

MEDIA RELEASE | NOVEMBER 2026

Wantok Musik releases *Na Ainamae ma Totoraha*: songs from Malaita, Solomon Islands, made the right way, decades after Deep Forest's *Sweet Lullaby*

Recorded on the ground in Malaita in March 2026, the album is led by the Elders: every voice named, everyone paid, every song 100% artist owned.

Lau cultural elder Natty Dolaiasi and Wantok Musik Foundation are releasing *Na Ainamae ma Totoraha (Songlines)*, a 22-track album and documentary of ancestral songs from Malaita, Solomon Islands, made on one principle - **the people who hold these songs own them, are named on them and are paid for them.**

This initiative is in stark contrast to the situation as reported by ABC News on 5 November, alleging the theft of a 1969 recording of Malatia woman Afunakwa singing a lullaby from her village of Baegu. The recording became the basis of Deep Forest's 1990s hit *Sweet Lullaby*, which sold millions of albums. Afunakwa's family say she was paid $2 for the song, titled *Rorogwela*, and never received royalties. She died in 1987. Deep Forest disputes responsibility for the permissions.

Na Ainamae ma Totoraha was recorded in Malaita Province, in the same region that gave the world *Rorogwela*, and was co-led by Lau cultural elder and artist Natty Dolaiasi. Including songs in the Baegu language sung by elders and contemporary artists carrying forward the legacy of ancestors such as Afunakwa, the album represents a living continuum of cultural knowledge and musical tradition. While the French duo Deep Forest failed to even recognise Afunakwa's name, this project was conceived, led and owned by the community itself. It reflects Wantok Musik's longstanding commitment to ethical cultural recording practices that prioritise cultural authority, informed consent and fair recognition.

"These songs belong to our grandparents and to the children who come after us. We recorded them our way, in our villages, so they stay with our people and are heard with our names on them" said Natty Dolaiasi, Lau cultural elder and co-producer.

How *Na Ainamae ma Totoraha (Songlines)* was made

1. **Led by the culture and the elders.** Led by Lau elder Natty Dolaiasi and 'Are'are cultural lead Charles Maimarosia and recorded in their own communities.
2. **Every voice named.** Every singer is credited by name, from elders to young performers.
3. **Everyone paid.** Performers and communities were paid for their time and contributions.
4. **100% artist owned.** Songs are registered to the artists, who keep 100% of the copyright.
5. **Sensitive songs protected.** Some culturally sensitive songs were recorded but, in line with cultural protocols, will not be made public.
6. **Kept safe and kept local.** Recordings are archived with PARADISEC, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Languages, under community-agreed cultural protocols, with local access being developed with the National Archives of the Solomon Islands.

“The right way of going about recording the wonderful and important cultural songs of our region is for the process to be led by elders, and for the rights to be owned and controlled by the songwriters, the elders and their community. Their story should be told respected and preserved and if appropriate, shared to the outside world’ said Dr David Bridie, Wantok Musik Artistic Director.

Songs from the lagoon and the mountains



Album cover: Na Ainamae ma Totoraha (Songlines)

The album gathers voices that are rarely recorded. Natty Dolaiasi's grandmother, Oku Lui, one of the last keepers of the old songs, sings a Bara Sili in Lau language from Adegege Island. High priest Matthew Touana sings Ainamae, the orphan stories he learned in the mountain villages. The Maekaniani bamboo group of Nariao'a Village plays kastom panpipes, and contemporary artists including Vicky Houopa and Kaumaakonga carry the traditions forward.

Album out Friday 13 November on Bandcamp**.**

The documentary

The companion documentary *Na Ainamae ma Totoraha*, filmed in Malaita in March 2026, has its official screening at Dreamcast Theatre, Honiara, on Wednesday 11 November. It will then be online at wantokmusik.org.

Standing with Afunakwa's family

Wantok Musik acknowledges Afunakwa, her family and the Baegu community, and supports the Afunakwa Foundation's call for recognition and fair payment.

Launch shows: SingSing Blong Wan Solwata

The album launches at SingSing Blong Wan Solwata, an Australia and Solomon Islands music showcase, after a week of rehearsals and school workshops. The Australian High Commissioner will open the Auki show.

Featuring: Dyagula, Charles Maimarosia, Vicky Houopa, Maekaaniani Cultural Group, Kaumaakonga, Natty D (Natty Dolaiasi), Beatrice Lewis, David Bridie, Ben Hakalitz, Russell Smith, Hillary Lui and more.

AUKI	HONIARA
FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER	**SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER**
2:30PM	**6:00PM**
Malaita Day, Auki Showgrounds	Album launch, Solomon Islands National Museum

Entry by donation.

