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Inquiry into Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Island nations

House of Representatives

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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Foreword

As one of many Pacific Island nations, Australia is historically and indelibly linked to its neighbours in the region. Our shared history of endurance and mutual assistance during times of major international conflict, natural disaster, climate change and pandemic has forged strong links between Pacific Island neighbours which go beyond statehood and diplomacy. Our people-to-people links, forged over centuries with our Pacific Island family, is at the core of this deep understanding, and defence relationships play a significant role in creating and maintaining this unique connection.

Defence and security challenges faced in the Pacific are now more prevalent and complex than ever before. It behoves all members of the Pacific family to be aware of emerging issues, and to face them together in an organised, collaborative, and coordinated manner. As a regional medium-power, Australia bears significant responsibility for creating the environment and providing the means to achieve this. From fisheries management, protection and surveillance, to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, intelligence collection and sharing, climate change and the global pandemic, Australia's defence organisation stands ready to play its part in the Pacific Step-up. There is, however, more to be done.

As the committee heard throughout the conduct of the inquiry, there are several existing and proven defence initiatives and programs which contribute significantly to the Step-up. The committee also heard that there are ways to increase and enhance these initiatives, as well as new and innovative ways to forge, deepen and strengthen ties between members of the Pacific family. This is where the future of Australian defence relationships should be focussed.

While the conduct of this inquiry was impacted by COVID-19, the submissions received, and evidence heard at public hearings was of the highest quality and the

committee thanks all of those who contributed. This report and its recommendations reflect the committee's belief that Australia's defence relationships in the Pacific are extremely important and becoming increasingly so, and that additional efforts can and should be made to ensure the security of our region in the years to come.

Mr Andrew Wallace, MP
Chair
Defence Sub-Committee

Members of the Committee

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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	Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP	

Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP

Mr Ross Vasta MP

Mr Andrew Wallace MP

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The Hon Keith Pitt MP

The Hon Dr John McVeigh MP

Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos

Membership of the Sub-committee

Members of the Defence Sub-Committee

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Deputy Chair Ms Meryl Swanson MP (*ex officio*)

Members The Hon Kevin Andrews MP

Mr Nick Champion MP (*ex officio*) (to 01/12/2020)

Mr Vince Connelly MP

Senator the Hon David Fawcett (*ex officio*)

Mr Andrew Hastie MP (to 22/12/2020)

Mr Julian Hill MP

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Senator Sam McMahon

Senator Jim Molan AO, DSC

Senator Deborah O'Neill

Mr Gavin Pearce MP

Mr Dave Sharma MP

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP

Mr Ross Vasta MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary

Ms Julia Morris (from 16/11/2020)

Ms Lynley Ducker (from 28/01/2020)

Inquiry Secretary

Wing Commander Steven Ferguson (from 16/10/2020)

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Evans

Office Manager

Mrs Dorota Cooley

Administrative Officer

Ms Alexandra Grimes (from 07/09/2020)

Ms Renee Dennis (to 30/06/2020)

Terms of reference

On Wednesday, 4 December 2019, the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, asked the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) to inquire into and report on Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Island nations.

With respect to this inquiry the JSCFADT, in particular the Defence Subcommittee was asked to give particular regard to:

- Current activities and outcomes undertaken by Defence in the South West Pacific, including the relationship between Defence's longstanding Cooperation Program and its Step-up activities;
- How Australia's Defence Cooperation programs and Pacific Step-up activities correspond to the needs, requests and feedback from partner nations in the Pacific (including consultation with civil society, parliaments and executive governments);
- Opportunities for closer coordination and collaboration between Defence and other Government departments on Australian programs and activities across the South West Pacific;
- Opportunities for closer coordination and collaboration between other nations seeking to invest and engage in the South West Pacific, including planning and execution of joint activities and preparation for HADR; and
- Any related matters.

List of abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AMFA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
ASPI	Australian Strategic Policy Institute
COVID-19	Coronavirus
DCG	Defence Coordination Group
DCP	Defence Cooperation Program
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FRANZ	France, Australia, New Zealand
HADR	Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
JSCFADT	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
NT	Northern Territory
NZ	New Zealand
OTP	Office of the Pacific
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PITO	Pacific Islands Treaty Organisation

PMSP	Pacific Maritime Security Program
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinean Defence Force
TA	Timor Awakening
US	United States
VCA	Veterans Care Association Inc.

List of recommendations

2 Defence engagement in the Pacific

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence seek opportunities to continually improve the capacity and capabilities of the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), and to increase the inclusion of Pacific Islands' representation and leadership in DCP design.

3 Opportunities for closer internal coordination and collaboration

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, via the Office of the Pacific (OTP), continue to improve collaboration to effectively monitor, evaluate and respond to diplomatic, environmental and defence challenges in the Pacific region.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends the Government pursue further opportunities for collaboration with state government partners to support Australia's Pacific Step-up. This would broaden the scope of possibilities for various levels of government to cooperate, facilitate partnerships and share capabilities in support of the Pacific Step-up.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government pursue further opportunities to integrate Australian Defence Force cooperation with Australian Industry to provide capability solutions in support of the Pacific Step-up.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends the Government consider opportunities to enhance Australia's soft-power and people-to-people ties in the Pacific, including educational exchanges and supporting Australian non-government organisations' initiatives.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Government consider innovative and practical means of actively deepening its defence relationships with Pacific Island states and other powers in the region. This could include increased and enhanced integration of Australian, Pacific Island and other military forces on combined training and operations.

4 Opportunities for closer external coordination and collaboration**Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends the Government investigate further opportunities for defence cooperation in the Pacific region with likeminded nations, including New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Japan, France and the United Kingdom.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Government and Defence expand existing programs (including the Defence Cooperation Program and Pacific Maritime Security Program), considerate of the need to maintain Pacific Island states' sovereignty, with the aim of further deepening institutional and people-to-people links with Pacific partners.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that Government offer to assist with increased intelligence capacity and sharing of and with Pacific Island countries to support a broader range of security objectives, including maritime domain awareness and maritime security operations.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends the Department of Defence consider additional maritime surveillance initiatives in the Pacific region. This may include an increase in frequency and intensity of existing surveillance operations and the addition of new Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV).

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government pursue opportunities to strengthen Australia's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response in the Pacific to effectively build the capacities of regional militaries to respond to humanitarian crises in a manner which is considerate of the impacts on women and girls.

Introduction

1.1 On 4 December 2019, the Minister for Defence, Senator the Honourable Linda Reynolds CSC, requested the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) Defence Sub-Committee to inquire into and report on *Australia's Defence relationship with Pacific Island nations* in the following terms:

1. Current activities and outcomes undertaken by Defence in the South West Pacific, including the relationship between Defence's longstanding Cooperation Program and its Step-up activities;
2. How Australia's Defence Cooperation programs and Pacific Step up activities correspond to the needs, requests and feedback from partner nations in the Pacific (including consultation with civil society, parliaments and executive governments);
3. Opportunities for closer coordination and collaboration between Defence and other Government departments on Australian programs and activities across the South West Pacific;
4. Opportunities for closer coordination and collaboration between other nations seeking to invest and engage in the South West Pacific, including planning and execution of joint activities and preparation for HADR; and
5. Any related matters.

History of the Pacific in Defence Policy

1.2 Past Australian Defence White Papers and other Strategy documents trace the unique strategic importance of the Pacific Islands over time,

Australia's continuity of engagement in the region, and the importance of the Pacific to Australia's national security.

1.3 *The 1976 Defence White Paper*, noted:

...Australia's friendly relations with all governments in the region. Australia seeks to co-operate with and assist these countries in their development in conditions of stability and security...We intend to maintain and develop Australia's military capability to demonstrate its interest in the region.¹

1.4 *The Defence of Australia 1987* outlined Australia's defence relations with Pacific Island nations², including maritime security activities, noting:

The small size of the national economies and the limited defence forces in the South-West Pacific fundamentally affect the ability of these countries to protect their interests. In view of significant regional concerns over sovereignty protection and economic vulnerability, bilateral Australian defence co-operation has been mainly directed toward those areas...Defence activities in the South-West Pacific thus support and complement Australia's development assistance.³

1.5 Further it describes Australia's role and engagement in the South-West Pacific:

Australia is a major power in the South-West Pacific. We have the capability now to deploy significant forces there. The current substantial capacity of Australian forces to contribute to security in the South-West Pacific will be further enhanced by the Government's decision to increase our air and naval deployments to the region and to provide practical assistance in such fields as maritime surveillance and patrol and hydrography. In the event of a regional conflict, the forces we are developing for our own defence would have direct utility in the South-West Pacific.⁴

1.6 *Defending Australia: defence white paper 1994* noted the longevity and importance of defence relations with Pacific Island nations:

The countries of the South-West Pacific are strategically important to Australia. In the unlikely event that a potentially hostile power acquired undue influence over one or more of the island states, the effect could be detrimental to the region and to the security of Australia. Therefore, we will continue to cooperate with and assist

1 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper, November 1976*, p.8.

2 Department of Defence, *The defence of Australia 1987, White Paper*, March 1987, pp.16-19.

3 Department of Defence, *The defence of Australia 1987, White Paper*, March 1987, p.17.

4 Department of Defence, *The defence of Australia 1987, White Paper*, March 1987, p.6.

these potentially vulnerable countries in securing their protection. Our present defence activities with these countries reflect this commitment. We will continue to build on these relationships, and further our efforts to promote the prosperity and well-being of our Pacific Island neighbours ... In other South-West Pacific countries, we will give priority to developing the capabilities of these nations to assert and protect their sovereignty in peace, often cooperating with police forces where regular military forces do not exist.⁵

- 1.7 *The 2000 Defence White Paper* again committed to provide substantial support in the unlikely event that any country in the Southwest Pacific faced substantial external aggression.⁶ Significantly, regional maritime security and the Pacific Patrol Boat Program are at the core of our Defence Cooperation Program in the South Pacific.⁷
- 1.8 *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: force 2030*, reinforced the importance of Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Island nations, as well as the Pacific Patrol Boat Program.⁸
- 1.9 *The 2013 Defence White Paper* describes Australia playing a central role in the South Pacific, being a source of economic, diplomatic and, if necessary, military support.⁹ It outlined Australia's commitment to securing our 'immediate neighbourhood'.¹⁰
- 1.10 *The 2016 Defence White Paper* outlined the following 'Strategic Defence Objective' related to Pacific Island nations:

...The second Strategic Defence Objective is to support the security of maritime South East Asia and support the governments of Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and of Pacific Island Countries to build and strengthen their security...The Government will continue its commitment to strengthened regional security architectures that support transparency and cooperation. Australia will continue to seek to be the principal security partner for Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island Countries in the South Pacific.¹¹

5 Department of Defence, *Defending Australia: defence white paper 1994*, White Paper, November 1994, p.92.

6 Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: our future defence force*, White paper, December 2000, p.43

7 Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: our future defence force*, White paper, December 2000, p.44.

