



# strategic development group

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## Pacific Security College

### Program Review

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#### Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are those of the review team. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors.

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## Executive Summary

The Pacific Security College ('College') was established in July 2019 with the Australian National University (ANU) contracted by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to manage it. The College was initially funded to September 2022 with a total budget of \$15 million. The ANU's contract to run the College was extended for an additional four years until September 2026, with an annual budget of approximately \$4.7 million per annum.

The College was designed to assist Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) members with implementation of the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security, which affirmed an expanded concept of security, including both traditional and non-traditional security issues.

The goal of the College is "to build deeper and stronger cooperation that addresses security challenges in the Pacific". The design of the College includes three end of program outcomes – to be delivered by September 2026 - with associated intermediate outcomes:

1. Forum Island Countries develop and implement relevant and effective national security strategies
  - 1.1. More state and Pacific agencies seek and accept more offers of support from the College and its partners
2. Forum Island Countries are capable of collaborating effectively on regional security challenges
  - 2.1. Pacific regional organisations engage with the College on security issues and derive benefits from the College's activities that enhance communication flows
3. Forum Island Countries have access to a skilled Pacific security officials' network
  - 3.1. The College's alumni members share more information about Pacific security challenges and responses

In order to achieve the end of program outcomes, the College undertakes initiatives around three main pillars:

- Learning and training
- Policy Engagement
- Regional collaboration

This review of the College's activities is for the period September 2022 to September 2025. This period largely coincides with the appointment of a new Director of the College who commenced the role in February 2023. The review is intended to assess the progress of the College towards achieving its stated objectives and to make recommendations to strengthen the College's performance that can inform a design refresh for the next iteration of the College. The review team collected a range of data that included review of all key program documentation, a survey of College alumni (including generating some quantitative data), and a significant number of key stakeholder interviews from across the region.

The terms of reference for the review (Annex 2) include a list of key review questions. Additional questions were included during the review inception phase, supplementing the questions in the terms of reference. The review report is structured around the key questions.

### *Key findings*

*Relevance - Is the College doing the right things [– both from an Australian perspective and from a Pacific partners perspective]? Are the College's objectives right? To what extent are College activities responding to the security needs of Pacific Island countries?*

The College has become a relevant part of the Pacific security ecosystem in a short period of time. The College's work supporting the development of National Security Strategies and its targeted capacity development initiatives, including the Executive Leadership courses for parliamentarians, directly align with the Pacific Leaders commitments on the approach required to strengthen regional security. The annual Pacific Regional and National Security Conference (PRNSC), co-hosted by the College with the Pacific Islands Forum, has become a key event in the regional national security calendar and contributes to fostering better connection and relationship amongst security actors throughout the region. To maintain its relevance, the College must continue to evolve its offerings to match the growing understanding of the interlinked nature of security as is it is understood in the Pacific context and the increased capacity across the region that it has contributed to.

*Effectiveness - How well do the current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms serve program and DFAT needs? Key evaluation question: To what extent is the College investment on track to deliver on the end of program outcomes and made progress against each of the intermediate program outcomes? Is the College achieving its stated objectives?*

The College has effectively been operating with two sets of end of program outcomes since a mid-term review in 2021 recommending new outcomes although these were never formally adopted. No baseline data was collected at the start of the program and a formal monitoring and evaluation system has not been functioning. The College has been collecting disaggregated participant data and providing output level reporting against annual workplans agreed with DFAT. **A monitoring and evaluation strengthened system should form part of the College design refresh.**

**The College's achievements have exceeded the specific program outcomes identified in the original program design.** While it is likely that the College will only achieve, in any meaningful sense, end of program outcome three – FICs have access to a skilled Pacific security officials' network - this is more a reflection on the unrealistic level of ambition they set out in the original design of the College than its performance. The College has worked with four FICs over the past three years to support the development of their National Security Strategies and supported the development of implementation plans for an additional three FICs' National Security Strategies. Baseline assessments have been completed in all FICs, tailored training courses have been held throughout the region and Executive Leadership courses have been held for parliamentarians from three countries. An alumni network has been established with some success, research has been published, and four Pacific scholars have been sponsored to complete their doctoral research at the ANU. The College has provided scholarships to doctoral students at the ANU. While this has had benefits, exploring a partnership with the Australia Awards program to provide security focused post graduate scholarships would be a more efficient way to achieve similar outcomes.

**This College's short-term performance is commendable, but it is more important to view the College as a long-term investment in regional security in the Pacific.** From this perspective, the most important achievement of the College to date is the strong relationships that the College has built with security actors from across the Pacific and the convening power it has developed as a result of these relationships. As a relatively well-resourced organisation, the College enjoys a privileged position in the Pacific security ecosystem; the long term effectiveness of the College will be judged by how it uses its position to create space for other voices to be heard, fostering a spirit of collaboration throughout the sector.

