



MĀLŌ O SAMOA

OFISA O LE MINISITA

TA'ALOGA MA ALAGAOA MO LE FIAFIA O TAGATA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Hon. Minister of Sports and Recreation

Australian Government Welcoming Reception for:

Australian Women's and Australian First Nations Men's Rugby 7s Team

AHC Compound Avele - Thursday, 19 September 2024 @ 6.00pm

Rev. Siasia Salesulu

Honourable Ministers of Cabinet

And Members of Parliament

Honoured Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps

Australian First Nations Men's and Australian Women's 7s Teams and
Management

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Talofa lava and warmest greetings. Rev. Salesulu, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your uplifting message and prayers. Your words set a tone of unity and positivity for this special event. Thank you, and may you continue to be anointed and blessed in your ministry to the world.

This evening, it is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome the Australian First Nations Men's 7s Rugby team and the Australian Women's 7s team to our shores.

I have fond memories that I have shared with the Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Will Robinson on occasion about my time on Policing missions to Timor-Leste, and the time I've spent in Darwin and Alice Springs. I have also recently had the privilege to join the Australian High Commission for the launch of their Art Exhibition

featuring Torres Straight artists on display for the people of Samoa to enjoy.

Language, culture and our own connection to land and sea is important to our Samoan people. Tonight, we celebrate not only the remarkable achievements of these outstanding athletes but also the deep and meaningful connections between our peoples. Sport is more than just a game; it is a powerful bridge that connects communities, fosters understanding, and nurtures friendships across borders.

I acknowledge the efforts of the Australian Government to centre First Nations in your Foreign Policy and through your programs like PacificAus Sports and Team Up.

Our two nations share a strong bond, united through our love for rugby and a mutual commitment to supporting athletes from grassroots to high performance. This includes the PacificAus Sports support for Manusina 15s development pathways through Penina Pasifika, and pre-olympic support for the Manu 7s.

The presence of three Australian teams in Samoa this week to celebrate 100 years of Rugby is a testament to the strength of this partnership. I hope your participation and dedication inspires us all and reminds us of the true spirit of competition and collaboration.

You will no doubt be aware of the newly established Ministry of Sports and Recreation and the commitment by the Government of Samoa to fostering an environment where sports can thrive, and our athletes can achieve their full potential. One of our primary goals is to ensure that sports are accessible to all Samoans, regardless of their background. We are dedicated to developing programs that not only enhance performance but also instil values of teamwork, discipline, and resilience in our youth.

We are therefore deeply grateful for Australia's unwavering support in the realm of sports, which helps elevate not just the game but also the lives of countless individuals resonating with the goals of the

Ministry. It is through this spirit of camaraderie and shared passion that we continue to grow and succeed together. A spirit that was evident at the Manusina versus Australia A match on Monday, on and off the field.

As we move towards two Rugby World Cups hosted in Australia, Samoa looks forward to exploring opportunities to further strengthen our partnership and Rugby in Samoa, at all levels.

Thank you for being here, for your dedication, and for the powerful example you set for all of us. Let us celebrate the unity and friendship that sport brings into our lives.

Fa'afetai tele lava, and all the best on the competition this week. May your time in our beautiful Samoa be a memorable and a joyous trip for everyone.

Thank you.