8 Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: force 2030*, 2009 Defence White Paper, May 2009, pp.43-44.

9 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, pp.15-16.

10 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, p.25.

11 Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, p.17.

- 1.11 *The Defence Strategic Update 2020* updates Defence strategic guidance in response to the relatively fast-changing geo-political environment in the Indo-Pacific region:

Military modernisation in the Indo-Pacific has accelerated faster than envisaged...Major power competition has intensified and the prospect of high-intensity conflict in the Indo-Pacific, while still unlikely, is less remote than in the past...Australia is concerned by the potential for actions, such as the establishment of military bases, which could undermine stability in the Indo-Pacific and our immediate region...The Indo-Pacific is at the centre of greater strategic competition, making the region more contested and apprehensive. These trends are continuing and will potentially sharpen as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic...The Government will also continue deepening our alliance with the United States and strengthening our regional engagement across the Indo-Pacific, including through the Pacific Step-up, and increase the Australian Defence Force's ability to respond to natural disasters.¹²

Conduct of the Inquiry

- 1.12 The Defence Sub-Committee announced the commencement of the inquiry by media release on 5 December 2019 and requested written submissions by 20 February 2020. Several extensions to the submission deadline were granted, principally to accommodate the disruption caused by the emerging COVID-19 crisis. Final submissions were received on 4 September 2020.
- 1.13 A total of 23 submissions were received from a range of government agencies, non-government organisations, academia, industry and private individuals. A full list of submissions received is included at Appendix A. Submissions are available on the inquiry website at:
www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/PacificIslandnations/Submissions

¹² Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, pp.3-4, 11.

- 1.14 The Sub-Committee also held three public hearings. Details are available at:

www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/PacificIslandnations/Public_Hearings

Defence engagement in the Pacific

- 2.1 This chapter addresses two of the Inquiry's terms of reference:
- Current activities by Defence in the South West Pacific, including the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) and the Pacific Step-up activities; and
 - How those activities respond to the needs, requests and feedback from partner nations in the Pacific.

Current Defence activities

- 2.2 Australia has had a near continuous defence presence in the Pacific since the 1970s. It is a multi-dimensional relationship comprising bilateral and multilateral arrangements, numerous security-related dialogues, senior leadership engagement, a broad attaché network, personnel exchanges, and joint participation in operations and training. The Committee heard that these institutional links are unique in their history and scope of integration and are often the strongest in the region.¹
- 2.3 Defence submitted significant detail on its activities throughout the region. Defence's long-standing relationships with the region have been built on three main lines of effort. These are the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP), humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).²

1 Lowy Institute, *Submission 21*, p.10.

2 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.2.

The Defence Cooperation Program

- 2.4 The Committee heard that the DCP strongly supports Australia's national interests and defence relationships within the Pacific. The DCP supports programs in the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Palau and Vanuatu.³
- 2.5 Several submissions identified the DCP as being one of Australia's most comprehensive and successful Pacific engagement mechanisms, and a key program which should continue to be funded and improved.
- 2.6 The Committee heard evidence from Joanne Wallis, a Professor of International Security at the University of Adelaide, about the centrality of the DCP to defence relations in the region:
- Australia's DCP is one of its most effective levers of influence in the region. This is because the DCP has been primarily directed at meeting what Pacific Island states identify as their needs in partnership with Australia, as opposed to what Australia has identified for them. This differentiates the DCP from the approach that largely characterised the Australian aid program until the mid-2000s...opportunities for military education and exchanges under the DCP have encouraged Australian and Pacific Islander military personnel to develop personal relations, on which Australia has been able to draw to influence Pacific Island military leaders in times of crisis.⁴
- 2.7 The Committee also heard that the DCP provides benefits additional to those strictly military. The DCP continues to support Australia's strategic interests in the Pacific by building strong people-to-people links and strengthening Australia's bilateral relationships.⁵
- 2.8 The High Commission of Tonga submission supports this assertion, highlighting the DCP as 'an essential component for high-level engagement' to raise dialogue pertaining to future goals and concerns in the region.⁶ In particular, efforts have been noted in improving recognition of women as an important component of the region's security space, and enabling capacity building and training programs to invest in human resources.
- 2.9 Professor Wallis gave evidence as to the core tenets of the DCP and consequently, its flexibility to address multiple security concerns:

3 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.3.

4 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.8.

5 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.3.

6 High Commission of Tonga, *Submission 18*, p.1.

The most important aspect of the Defence Cooperation Program is the Pacific Patrol Boat Program and its replacement the Pacific Maritime Security Program. As islands and archipelagos, Pacific Island states have extensive maritime territories. As they often have limited government capacity, they face difficulties in monitoring these territories. As a result, they are vulnerable to illegal and often unsustainable fishing, unregulated seabed mining and transnational crime.⁷

2.10 The Committee heard that the DCP is also of significant importance for Pacific Islands nations:

Pacific Island states appreciate the Pacific Maritime Security Program. It has helped them to protect their maritime resources and in turn to increase their fisheries revenue. It's also helped in relation to other security challenges, including search and rescue, medical evacuations, transporting ballot boxes during elections and, most significantly, in humanitarian and disaster response. Recipient states also appreciate the training that is provided to support the program. An important element is that the Pacific Maritime Security Program represents a partnership between Australia and Pacific Island states, with Australia playing a facilitating role, whilst Pacific Island states operate the boats. Pacific Island states are also committed to the Pacific Maritime Security Program, reflected by the relatively high number of sea days that Pacific Island states manage to achieve with their boats, often at significant human and financial cost.⁸

2.11 Other submissions also endorsed the DCP as being one of Australia's most comprehensive and successful Pacific engagement mechanisms. While the Committee heard that the DCP is not without its opportunities for improvement (addressed in Chapter 4) it was generally regarded in inquiry submissions as a key program which should continue to be increasingly funded and continually improved.⁹

7 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.2.

8 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.2.

9 Assoc Prof Joanna Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.3.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence seek opportunities to continually improve the capacity and capabilities of the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), and to increase the inclusion of Pacific Islands' representation and leadership in DCP design.

Pacific Maritime Security Program

2.12 The second pillar of practical defence engagement in the Pacific is the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP). The PMSP comprises three main components: the replacement of the Pacific Patrol Boats with new Guardian-class Patrol Boats, integrated region-wide aerial surveillance, and enhancements to regional coordination.¹⁰

2.13 The PMSP represents a commitment of approximately AUD \$2 billion over 30 years to increase regional maritime security for Pacific Island nations.¹¹ It is the cornerstone of Defence maritime engagement in the Pacific, assisting Pacific nations to protect maritime resources, and reduce the economic and social costs of illegal activities. The Committee heard that the PMSP provides a number of key benefits:

The Pacific Maritime Security Program serves Australia's strategic interests in several ways...It gives Australia a strategic presence in the region and helps us to be seen as a natural strategic partner of the recipient countries. It has helped Australia to build personal networks throughout the region via the maritime surveillance and technical advisers stationed in recipient states. It has effectively established an Australian controlled network of maritime surveillance in the Pacific Islands, which has enabled Australia to gain situational awareness throughout the maritime region.¹²

2.14 The PMSP builds on the success of the Pacific Patrol Boat Program, which gifted 22 steel patrol boats to 12 Pacific Island nations between 1987 and 1997. Together, these programs and the DCP will see an uninterrupted 60-year commitment of deeper-level engagement in the Pacific. The 12 Pacific Islands nations which participated in the previous Patrol Boat Program

10 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.7.

11 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

12 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.2.

- will receive new replacement Guardian-class Patrol Boats over the course of 2018-2023. In addition, Timor-Leste will also receive two vessels.¹³
- 2.15 The Department of Defence submission noted that Australian-gifted patrol vessels are a critical capability which enable Pacific Island countries to participate in Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) led maritime surveillance and patrol operations.¹⁴
- 2.16 Under the PMSP, Defence has also engaged civilian aircraft operators to provide aerial surveillance services to 15 PIF countries. This component of the PMSP supports targeted, intelligence-driven maritime patrols and enhances the capacity of Pacific Island nations to locate and prevent illegal activity occurring within their exclusive economic zones and adjacent high seas.¹⁵
- 2.17 The Committee heard that the PMSP aims to increase regional coordination efforts, particularly the improved use and sharing of information available through existing regional coordination centres and intelligence gathered from surveillance patrols and other sources. This effort is focused on increasing the capacity of participating countries to effectively collect, analyse, manage and share maritime security information across national agencies. It also aims to engage with neighbouring countries and regional coordination centres such as the Pacific Islands FFA in Honiara and the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre in Samoa.¹⁶

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief

- 2.18 Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) is a key component of Australia's Pacific Step-up. Pacific Island states have faced and survived natural disasters and humanitarian crises for centuries and are resilient, but they have also relied on Australia and New Zealand as the first-responders to Pacific emergencies. It is therefore incumbent upon Australia to continually improve its HADR capabilities and commitment to its Pacific partners as part of the Pacific Step-up.
- 2.19 In addition to increased emphasis on coordinated HADR operations as part of the Step-up, Australia is also investing in HADR infrastructure:
- Defence is redeveloping Fiji's Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp, which will produce a state-of-the-art peacekeeping operations facility and HADR capability for the Pacific

13 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

14 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

15 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

16 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

region. It will also build stronger interoperability between the ADF and Republic of Fiji Military Forces.¹⁷

- 2.20 Australian HADR support to the Pacific, its criticality to the future of the Pacific Step-up, and associated recommendations are expanded upon in Chapter four.
- 2.21 Australia maintains defence relationships with all Pacific nations that retain standing militaries. The DCP, the Pacific Patrol Boat Scheme, and support to the policing of illegal fishing and transnational crime links Australia's defence and security agencies with every Pacific nation.¹⁸ Of the 14 independent Island members of the Pacific Islands Forum, only four have any indigenous defence capacity. PNG, Fiji and Tonga have formal military establishments. Vanuatu's police force maintains a paramilitary unit which has some security functions.¹⁹
- 2.22 The Pacific Step-up represents a strong commitment across multiple Australian Government agencies and is coordinated through the Office of the Pacific (OTP) in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Defence's efforts are thus synchronised with whole-of-government efforts and are delivered under the guidance of, and in cooperation with, the OTP.
- 2.23 Defence's contribution to Pacific Step-up includes:
- investing in significant infrastructure projects;
 - increasing the ADF's regional presence; and
 - deepening people to people links.

