting his Bills and Legislation Committee.

For me, this is a very terrible time. Moreover, for our democracy," he added. The deliberate choice to destroy our democracy and parliament was made.

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