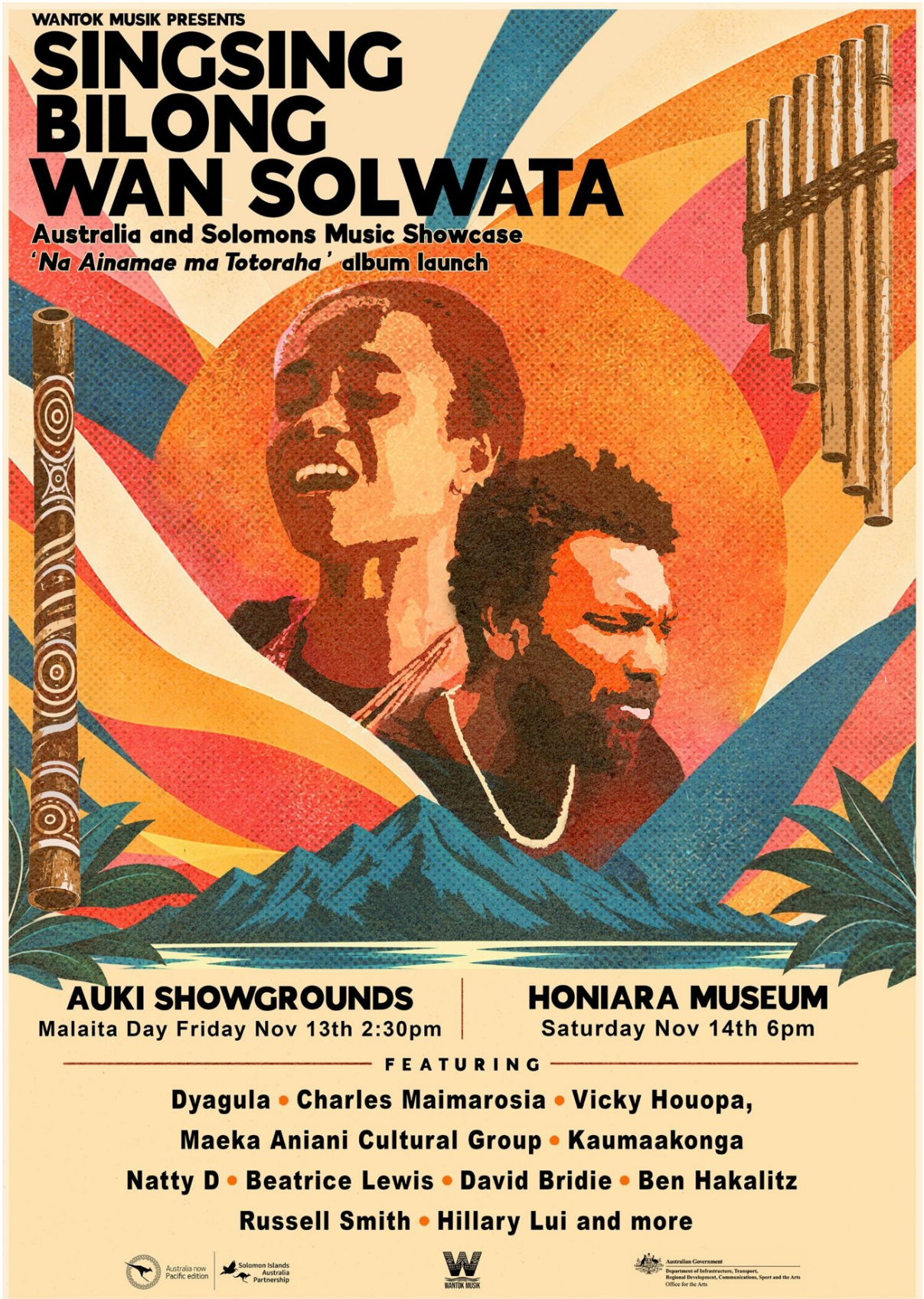
Media contact

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Interviews with Natty Dolaiasi, Charles Maimarosia, David Bridie and the artists, plus photos and video, are available on request.

About Wantok Musik Foundation

Wantok Musik Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit record label and cultural organisation that has worked with Pacific, Timor-Leste and First Nations Australian artists for more than 15 years [confirm], including the RAMSI peacekeeping tour (2005) and the Wan Solwara project (2023). It records, releases and archives music on the artists' own terms. Who controls and benefits from traditional songs is a pressing issue for First Nations Australians and Pacific communities alike.



SingSing Blong Wan Solwata is supported by Australia Now: Pacific Edition and the Solomon Islands Australia Partnership.
Na Ainamae ma Totoraha is supported by the Australian Government through the Office for the Arts.