The needs, requests and feedback of Pacific Island states

- 2.24 The Pacific Islands Forum is the region's premier political and economic policy organisation. Founded in 1971, it comprises 18 members: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.²⁰
- 2.25 The needs and vision of the Pacific Island nations have been articulated in regional forums and agreements (including Australian participation). This includes the Boe Declaration on Regional Security.

17 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.7.

18 Lowy Institute, *Submission 21*, p.1.

19 Professor Richard Herr OAM, *Submission 20*, p.2.

20 [The Pacific Islands Forum website](#), accessed 15 Feb 21.

The Boe Declaration

- 2.26 On the 5th of September 2018 in Nauru, the Pacific Islands Forum, including Australia, adopted the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. The Boe Declaration recognises an expanded concept of security, including human, cyber and environmental security, and frames regional responses to emerging security issues.²¹
- 2.27 The Boe Declaration represents the contemporary and collective will of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) states and is as an important input to Defence and Government policy. The Boe Declaration emphasises, in part, the importance of the following:²²
- the recognition of climate change as the region's 'single greatest threat'
 - the 'sovereign right of every Member to conduct its national affairs free of external interference and coercion'
 - the rules-based global order
 - that 'security' is a broad issue which includes climate change, cybersecurity, transnational crime, humanitarian relief and environmental/resource security
- 2.28 These terms of the Boe Declaration suggest that defence engagement initiatives will continue to benefit from being considerate of PIF states' emphasis on maintaining sovereignty and control of their own destinies. As such, Defence policy and activity in the region should continue to be formulated and communicated so as to convey Australia's interests as being based on equal-footed partnership with Pacific Island nations and to avoid any misperception of Australian dominance, paternalism or neo-colonialism in the region.
- 2.29 This approach is echoed by the New Zealand Minister for Defence who submits that 'Partnership and people-to-people ties have long been the hallmark of the New Zealand Defence approach'.²³ The New Zealand submission states that 'Core to our concept of partnership is the assurance that our engagement will be sustainable, focused on Pacific priorities, and underpinned by respect for Pacific countries' sovereignty.'²⁴
- 2.30 The Committee heard that New Zealand's Advancing Pacific Partnerships 2019 strategy document emphasises people-to-people links and respect for Pacific Island states' sovereignty as being at the core of the New Zealand approach. The document itself demonstrates this commitment by utilising

21 [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Boe Declaration of regional Security](#), accessed 15 Feb 21.

22 [The Boe Declaration, 2018](#), accessed 15 Feb 21.

23 Government of New Zealand, Submission 16, p.2.

24 Government of New Zealand, *Submission 16*, p.6.

Pacific Islands' native languages to describe components of the policy, for example 'Vaka Tahī' (One Boat), Maori proverb 'He tangata, he tangata, he tangata' (the people, the people, the people) and 'Talanao' (Fijian process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue).²⁵ The use of native languages and references to Pacific cultural ideals in the New Zealand Government's policy documents represents a symbolic yet powerful commitment to partnership and respect for sovereignty.

2.31 In addressing these aspects the Committee heard that the Department of Defence:

...has established a new, dedicated ADF Pacific Support Team. The Pacific Support Team is engaging with Pacific partners to understand their needs and deliver tailored packages that seek to strengthen capacity, resilience and interoperability in areas such as engineering, medical services, communications, logistics, maritime and planning. To ensure that the Pacific Support Team remains responsive and relevant to the needs of the Pacific, it will continue to evolve as it carries out activities with partner nations.

Defence continues to evolve its understanding of security cooperation within the Pacific, embracing a wider scope for security cooperation in line with the priorities of our Pacific partners and the intent of the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Defence listens to the totality of our Pacific partners' security concerns to cooperate in non-traditional areas of security and respond to these requests in close coordination with Australian whole-of-government.²⁶

2.32 In addition to ongoing bilateral engagement, Defence contributes to Australia's participation in the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). The annual PIF leaders meeting is an opportunity to work with our Pacific partners on practical solutions that deliver on the region's priorities.²⁷

2.33 Australia also participates on an annual basis in numerous security-related international and regional meetings at Defence Chief, Ministerial and Prime-ministerial levels including the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, Shangri-La Dialogue, Pacific Chiefs of Defence, and Joint Heads of Pacific Security.²⁸ These engagements reiterate Australian and Australian Defence Force support for challenges faced by our Pacific

25 Government of New Zealand, *Submission 16*, p.6.

26 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.9.

27 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.10.

28 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.12.

partners and identify how best to collaborate and coordinate our efforts with other nations.

- 2.34 The DCP, PMSP, other maritime assistance and HADR have involved significant coordination with Pacific Island states and other partners in the region, particularly under the France, Australia, New Zealand (FRANZ) Agreement and the Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (DCG).²⁹ Given the established history between FRANZ and the DCG with numerous Pacific Island nations, expansion of these organisations to include formal Pacific Islander defence and/or Government representation would further entrench important people-to-people and cultural ties which are critical aspects of Pacific Island states' approach to diplomacy and international relations.

Committee Comment

- 2.35 The Committee acknowledges the significant depth and breadth of the Australian Government and the Department of Defence's ongoing bilateral and multilateral relationships, numerous security-related dialogues, senior leadership engagements, attaché networks, personnel exchanges, and joint participation in operations and training in the Pacific.
- 2.36 The Committee also recognises the significant positive impacts that the Defence Cooperation Program, the Pacific Maritime Security Program and ongoing Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief efforts have had and continue to have. It also recognises that enhancement and expansion of these existing programs would likely make very significant positive contributions to the Pacific Step-up.
- 2.37 The Committee understands PIF members' concerns regarding climate change, the rules-based global order, security and Pacific states' sovereign right to conduct their national affairs free of external interference and coercion. The Pacific Step-up should continue to be very sensitive to these priorities moving forward.

29 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.9.

Opportunities for closer internal coordination and collaboration

- 3.1 Pacific Island states are facing an increasing number of potentially existential challenges, including domestic security instability, climate change and geopolitical rivalries.¹
- 3.2 This warrants the need for Defence to investigate opportunities for closer collaboration and coordination with Australian Government departments and non-governmental organisations to meet these emerging challenges. This chapter will consider such opportunities as submitted to the Committee.

Defence and the Office of the Pacific

- 3.3 Defence's partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Office of the Pacific (OTP) is noted as being at the forefront of Australia's strategic leadership in the Pacific.² The Committee heard that the Department of Defence acknowledges the success of its long history of collaboration with DFAT in the Pacific, particularly in the humanitarian assistance and disaster response space, as an area that has called for the 'full spectrum of Defence skills and capabilities'.³
- 3.4 Defence elaborates on the utility of its partnership with DFAT as it relates to disaster response:

The increasing use of Defence assets in response to disasters in the Pacific has seen the relationship with DFAT strengthen over recent years. In the Pacific, DFAT and Defence have successfully

1 Professor John Blaxland, *Submission 1*, p.1.

2 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.12.

3 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.10.

coordinated in response to a range of crises, including Tropical Cyclones Winston, Pam and Gita; volcanic activity in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Vanuatu; the 2018 earthquake in PNG; and the measles crisis in Samoa.⁴

- 3.5 Similarly, the Committee heard that collaborating with DFAT in the Pacific has resulted in a strengthening of Defence's ability to holistically secure the region's interests. In particular:

Under the strategic leadership of the OTP, we [Defence] have committed to an ambitious agenda to build a region that is strategically secure, economically stable and where states are politically sovereign. With OTP guidance, our approach continues to focus on delivering support that enhances whole-of-government coordination and consistent with the priorities of Pacific countries.⁵

- 3.6 The Department of Defence also recognises the necessity of future collaboration with the OTP:

Over the coming decades we will increase our investment in the region. We will work with the OTP and, learning from our experiences, continue to evolve our approach to security-related engagement in the region.⁶

- 3.7 Further, Defence noted that present work with DFAT pertaining to identifying complementarities between the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP) and DFAT's investment in sustainable fisheries in the Pacific will be an important agenda to take forward to protect Pacific Island maritime interests.⁷

- 3.8 It is important that Defence continues to work collaboratively and cooperatively with DFAT, whilst simultaneously enhancing opportunities for further Pacific engagement to assist Pacific states in facing existing regional challenges.

4 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.10.

5 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.12.

6 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.12.

7 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.11.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, via the Office of the Pacific (OTP), continue to improve collaboration to effectively monitor, evaluate and respond to diplomatic, environmental and defence challenges in the Pacific region.

Whole-of-Government synchronisation

3.9 The Committee heard that Defence's collaboration with the OTP is important; however, it is but one piece of a much larger picture of crucial whole-of-government cooperation. The multifaceted needs and challenges present in the Pacific region require Defence to collaborate with other relevant Government departments and agencies to best protect Australia and the Pacific's long-term interests.⁸

3.10 Defence has a longstanding history of working closely with inter-agency partners to deliver the Australian Government's approach to regional security in the Pacific.⁹ Mr Hugh Jeffery, First Assistant Secretary of the International Policy Division at the Department of Defence, gave evidence as to the importance of Defence coordinating efforts with relevant Australian Government agencies. Mr Jeffery noted that Defence was 'very focused' on contributing to and enhancing the whole-of-government efforts in support of the Pacific Step-up.¹⁰ Elaborating further, Mr Jeffery highlighted:

The concerns and development needs of our Pacific partners cannot be addressed by any one department in the Australian government; it has to be a whole-of-government effort if we are to work with our partners to improve and strengthen the region's security and prosperity. We are very focused on making sure that everything that we do is aligned through the whole-of-government effort and also is reflective of the security, economic and social needs of our Pacific partners, as they see them.¹¹

3.11 Defence contributes to Australia's whole-of-government efforts to ensure that the Boe Declaration on Regional Security in the Pacific effectively

8 Mr Benjamin Cronshaw, *Submission 4*, p.7; Professor John Blaxland, *Submission 1*, p.1.

9 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.9.

10 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.19.

11 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.19.

guides the region in responding to emerging security threats. This includes expanding the concept of regional security, promoting the rules-based order and advocating freedom from external interference and coercion.¹²

- 3.12 Defence notes that cooperation in the Pacific maritime security and fisheries domain reflects key synergies across Defence, DFAT, the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AMFA).¹³ This collaboration in particular has presented new opportunities for the Australian Government to deepen existing inter-agency cooperation in support of the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP).¹⁴
- 3.13 The PMSP aims to support maritime security in the Pacific through measures including integrated aerial surveillance, upgraded patrol boats, and enhancements to regional cooperation. Opportunities for cross-agency collaboration exist within the PMSP, including diversification efforts to improve maritime domain awareness, reduce criminal activity at sea, improve policing efforts and manage the movement of irregular people in the region.¹⁵
- 3.14 Notwithstanding Defence's existing efforts to support cross-agency collaboration, there is recognition that more can be done to utilise opportunities for further government cooperation. In particular, the Northern Territory (NT) Government submission makes a case for pursuing further collaboration between Defence and federal government agencies with state government partners in support of the Pacific Step-up.¹⁶
- 3.15 The NT Government noted that collaborative work between state governments and with Pacific states to date highlight avenues for broadening the scope of government synchronisation. In particular, the NT Government highlighted previous work with the Queensland Government to invest in strengthening maritime support capabilities in the Pacific. It is argued that this not only reflects the ability of state government collaboration to generate positive security outcomes for the Pacific, but was also a vehicle to assist Australia's broader soft diplomacy efforts in the region.

12 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.10.

13 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.11.

14 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.11.

15 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.11.

16 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 14*, p.1.

[The NT] Government is keen to continue working with Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrade and north Australian states to support the Defence Cooperation Program and Pacific Step-up Policy, and I look forward to this collaborative approach strengthening in 2020.¹⁷

- 3.16 Accordingly, the NT Government encourages Defence to broaden the scope of possibilities for various levels of government to cooperate to ‘facilitate partnerships and the sharing of capabilities’ to improve the Australian Government’s overall approach in the region.¹⁸
- 3.17 The success of Defence in the Pacific is built-on cooperation with the wider whole-of-government effort. It is critical that Defence continue to explore further opportunities to deepen internal collaboration and coordination to effectively respond and deliver with real security and capability outcomes for Pacific partners.
- 3.18 To assist this approach, Defence should also explore opportunities for further cooperation with industry partners to ensure Australia’s defence efforts in the Pacific are agile and innovative.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends the Government pursue further opportunities for collaboration with state government partners to support Australia’s Pacific Step-up. This would broaden the scope of possibilities for various levels of government to cooperate, facilitate partnerships and share capabilities in support of the Pacific Step-up.

Defence and Industry

- 3.19 Looking beyond cooperation with Government bodies, it is also important that Defence leverage and improve existing successful partnerships with industry bodies to bolster Australia’s defence relationship with the Pacific.
- 3.20 The Northrop Grumman Australia submission reinforces the criticality of Defence-Industry partnerships, as many of the challenges faced by Pacific states can be addressed through promoting better integration between Government and Industry, particularly to promote the design and

17 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 14*, p.1.

18 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 14*, p.2.

execution of innovative defence solutions.¹⁹ Northrop Grumman Australia contend that:

Industry plays a key role in the design, production and sustainment of Australian Defence Force (ADF) assets that support Defence's operations and cooperative activities with Pacific Island Countries (PICs).²⁰

3.21 Northrop Grumman Australia goes on to suggest that Defence should examine further opportunities for collaboration with Industry:

Industry can provide the ADF with the capacity to augment sustainment teams deployed on operations and provide insights into innovative capability solutions to support Australia's regional priorities...Australian industry can also provide opportunities to integrate local Pacific Island industry in support of ADF operations, generating both capability and economic outcomes for PICs...[this] will produce capability and economic outcomes for PICs through exposure to best-practice processes and the development of local industry capability, in addition to the economic benefits associated with the employment opportunities that these partnerships could generate.²¹

3.22 Complementing this, the Committee also heard that there also exist further opportunities for Industry to assist Defence's humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR) responses in the Pacific.²² PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia concur with the suggestions of Northrop Grumman Australia, noting that Industry can assist Defence capability by providing 'immediate turn-key solutions' to support Australia's relationships with Pacific Island countries.²³ For example, PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia suggest:

Private sector industry could be useful to provide an additional or surge capability for aerial surveillance in support of key annual and ad hoc activities through the PMSP strategy.²⁴

3.23 In addition to seeking new opportunities for improved collaboration and coordination with Industry bodies, Defence could leverage existing opportunities with non-government organisations, including academia, to deliver increased defence outcomes in the Pacific.

19 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.4.

20 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.11.

21 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.11.

22 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.12.

23 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.6.

24 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.6.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government pursue further opportunities to integrate Australian Defence Force cooperation with Australian Industry to provide capability solutions in support of the Pacific Step-up.

Defence and Non-Government Organisations, including Academia

3.24 The Australian Government and Defence maintain numerous working relationships with a range of non-government organisations to support objectives in the Pacific. Two specific groups that actively support Defence's role in the Pacific are academic bodies and the Australian Veteran Community.

Academia

3.25 The Committee heard evidence from Professor Joanne Wallis that reinforced the importance of people-to-people links cultivated through defence education and exchange ties between Australia and the Pacific.²⁵

3.26 Professor Wallis emphasised the potential for the Australian Government, including Defence, to promote study opportunities for Pacific Islanders in Australia.²⁶ Professor Wallis contends that there is a lack of incentive for Pacific Islander postgraduate students to study in Australia, resulting in many completing further study in other countries including China:

It's somewhat disappointing to me now that, when I'm encountering young Pacific thinkers whom I invite to events here in Australia or who approach me to do their PhD or further study, they have done their master's degree in China. I just think it's a wasted opportunity.²⁷

3.27 Professor Wallis encourages the Australian Government to consider incentivising education exchange programs to develop stronger bilateral relationships with Pacific neighbours. Specifically:

25 Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.5.

26 Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.5.

27 Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.5.

There are some of the best and brightest in the region and they're studying to speak publicly and inform strategic thinking in the region, and their education has been shaped by a country that might have interests different to our own.²⁸

- 3.28 Professor Wallis' submission suggests that opportunities exist for Defence to increase soft-power ties and relationships with Australia's Pacific Island neighbours via enhanced education and exchange programs. Such an approach would facilitate knowledge sharing and trust building between Australia and the Pacific, boosting Australia's presence in the region and reinforcing its role as a vital Pacific security partner.²⁹

Veteran's groups

- 3.29 In addition to Australia's academic community, soft-power diplomacy and people-to-people relationships have been strengthened by the participation of Australia's veteran community in supporting Pacific Island development and maintaining defence partnerships.
- 3.30 The Veterans Care Association Inc. (VCA), is an Australian ex-service registered charity organisation which aims to 'reduce the instance of veteran suicide and improve the wellbeing of veterans and their families' The VCA submitted that the strong defence relationships have been formed and maintained between former Australian and Timor-Leste defence personnel through its outreach programs.³⁰
- 3.31 Specifically, VCA's flagship program, Timor Awakening (TA), is a program designed to immerse Australian veterans in Timor-Leste and deliver health education, mentoring and community development. According to VCA, the TA program focuses on utilising and promoting local industry in Timor-Leste, and across three programs per year contributes approximately \$200,000 to local economies.³¹
- 3.32 Australian Veterans, through the TA program, have created strong people-to-people relations within Timor-Leste. This demonstrates the ability of non-government organisations to promote defence relationships beyond governmental levels:

Australian Veterans, through the TA program, have forged a powerful bridge of people to people relations with Timor-Leste. Every President and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste's history has welcomed one or more of the

28 Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.5.

29 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.6.

30 Veterans Care Association Inc., *Submission 13*, p.3.

31 Veterans Care Association Inc., *Submission 13*, p.2.

TA groups in both formal and informal receptions...These occasions have been universally embraced and applauded by Timor-Leste senior leadership. The program has received widespread media coverage in Timor-Leste through every media median and is one of the most widely recognisable international programs in the country. Key to every program are regular community engagements both formal and informal, at village, district and national level.³²

- 3.33 Evidently, opportunities exist for Defence to support non-government organisations' activities as a means of boosting bilateral trust, respect and friendship in the Pacific.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends the Government consider opportunities to enhance Australia's soft-power and people-to-people ties in the Pacific, including educational exchanges and supporting Australian non-government organisations' initiatives.

Opportunities for closer coordination and collaboration

- 3.34 The current regional security architecture could be enhanced by additional focus on existing arrangements, but also by the establishment of new initiatives which may be leveraged so as to benefit Pacific Island nations and support their self-governance and sovereignty while continuing to deepen defence ties with Australia. The Committee heard that one possible means of increased engagement includes the raising of a Pacific Islands Regiment within the ADF.

Pacific Islands Regiment

- 3.35 Mr Chris Gardiner, CEO of the Institute for Regional Security, proposes the establishment of a Pacific Islands Regiment within the Australian Army:

The creation of such a regiment would...be part of geo-political efforts to build stronger relations between the islands communities from which members of the regiment would be drawn and Australia...residency and eventual citizenship [could] be offered to those serving or having served in the Regiment and their family members. One of the aims of Australia's geo-

32 Veterans Care Association Inc., *Submission 13*, p.2.

political strategy should be the political and social integration of the Pacific community as intimated above, and having growing ex-patriot islander communities in Australia would contribute to such a strategy.³³

- 3.36 The Committee also heard that The World Citizens Association (Australia) supports the establishment of a Pacific Islands Regiment as a means to deepen Defence ties in the region:

...A land-based security force, perhaps a Pacific Islands Regiment, to carryout peacekeeping duties both within and outside the region, and if necessary to intervene in 'extra-constitutional crises' in the region. Interventions by such a force would carry much greater legitimacy than a similar intervention by (say) Australian or New Zealand forces, which are always subject to charges of paternalism or neo-colonialism. It could also provide a significant source of employment for some of the smaller islands.³⁴

- 3.37 The Committee heard that a Pacific Islands Regiment, using equipment, training and facilities supplied by Australia and New Zealand, could undertake peacekeeping missions for the UN and could also be deployed to lead security and stabilisation operations within the island states at the behest of the PIF.³⁵ The PIR concept already enjoys support from some Pacific states including Fiji.³⁶
- 3.38 The Committee understands that establishing any military body would have associated complexities including (but not limited) to consideration of status of forces agreements, pay and conditions, and veterans affairs.

33 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

34 World Citizens Association, *Submission 8*, p.5.

35 World Citizens Association, *Submission 8*, p.6.

36 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/defence/fiji-seeks-pacific-regiment-in-australian-army/news-story/bd425f643a0e5bd3247f06bafccf4e27> accessed 15 Feb 21.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Government consider innovative and practical means of actively deepening its defence relationships with Pacific Island states and other powers in the region. This could include increased and enhanced integration of Australian, Pacific Island and other military forces on combined training and operations.

Committee Comment

- 3.39 The Committee acknowledges the efforts by the Department of Defence and relevant Australian Government agencies to collaborate and coordinate Australia's approach to the Pacific Step-up. A number of witnesses to the inquiry, and submissions received, highlighted the ongoing work of Defence to coordinate across various sectors and portfolios to achieve positive outcomes, including with Industry partners.
- 3.40 Nonetheless, the Committee encourages Defence to consider further opportunities to strengthen collaboration and coordination in the Pacific. As highlighted earlier, initiatives range from greater consultation with defence industry to utilise collective industry expertise, to exploring new avenues to foster people-to-people links and soft-power ties through academic cooperation.
- 3.41 Additional efforts in this space would assist Australia in maintaining and enhancing positive defence relationships with Pacific partners.

Opportunities for closer external coordination and collaboration

4.1 This chapter considers evidence regarding opportunities for closer external coordination and collaboration between Defence, Australia's Pacific Island partners and other likeminded friends. In particular, the following themes will be examined:

- Integration with likeminded friends and allies;
- Strengthening security compacts;
- Intelligence fusion and sharing; and
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) responses.

Integration with likeminded allies and partners

4.2 The Department of Defence gave evidence that cooperation and coordination with bilateral partners and allies forms a core component of the Pacific strategy:

Defence enjoys strong people-to-people links with our Pacific partners that have been created through training and exercising together during the conduct of the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP)... As part of the Pacific Step-up, Defence continues to look for additional opportunities to strengthen our people-to-people ties, to foster deep and personal relationships with Pacific leaders, present and emerging, and to enhance cultural linkages.¹

4.3 Defence's work in integrating strategic defence planning, coordination and cooperation is reinforced by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute,

¹ Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.8.

who note Australia has an extensive history of working with other countries, including New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu, on defence programs in the Pacific, including peacekeeping missions.²

4.4 The Committee heard that Defence has commenced several future-focused initiatives under the Pacific Step-up. These include:

- Redevelopment of the Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Camp, Fiji;
- Redevelopment of Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea;
- New Pacific Guardian-class Patrol Boats;
- The Joint Heads of Pacific Security event (Inaugural event held in Brisbane 8-10 October 2019);
- Expansion of ADF sporting engagement with Pacific Island nations;
- Reinforcement of alumni security networks, to maintain personal connections and deepen relationships; and
- Expansion of health and medical diagnostic training.

4.5 These initiatives are in line with Australia's 2020 *Defence Strategic Update*, 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* and the 2016 *Defence White Paper* which cite the Pacific Step-up is one of Australia's highest foreign policy priorities and emphasise that further opportunities should be pursued.³

4.6 The Government of Japan also recognises Australia's presence and cooperation with partners in the region as important for promoting the shared vision of a free, open Indo-Pacific. It notes that Australia and Japan's longstanding bilateral friendship and cooperation will become particularly important as opportunities arise as Japan's regional defence posture increases.⁴

4.7 The Committee heard of Defence's collaboration with likeminded partners in the region via a respectful, diplomatic approach:

When we engage with our partners in the Pacific, we engage with them as they see themselves, which is not as small island countries but as large ocean states ... We very much try to ensure that our engagement with our Pacific partners is on the basis of understanding that and that it's not a donor-recipient relationship; it's a relationship between regional partners.⁵

2 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 17*, p.2.

3 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.2.

4 Government of Japan, *Submission 11*, p.2.

5 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.19.

4.8 As key ally of Australia, New Zealand (NZ) recognises the importance of working with likeminded partners to enhance bilateral relationships and security architectures to positively contribute to regional security.⁶ The NZ Government highlighted that:

Working with likeminded partners is critical to enhancing Pacific security, stability, and resilience. From different national vantage points, likeminded partners share our concern about intensifying complex disrupters and competition⁷...In the context of an increasingly complex strategic environment in the Pacific, enhancing defence relationships and resilience, and active engagement in support of regional security architecture will increase in importance.⁸

4.9 In recognising the importance of collaborating with likeminded partners, the NZ Government underlines the need for regional players including Australia to work together:

Alongside our work with Pacific partners, prioritising cooperation with likeminded partners is fundamental to the Advancing Pacific Partnerships approach. We can achieve more together than any of us could on our own. We must work in concert, bolstering our coordination efforts, to provide good partner options to Pacific countries, maximise contributions to regional security, and encourage transparency from all partners engaged in the region.⁹

4.10 Ms Leanne Smith, Director at the Whitlam Institute, Western Sydney University also gave evidence about the importance of Australia developing long-term, meaningful and multi-faceted partnerships:

We should work to deepen relationships beyond the capitals. Again, this goes to cultural, sporting, church and economic relationships that really could add a lot of weight to existing bilateral relations. Under the same area, the recommendation was to improve government, private sector and NGO partnerships...although there are some good relationships in these spaces with Australian counterparts, sometimes they're perceived as being extractive relationships or, certainly, unequal relationships. And people want more respect for local capacity and expertise.¹⁰

6 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.9.

7 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.11.

8 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.16.

9 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.9.

10 Ms Leanne Smith, Western Sydney University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.12.

- 4.11 The Australian Strategic Policy Institute further suggests considering whether scope exists for more strategic and comprehensive cooperation in the Pacific to support United Nations peacekeeping missions.¹¹ These missions are emphasised as a vehicle for meeting the needs and objectives of the Pacific countries themselves.
- 4.12 The Committee heard that Defence also recognises the need to investigate further opportunities by way of HADR:
- Defence is working with our Pacific partners and other countries – such as France, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States – to identify opportunities for collaboration on security-related engagement and approaches to HADR in the region.¹²
- 4.13 Defence is encouraged to continue to pursue new opportunities to collaborate and coordinate strategic initiatives with likeminded nations. This will benefit the region's peace, security and stability, but could also facilitate an expansion of bilateral and multilateral security compacts moving forward.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends the Government investigate further opportunities for defence cooperation in the Pacific region with likeminded nations, including New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Japan, France and the United Kingdom.

Strengthening security compacts

- 4.14 The Committee heard there exists a general understanding within Defence and Australian Government agencies that the Pacific region's security and economic interests are best addressed collectively rather than individually or through a collection of bilateral engagements.¹³ The Committee understands that the majority of Defence's work is focused on building regional response capability, particularly through collaboration with Pacific partners via the Defence Cooperation Program and the Pacific Maritime Security Program (successor to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program):
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11 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 17*, p.5.

12 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.12.

13 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.20.

The Pacific...is our home, so it is understandable that the Australian agencies of state are deeply invested in engaging and working closely with our Pacific partners. That's reflected in the nature of Defence programs in the regions.¹⁴

- 4.15 The Committee heard that Defence's collaborative approach in the Pacific emphasises broadening and deepening security compacts to ensure all Pacific partners have necessary strategic, maritime surveillance and intelligence capabilities:

For us, it's about deepening the region's ability as a whole to respond to what they see as critical economic and security requirements. They are the areas that we want to grow in the future.¹⁵

- 4.16 Defence actively engages various security programs and compacts to support Pacific strategic cooperation and collaboration, while acknowledging the need to view each country's security requirements on a case-by-case basis to tailor Defence responses appropriately:

Defence has had longstanding engagement with our Pacific partners. All of that is underpinned by relationship-building that's taken place over decades...In terms of capability, each country has a different requirement. Some countries have military and some countries just have police forces. So we need to tailor those requirements individually.¹⁶

- 4.17 Other submissions raised the need for further efforts by Defence to bolster security compacts with the Pacific, specifically given evolving regional insecurities. In particular, Professor John Blaxland explicitly emphasised a need for more expansive compact arrangements:

It's about being generous. It's about being magnanimous in our approach to our neighbours, but also applying a degree of realpolitik to the equation. This is about responding to real changes. People who decry the grand compact proposal are offering no solutions to the major challenges...relating to great-power contestation, looming environmental catastrophe and the spectrum of governance challenges that Australia has been trying to respond to through the Pacific Step-up and other initiatives, particularly the Defence Cooperation Program and the Pacific Patrol Boat Program (presently Pacific Maritime Security

14 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.20.

15 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.20.

16 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.19.

Program). My point is that they are not enough. We are being outplayed and outgunned.¹⁷

4.18 Professor Blaxland goes on to suggest that:

Australia should look to bolster ties and deepen reciprocal arrangements in the Pacific, particularly concerning policing and domestic governance issues...Australia should offer association with Pacific countries through sharing governance arrangements, similar to the treaty arrangements in place between the United States and the Pacific...Whilst the Australian public may balk at the potential cost of undertaking a collaborative defence scheme, in the long run the costs will be outweighed by the benefits.¹⁸

Defence Cooperation Program

4.19 As noted in Chapter 2, the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) is one of Australia's most effective levers of influence in the Pacific region. The DCP has been shaped to meet what Pacific Island states identify as their needs in partnership with Australia, rather than those needs being determined for them.¹⁹ However, critiques exist which warrant Defence's attention moving forward. Professor Wallis submitted to the Committee that some aspects of the DCP lack clear objectives, transparency on spending and managing projects, and links between the DCP and defence strategic guidance are often unclear.²⁰ Consequently, Professor Wallis urges Defence to address these concerns through the Pacific Step-up, in consultation with Pacific Islands states.²¹

4.20 The Committee heard that Defence (in 2019-20) committed over \$116 million (AUD) to the DCP to continue to address future security priorities, enhance people-to-people links, exercises and operations, sustainment and operation of existing assets, infrastructure, and capacity building.²²

4.21 The NT Government also supported enhancement of the DCP. Specifically, the NT Government encourages further development of Darwin's maritime capabilities and the establishment of an Australian Defence Force Regional Force Surveillance Group Training and Education

17 Professor John Blaxland, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.5.

18 Professor John Blaxland, *Submission 1*, p.2.

19 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.7.

20 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.3.

21 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.3.

22 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.4.

Centre which 'is likely to lead to greater links between Pacific Island nations and the NT.'²³

4.22 Similarly, the Committee heard that the Australia-Philippines DCP compact provides invaluable intelligence, surveillance and informing sharing capacity. The Philippine Embassy highlighted its Government's desire to enhance the arrangement, noting the potential for extending AFP and ADF education and training initiatives by 'intensifying research collaborations on strengthening cooperation, forecasting emerging security threats in the Southeast Asian region, and innovations in training and doctrines'.²⁴

4.23 While several submissions highlighted the need to expand the DCP, Mr Chris Gardiner gave evidence that:

Australia will need to tread cautiously in proposing any integration initiative that could appear to involve loss of sovereignty (a compact of association giving up defence and foreign policy) or economic absorption (labour and brain drain through migration programs).²⁵

4.24 An alternative view was expressed by Professor Blaxland who encouraged Defence to investigate the potential for a grand security compact to strengthen Pacific security ties:

We need to do more. We need to be aiming towards the 'grand compact'. I believe that if we were to engage constructively and have a plan to engage constructively over the next couple of years to socialise the idea and explore with these ... states their appetite for this, what would be in it for them and how we could make it work for their benefit and for ours, we would probably get there.²⁶

4.25 Professor Blaxland further suggests:

We can probably ramp-up the Pacific Patrol Boat Program. It looks like it's pretty generous but, in the grand scheme of things, it's actually quite a small scheme. We could also engage more constructively and further on a range of other related issues ... One is about making sure that the infrastructure facilitates greater connectivity between the Pacific states and Australia and that we look to streamline procedures.²⁷

23 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 14*, p.1.

24 Philippine Embassy, *Submission 7*, p.2.

25 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.2.

26 Professor John Blaxland, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.15.

27 Professor John Blaxland, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.15.

- 4.26 The Committee also heard, from Professor Wallis, of the importance of developing relationships and cooperation ties with Pacific partners to further strengthen the DCP:

The relationships and modes of cooperation developed in these spheres could be expanded to other areas to facilitate cooperation between Pacific Island states and their external partners. This may help to mitigate against concerns that Pacific Island states have about being overwhelmed by poorly coordinated, overlapping and ill-targeted assistance as Australia and other partners rapidly increase their presence in the region.²⁸

- 4.27 Considering the evidence provided, Defence is encouraged to continue to evolve and enhance the DCP in response to regional security needs, while maintaining a position of partnership and respect for sovereignty. Given the DCP's historic value and success, and potential for expansion in ways which will benefit both Australia and its Pacific partners, it is essential that the compact's future success and effectiveness is maintained.

Further opportunities for compact strengthening

- 4.28 Complementing Defence's DCP efforts, the Committee heard that alternate opportunities for strengthening security compacts between Australia and the Pacific may exist.
- 4.29 The concept of strengthening security ties via joint peacekeeping operations between Australia and Pacific Islands was a common theme in several submissions. Ms Leanne Smith said that:

Instead of a Pacific regiment, there could be an opportunity to work with the militaries of the region to think about offering regional military or police contributions to Australia's contributions to United Nations peacekeeping. This happens in many parts of the world – in Europe, Africa and the Americas. Countries of those regions join together with different assets, different capabilities and different training programs to provide regional contributions to multilateral efforts in peacekeeping. I think it might be one way that Australia could demonstrate real respect and co-operation with the countries of the region, rather than anything else.²⁹

28 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.15.

29 Ms Leanne Smith, Western Sydney University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.18.

- 4.30 The Committee heard that opportunities to strengthen Australia-Pacific Island security compacts as a means of complementing pre-existing DCP efforts should be considered to promote further external coordination and collaboration between Australia and key partners.

Pacific Islands Treaty Organisation

- 4.31 Mr Chris Gardiner submitted to the Committee that a longer term goal of establishing a Pacific Islands Treaty Organisation (PITO) would offer assured commitment of Australian military forces to the defence of member states, in return for those states precluding the establishment of foreign military bases or programs in their countries; including the prevention of the use of businesses and commercial assets for intelligence, influence or 'immersion missions'.³⁰

- 4.32 The proposed PITO members would:

...establish an integrated and jointly governed maritime and air operational command. Whilst Australia would contribute major assets and capabilities to the Command, the burden would be shared with other potential developed state members such as Japan, the US and France. The creation of a 21st century integrated command will also favour heavily the use of long-range UAVs, UUVs, drones and satellites to provide effective but lower cost ISR and interdiction... They would also establish a PITO Information, Intelligence and Communications Command focused on effective political and cyber warfare in the region. PITO headquarters and bases would be based within the region and not in Australia.³¹

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Government and Defence expand existing programs (including the Defence Cooperation Program and Pacific Maritime Security Program), considerate of the need to maintain Pacific Island states' sovereignty, with the aim of further deepening institutional and people-to-people links with Pacific partners.

30 Mr Chris Gardiner, Submission 9, p.3.

31 Mr Chris Gardiner, Submission 9, p.3.

Intelligence fusion and sharing

- 4.33 Complementing opportunities to strengthen Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Islands via enhanced security compacts, the fusion and sharing of intelligence provides further opportunities to deepen strategic ties.
- 4.34 The Defence Cooperation Program and the Pacific Maritime Security Program provide a cornerstone for Defence's engagement in the Pacific, and reflect an existing platform used to share intelligence and surveillance between Australia and Pacific partners.³² In addition to these programs, Professor Wallis notes Australia continues to provide maritime support to the Pacific Islands via maritime surveillance mechanisms including *Operation Solania*.³³
- 4.35 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submitted to the Committee that there exists a need to further develop processes and systems to enable Pacific Islands to collect, collate, process and share surveillance in a timely manner.³⁴ Northrop Grumman Australia also emphasised the importance of evolving and strengthening intelligence sharing to better equip Pacific decision makers with information to identify and effectively respond to security threats, including illegal fishing, people smuggling and narcotics trafficking.³⁵
- 4.36 The Committee heard that safeguarding Pacific maritime resources through intelligence fusion and sharing is pivotal to protecting the Pacific Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and fisheries.³⁶ In particular, increasing maritime surveillance support to the Pacific EEZs would 'build considerable goodwill and influence for Australia in these small states for whom fishing is often the largest industry'.³⁷
- 4.37 Professor Wallis supports his assertion:
- Given the importance of maritime resource protection, Australia is encouraged to extend its current maritime surveillance cooperation, including information-sharing, supporting regional multilateral maritime surveillance activities and coordinating surveillance support to Pacific Island states from Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States (US) through the

32 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

33 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.5.

34 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.2.

35 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.11.

36 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.9.

37 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.9.

Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group, the FRANZ Arrangement between Australia, France and New Zealand and the 2012 Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership between Australia and France.³⁸

- 4.38 The PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submission provided context regarding the scale of the Pacific EEZ's in question:

Patrolling the combined EEZs of some 27.5 million square kilometres presents its own challenges. Given the scale of the task, there is an immediate need to scale-up the contribution to aerial surveillance under the Pacific Maritime Security Program to widen the area covered.³⁹

- 4.39 Northrop Grumman Australia gave evidence regarding the benefits of enhancing intelligence fusion and sharing to respond to regional security challenges:

The persistent nature of layered, coalition wide-area surveillance operations would provide a 'patterns of life' pictures for allies to discern regional changes that might be of concern.⁴⁰

- 4.40 The evidence heard by the Committee suggests that better fusion and sharing of intelligence and increasing surveillance capacity in light of the sheer size of Pacific EEZ's are important to enhancing Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Island states.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that Government offer to assist with increased intelligence capacity and sharing of and with Pacific Island countries to support a broader range of security objectives, including maritime domain awareness and maritime security operations.

Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance

- 4.41 The Committee understands that reliable and high-quality intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) is important to maintaining the rules-based global order.
- 4.42 The Department of Defence submitted that the provision of infrastructure and security capabilities has been a vital component of Defence's activities

38 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.6.

39 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.5.

40 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.9.

in the Pacific. As highlighted by Northrop Grumman Australia; however, this does not necessarily address the reality that:

In the near future Australia will likely find itself operating concurrently in several critical theatres of operation – conducting high-end ISR missions in the South China Sea, providing maritime security ISR support to PICs, responding to domestic natural disasters, conducting ISR support for border security operations and supporting allied sanctions-enforcement missions.⁴¹

4.43 The Committee heard that underlying challenges of insufficient maritime security capability in the Pacific necessitates Australia's defence engagement:

At present, Pacific maritime security agencies lack the equipment, maintenance and operational funds to develop an effective approach to long-term maritime security for their country, with air and maritime surveillance particularly inadequate.⁴²

4.44 The Committee is aware of the expanse of adjoining EEZ's in the Pacific region requiring surveillance under the PMSP, and that the increasing allocation of surveillance assets in coming years will be critical to Australia and its Pacific partners' situational awareness of foreign activity in the Pacific.⁴³ It will also continue to be an increasingly important element of interconnectedness and co-dependence between Australia and participating Pacific Island states.

4.45 The PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submission echoes the Defence submission with respect to the need for improved information collection, sharing and analysis. It offers that contracted services could contribute to both aerial surveillance in the region as well as increasing capacity for Australia and Pacific Island countries to collate, process and share the actionable information that increased surveillance will provide. PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submit that contract solutions of this nature would allow high-demand ADF assets to be employed elsewhere and for Australian businesses to actively contribute to the Pacific Step-up.⁴⁴

41 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.8.

42 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.4.

43 Northrop Grumman, *Submission 3*, p.7.

44 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.3.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends the Department of Defence consider additional maritime surveillance initiatives in the Pacific region. This may include an increase in frequency and intensity of existing surveillance operations and the addition of new Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV).

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief support

4.46 As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, the Committee heard that Pacific Islands humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) support presents an opportunity for Australia to further build relationships with Pacific Island states through ‘disaster diplomacy’.⁴⁵ Mr Chris Gardiner reflected on Australia’s HADR support to the region, stating:

Australia has an honourable and unequalled record of deploying the ADF to provide humanitarian and disaster relief to island states.⁴⁶

4.47 Professor Wallis defines disaster diplomacy as Australia’s HADR and joint civil-military efforts to assist the Pacific states respond to disasters and humanitarian crises by working together, building relationships and confronting challenges cooperatively.⁴⁷

4.48 Similarly, the Committee heard from Professor Wallis that:

Humanitarian and disaster relief offers Australia an opportunity to conduct disaster diplomacy. This was particularly important in respect of Cyclone Winston in Fiji, which offered an important opportunity for Australia to rebuild its relationship with Fiji after the 2006 coup. The response provided the opportunity for Australian personnel to work with the Fijian military forces which was welcomed by both communities, as they shared a strong collective sense of purpose. Australia’s assistance encouraged Fijian Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, to declare that Fijians will ‘always be grateful’ and that he wanted to ‘reset the direction

45 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.8.

46 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

47 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.7.

of our relationship and work together to confront our many challenges in the region and the world'.⁴⁸

- 4.49 Given the mutual benefits HADR provides for Australia and Pacific states, it is worth considering opportunities to enhance and expand collaborative HADR planning and execution measures. The importance of this is reinforced by the Philippine Embassy which highlighted its national interest in enhancing cooperation with Australia on HADR:

The Philippines welcomes opportunities in which both countries could enhance its cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR). This could be explored under the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Program, which took effect on 01 December 2019.⁴⁹

- 4.50 The Committee heard from Mr Gardiner that Australia should consider establishing a HADR command centre, through Australia's international aid program, with dedicated maritime and air assets.⁵⁰ This would further promote and shape Australia's soft-power as 'aid boat' rather than 'gun boat' diplomacy.⁵¹

- 4.51 The Committee heard that promoting collaborative HADR and peacekeeping missions is a valuable avenue for regional cooperation. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute urges Australia to consider strengthening humanitarian efforts through United Nations peacekeeping operations as an important apparatus to 'give back' to the international community and support multilateral efforts towards maintaining a rules-based order.⁵² The Institute points to sentiments expressed by officials in the Solomon Islands during the deployment of the regional peacekeeping mission RAMSI as evidence of this opportunity.

- 4.52 Ms Lisa Sharland emphasises the value of peacekeeping operations to fostering Australia's defence relationships in the Pacific. She stated:

UN peacekeeping offers a vehicle to give back to the international community, particularly for those countries that have hosted peacekeeping missions in the past...deployments can offer financial incentives and benefits for individuals and the sending government. Finally, UN peacekeeping can also offer prestige and

48 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.2.

49 Embassy of the Phillipines, *Submission 7*, p.2.

50 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

51 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

52 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 17*, p.3.

be a noble endeavour, particularly for those who serve in their home countries.⁵³

- 4.53 Expanding on the benefits of peacekeeping missions, Ms Sharland also noted that:

Partnerships in peacekeeping training offer a two-way street to facilitate lessons learnt and training and engagement. Australia can also learn a lot from some of our Pacific counterparts in this regard as well. While Australia's Defence Cooperation Program can offer opportunities, it will also be important that Australia is mindful of the experience that Pacific countries can bring to these partnerships. In some instances, their deployment footprint is larger – and, again, I refer to Fiji here. In that regard, there is a need to be modest. We are not necessarily a big player when it comes to UN peacekeeping, particularly compared to some of our neighbours in the region.⁵⁴

- 4.54 Beyond peacekeeping missions, Australia's HADR response in the Pacific could be strengthened through promoting the interconnection between women, peace and security. Ms Sharland highlighted this aspect as being of specific importance:

On women, peace and security, the short answer is that I think the more that we can engage on this the better... We are aware that the pandemic and COVID-19 are having a disproportionate impact on women... This is something that Australia, the ADF, has been quite focused on, as part of our women, peace and security engagement. ...For instance, one of the reasons the UN as an organisation has a Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy in place is that at the moment the contribution of women to UN peacekeeping from the military, as part of the 80,000-plus military personnel deployed abroad, is about four per cent, and a number of the major contributors have very few women deploying as part of their contingents.⁵⁵

- 4.55 Dr Anuradha Mundkur, Head of Gender Equality at CARE Australia gave evidence that women, peace and security, must be closely interlocked with Australia's HADR response. Specifically, Dr Mundkur noted:

The women, peace and security agenda draws attention to the gendered nature of instability and the role that diverse women play in all aspects of peace-building and responding to and rebuilding after humanitarian crises. The agenda seeks to facilitate an inclusive approach to all aspects of crisis prevention, mitigation

53 Ms Lisa Sharland, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.21.

54 Ms Lisa Sharland, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.21.

55 Ms Lisa Sharland, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.27.

and resolution in ways that address the specific needs of the most marginalised group, particularly women and girls, and draws on their unique experiences to contribute to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as disaster reduction, response, relief and recovery.⁵⁶

4.56 Outlining the potential for further actions in this space the Committee heard that:

...in considering Australia's defence relationship in the Pacific, it is vital that the voices and the particular needs of women and the implementation of the WPS agenda are deliberately included. The first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security contains five strategies and 24 actions that reflect five thematic areas of the women, peace and security agenda – namely prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery. Defence has responsibility for 17 of the 24 actions in the first national action plan.⁵⁷

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government pursue opportunities to strengthen Australia's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response in the Pacific to effectively build the capacities of regional militaries to respond to humanitarian crises in a manner which is considerate of the impacts on women and girls.

Committee Comment

4.57 The Committee is encouraged by the efforts of the Australian Government, in particular the Department of Defence, in fostering stronger defence partnerships and networks with Pacific Islands neighbours.

4.58 The Committee is cognisant of the availability of resources that can be directed towards supporting collaboration with Pacific Island partners and likeminded allies. Nevertheless, the Committee is also aware of growing regional instabilities, geopolitical competition, and Australia's desire to maintain the rules-based order. Consequently, the Committee

56 Dr Anuradha Mundkur, CARE Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.1.

57 Dr Anuradha Mundkur, CARE Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.1.

encourages the Australian Government and the Department of Defence to continue to deepen and strengthen existing initiatives that support defence ties in the region, while investigating alternate avenues for cooperation and coordination.

- 4.59 This could include, but is not limited to, strengthening the DCP through increased collaboration with likeminded partners, promoting greater intelligence fusion and sharing with Pacific neighbours, supporting and increasing maritime security activities through the Pacific Maritime Security Program, and investigating opportunities for enhanced HADR capability and capacity. The Committee believes that these efforts should be completed in direct consultation with Pacific Island partners, so as to place emphasis on promoting and supporting their values, sovereignty and national interests.
- 4.60 The Committee agrees that emphasising and supporting the women, peace and security agenda to comprehensively understand the gendered impacts of conflict and disasters in the Pacific is a critical component of the Pacific Step-up.

Challenges to Defence relationships in the Pacific

- 5.1 This chapter considers challenges impacting Australia-Pacific defence relationships in two categories:
- Broader strategic challenges which are impacting both regional and international defence approaches (including geopolitical contestations, climate change and Coronavirus); and
 - Defence-specific challenges, including available capabilities and resources.

Strategic challenges

- 5.2 The Committee heard that Australia's longstanding defence relationships with Pacific Island partners form the basis of Australia's strategic approach to the Pacific region.¹ At the broader strategic level however, transnational challenges are having a direct impact on Australia-Pacific defence relationships.
- 5.3 In particular, several submissions identified the following as key challenges to the present and future security relationships:
- The stability of the liberal international, rules-based order;
 - Destabilisation arising from growing regional powers;
 - Changing environmental factors; and
 - The long-term impact of COVID-19 on regional affairs.

¹ PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.1.

- 5.4 It is important to reflect on these challenges in order to provide appropriate mitigation measures and potential solutions to bolster Australia-Pacific defence relationships moving forward.

Stability of rules-based global order

- 5.5 The Committee is aware that the growing presence of external powers in the Pacific has resulted in the region becoming increasingly 'crowded and complex', and is posing a variety of challenges for Australia in terms of both its own security and how powers could potentially shape and constrain Australia's actions in the region.² Professor John Blaxland submitted to the inquiry that geopolitical contestation is giving rise to Australia's anxieties about the vulnerability and future stability of the rules-based international order in the Pacific region.³
- 5.6 As stated in numerous Defence White Papers and other Strategy documents in recent decades, Australia's strategic interests lie in upholding liberal democracy via the international rules-based order. This has benefited both Australia and Pacific Islands' national interests by bolstering security and stability in the Pacific for many years.⁴ The Committee heard that while uncertainty and anxieties regarding the future of the order exist, Australia must adjust how it sees and approaches the Pacific region.⁵ Specifically, Professor Joanne Wallis submits that rather than looking at the region as a source of anxiety, Australia should embrace opportunities to strengthen and develop Pacific security and defence relationships.⁶
- 5.7 The *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* reiterated the emphasis placed by Australia on maintaining an alignment of western international interests in accordance with national agendas:
- We want peace to help sustain the growth that has brought the region to the centre of the global economy. Equally, we want a region where our ability to prosecute our interests freely is not constrained by the exercise of coercive power.⁷
- 5.8 The ability for Australia to protect the stability and security of the liberal international rules-based order is however, also dependent on the current and future actions of rising regional powers. The threat of great power

2 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.1.

3 Professor John Blaxland, *Submission 1*, p.1.

4 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.2.

5 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.2.

6 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.2.

7 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, p.31.

contestation and regional rising powers weighs heavily on the minds of Australia's foreign policy officials. The Committee heard that:

Australia has been anxious about its proximity to the Pacific Islands, the region's vulnerability to penetration by potentially hostile powers, and its distance from its major security allies (first the United Kingdom, later the United States).⁸

- 5.9 Professor John Blaxland notes the increasing pressure in our region on stability; particularly noting China's growing posture and influence in the Pacific as generating concern in the West.⁹ The Committee heard that Australia's key strategic interests in the Pacific seemingly centre around the preservation of liberal international stability and the diplomatic 'hedging' of powers hostile to Western interests.¹⁰
- 5.10 Associate Professor Wallis elaborates on Australia's defence relationships in the Pacific as being based around two primary interests:¹¹
- Seeking to become the 'principal security partner' of the region to ensure that Western interests are maintained and any attack on Australia or its allies are mitigated; and
 - Maintaining the 'security, stability and cohesion' of the region to ensure vulnerable Pacific partners can defend their national interests against hostile powers.
- 5.11 DFAT reiterated these key principles in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, in which it reinforced the growing economic weight of Asia, particularly China, as lending itself to potential regional contestations. Specifically:
- Economic growth in Asia continues to re-shape our strategic landscape. The compounding effect of China's growth is accelerating shifts in relative economic and strategic weight... In parts of the Indo-Pacific, including in Southeast Asia, China's power and influence are growing to match, and in some cases exceed, that of the United States. The future balance of power in the Indo-Pacific will largely depend on the actions of the United States, China and major powers such as Japan and India...In this dynamic environment, competition is intensifying, over both power and the principles and values on which the regional order should be based.¹²

8 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.1.

9 Professor John Blaxland, *Submission 1*, p.1.

10 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.1.

11 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.1.

12 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, pp.25-26.

5.12 The Committee heard from the Government of New Zealand that the challenges present in the Indo-Pacific region are a consequence of the constantly evolving regional circumstances:

The pace, intensity, and scope of engagement by external actors, who may not always reflect our values across their activities, are at the heart of a growing sense of geostrategic competition that is animating many nations' renewed focus on the Pacific.¹³

5.13 Offering a contrasting perspective, Associate Professor Wallis identifies the need for Australia to re-characterise the Pacific as an 'arc of opportunity', with the goal of removing overriding strategic anxieties that are potentially hindering the enhancement of Defence cooperation in the region.¹⁴ These opportunities are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Climate change

5.14 The Indo-Pacific is one of the most natural disaster-prone regions in the world. Consequently, climate change plays a significant role in defining the motivations and security interests of Pacific Island states.

5.15 The Northrop Grumman Australia submission elaborates:

The Boe Declaration on Regional Security...reaffirms that climate change remains the single greatest threat to livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the Pacific peoples. During the 2019 Pacific Islands Forum, Pacific leaders presented a united stance on the pressing need for accelerated and ambitious global action on climate change, noting that it remains the single greatest threat to PICs as its impacts will undermine – and potentially reverse – economic development, create instability and conflict, and threaten lives.¹⁵

5.16 The Government of New Zealand submission highlighted climate change's effects as being 'acutely' felt across the Pacific and thus necessitating enhanced HADR responses.¹⁶

5.17 The Committee understands that climate change, over time, will likely intensify requirements for Government and Defence cooperation with and support to Pacific Island nations under the Pacific Step-up.

13 Government of New Zealand, *Submission 16*, p.7.

14 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.1.

15 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.5-6.

16 Government of New Zealand, *Submission 16*, p.7.

COVID-19 impact

- 5.18 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade notes that COVID-19 is impacting the stability and economic development of Indo-Pacific countries:

The growth, openness and stability of the Indo-Pacific, which has underpinned Australia's prosperity and security for decades, is at risk. Economies, jobs, education and health systems are being disrupted.¹⁷

- 5.19 Elaborating on broader economic impacts, DFAT raises concerns as to the potential for issues of social disruption and inequality arising from COVID-19 to challenge regional security:

A sustained economic downturn would have far-reaching consequences for social cohesion and human development. It would throw millions out of work, exacerbate economic and gender inequality, encourage criminal activity, and potentially spur irregular migration. It would undermine food security and supply chains, delay children in their education, and put pressure on political and social stability in societies across the world.¹⁸

- 5.20 The Committee understands that COVID-19 has and will likely continue to intensify requirements for Government and Defence cooperation with and support to Pacific Island states under the Pacific Step-up.

Defence capability challenges

EEZ Security, aerial surveillance and air capability

- 5.21 The Committee is aware that the Pacific presents unique challenges for Australia's defence capability to support the security of the region. The scale and expanse of the region, combined with limited Pacific states' defence capabilities to monitor and police it, give rise to numerous risks and issues.¹⁹
- 5.22 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia highlight the Pacific's combined exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as covering more than 27.5 million square kilometres.²⁰ The Committee heard that there are significant benefits for Australia in patrolling and protecting Pacific waters. In particular:

17 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *2020 Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*, p.1.

18 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *2020 Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*, p.2.

19 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.3.

20 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.3.

In helping Pacific island countries to help themselves in patrolling the southwest Pacific, Australia can concentrate assets in other areas, such as the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Over the longer term, an increased capability of Pacific island countries to respond to ensure their own security and protect and enhance economic opportunities for their citizens reduces the requirement for Australia to provide a high level of ongoing support.²¹

- 5.23 The Committee is aware however, that according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's (ASPI) *Ocean Horizon* report, significant operational gaps exist in the ability of Pacific Island nations to facilitate maritime patrols.²² This is a challenge further exacerbated in remote island locations.
- 5.24 Similarly, ASPI recognised aerial surveillance capability is lacking or otherwise conducted on a limited basis with limited sovereign surveillance capability.²³
- 5.25 The Committee understands that the vast expanse of the Pacific's combined exclusive economic zones (EEZ) creates challenges of scale for Australia's limited ISR and maritime security capabilities.

Committee Comment

- 5.26 The Committee acknowledges the current and emerging challenges facing Australia's defence cooperation and collaboration in the Pacific. Consequently, the Committee continues to emphasise the need for Australian government agencies to take a coordinated approach to the Pacific Step-up in order to mitigate the impact of these challenges.

21 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.3.

22 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Ocean Horizons* report, December 2019, p.5.

23 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Ocean Horizons* report, December 2019, p.44.

Senator the Hon David Fawcett

**Chair
Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs and Trade**

25 March 2021

Mr Andrew Wallace MP

**Chair
Defence Sub-Committee**

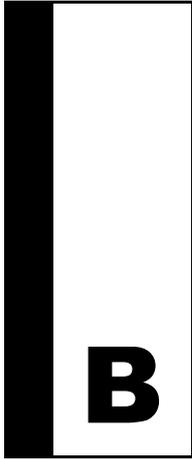


Appendix A – Submissions

List of submissions

- 1 Prof John Blaxland
Attachment No 1
- 2 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis
- 3 Northrop Grumman Australia
- 4 Mr Benjamin Cronshaw
- 5 Air Affairs Australia & PAL Aerospace
- 6 Whitlam Institute within Western Sydney University
Attachment No 1
- 7 Philippine Embassy
- 8 World Citizens Association of Australia
- 9 Mr Chris Gardiner
- 10 Department of Defence
10.1 Supplementary Submission to Submission No.10
- 11 Government of Japan
- 12 BMT Defence and Security Australia Pty Ltd
- 13 Veterans Care Association Incorporated
- 14 Northern Territory Government
- 15 Australia West Papua Association and West Papua Project,
University of Wollongong
- 16 Government of New Zealand
- 17 Lisa Sharland and Genevieve Feely
- 18 High Commission of the Kingdom of Tonga

- 19 CARE Australia
- 20 Professor Richard Herr OAM
- 21 Lowy Institute
- 22 Aspen Medical
- 23 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Response to QoN



Appendix B – Public Hearings

Wednesday, 15 July 2020 – Canberra

Australian National University

- Professor John Blaxland, Professor of International Security and Intelligence Studies, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre

Private capacity

- Ms Genevieve Feely
- Ms Lisa Sharland

World Citizens Association of Australia

- Associate Professor Christopher John Hamer, President

Lowy Institute

- Mr Jonathan Pryke, Director, Pacific Islands Program

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Mr Gerald Thomson, First Assistant Secretary, Pacific Bilateral Division

University of Adelaide

- Professor Joanne Wallis, Professor of International Security

Thursday, 16 July 2020 – Canberra

CARE Australia

- Ms Roslyn Dundas, Advocacy Manager
- Dr Anuradha Mundkur, Head of Gender Equality

Department of Defence

- Air Commodore Stephen Edgeley, Director-General, Pacific and Timor-Leste Branch
- Mr Hugh Jeffrey, First Assistant Secretary, International Policy Division

The Institute of Regional Security

- Mr Chris Gardiner, Chief Executive Officer

Private capacity

- Dr Theresa (Tess) Newton Cain

Western Sydney University

- Ms Leanne Smith, Director, Whitlam Institute

Friday, 4 September 2020 – Canberra*Roundtable**Kiribati*

- Mr Ierevita Biriti, Acting Director for Business Promotion Centre, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives
- Ms Angoango Fakaua, Trade Officer, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives,
- Mr John Mote, Officer Commanding Police Maritime, Kiribati Police Service
- Mrs Donna Tekanene, Senior Trade Officer, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives
- Mr Reetaake Takabwere, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Kiribati Police Service
- Mr Teata Terubea, Director, Asia Pacific Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
- Ms Nanoua Tiroi, Desk Officer, Asia Pacific Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

New Caledonia

- Dr Yves Lafoy, Counsellor and Official Representative of New Caledonia to Australia

New Zealand

- Captain Shaun Fogarty, New Zealand Defence Adviser
- HE Hon Dame Annette Faye King, High Commissioner
- Ms Abigail Poole, Second Secretary, Political

Papua New Guinea

- Colonel Mark Goina, Defence Attaché
- HE Mr John Ma' o Kali, High Commissioner
- Mr Sakias Tameo, Deputy High Commissioner

Independent State of Samoa

- Ms Rona Meleisea-Chewlit, Deputy High Commissioner
- HE Ms Hinauri Petana, High Commissioner
- Mr Henry Tunupopo, Vice Consul, Trade

Solomon Islands

- HE Mr Robert Sisilo, High Commissioner
- Mr Walter Diamana, Deputy High Commissioner

Kingdom of Tonga

- Mr Curtis Leonard Tuihalangie, Deputy Head of Mission
- Mr Tasimani Duifken Telefoni, Third Secretary, High Commission

Republic of Vanuatu

- HE Mr Samson Vilvil Fare, High Commissioner
- Mr Evaristo Chalet, Second Secretary