**Further practical steps should be considered in the next iteration of the College which would enhance the College's reputation throughout the region.** The academic nature of the College is a valuable aspect of its identity; the academic freedom it enjoys is in stark contrast to perhaps a private think tank or other type of institution focusing on security matters. While the College's location at ANU, and Canberra, has been a practical advantage (including to facilitate access to Australian members of Parliament during the College's Executive Leadership retreats), increasing its physical footprint in the Pacific would increase access for Pacific scholars and practitioners from a wide range of traditional security and non-security posts and positions. The College should seek to establish a permanent base in at least one FIC, co-located with one or multiple academic institutions. The partnership could take many forms and include different elements that benefit both partners. For example, the College could have permanent staff based at the partner's campus, the College could provide scholarships for emerging security professional to complete post-graduate studies at the partner institution, or opportunities for professional exchanges could be considered.

**The change of title from the Australia Pacific Security College to the Pacific Security College (in December 2023) was an important signal from the College to the Pacific region that the College, had formally recognised its geographical context, and would reflect the input of FICs and territories in its work, delivery and approach to regional security.** The name change has also seen a change in perception of the College itself from an Australian institution implementing Australian security policies, to a body which is more clearly tethered to the concerns and interests of FICs. As the work of the College, and as importantly its approach, becomes more well known throughout the region and the breadth and depth of its relationships continue to grow, it is expected that the College's reputation as a regional asset, of and for the Pacific, will also grow.

**Whilst the College revised both its Gender and Disability Action Plans in 2024 and has made some positive steps to improve its efforts around gender and disability, the College can still do more to be more inclusive.** Being more proactive in striving for equal participation in training courses and in speakers at the PRNSC is a starting point. Strengthening training courses to ensure that the perspectives of marginalised groups are consistently considered

and discussed, and most importantly sharpening the focus on addressing structural barriers and ensuring full and meaningful participation of women and people with disability in discussions and policy formulation so that security benefits are shared equally by all people in society, should all be a focus in the future.

*Efficiency - Are the College's resources being used well? Is the balance of resources being spent FICs operationally as opposed to research and administration, correct?*

**The College is operating efficiently and represents a good value for money investment in the regional security sector.** The 14 College staff are balanced between technical and operational staff and additional technical resources are contracted to meet requests for support from partner governments if required. The design of the College included a Technical Assistance Register to enable the rapid deployment of expertise. This has not proven to be necessary and the continued maintenance of it is inefficient. Another inefficiency exists in the level of reporting required of the College. Any workplans are agreed with DFAT, and activities undertaken by the College are relatively low risk. Effective oversight could be maintained through less frequent written reporting with regular meetings between DFAT and the College.

**The Advisory Board has recruited eminent people from across the Pacific, their experience, regional reputations and connections adding credibility to a relatively new institution.** The geographic spread of Advisory Board members is important, with a number of interlocutors referencing one or more Board members in discussions. To maximise the expertise on the Advisory Board, DFAT should provide greater clarity around the role of the Board as part of the design refresh for the College and ensure reporting lines for the Board are clear.

*Impact - What difference is the College making to FICs' capacity to identify country risks as well as close regional security issues and address them?*

Counting an establishment period and delivery challenges through the COVID-19 pandemic, the College has really only been able to be fully operational for 3-4 years. This is a very short timeframe for a new institution to have an impact. **But there is evidence of impact from the College's work.** A survey of alumni completed as part of this review noted that 91 per cent of respondents were applying what they learnt from their engagement with the College to their daily work. The most common examples of skills being used were around better analytic skills and ability to better understand, develop and structure policies.

*Sustainability - How "Pacific" is the Pacific Security College? What are the key priorities to inform the next stage of the program?*

**For the College to become sustainable it must consistently demonstrate its value to Pacific partners, and more than that, demonstrate that it is listening to Pacific partners and is being led by them.** As noted above, establishing partnerships with Pacific-based academic institutions should be a priority in the coming years.

The increasingly positive profile of the (now) annual PRNSC, and its seeming acceptance as part of the annual calendar of regional security events, is an indicator that the College is adding value to the sector and gaining acceptance in the sector. There is a general sense among partner governments that the College is making progress towards becoming increasingly Pacific-led; the increased number of College staff from the Pacific and the use of local consultants wherever possible to lead the development of National Security Strategies have contributed to this perception. An initiative the College could support that would further develop the security ecosystem in the Pacific is to repurpose the College's alumni network into a more inclusive, member-led community of practice housed in a Pacific institution and resourced and supported by the College.

**To establish and maintain partnerships in the Pacific, ensuring there is value in partnering with the College, requires additional funding and resources.** As does establishing and maintaining a vibrant community of practice. Discussions with the College Executive and Advisory Board suggest a relatively modest additional annual investment in the College could ensure a strong foundation is built for the partnerships and the community of practice and cement the College as the central actor in the Pacific security sector.

### *Recommendations*

## **Partnerships**

The following three Partnerships recommendations should all be included in the design refresh and implemented during the next iteration of the College:

1. The College should enter into negotiations with suitable academic institution(s) in the region with a view to co-locating staff and undertaking joint activities in the short term and in the medium to long-term developing a shared ownership model of the College.
2. The College transition its alumni and professional networks into a broader Pacific Security Community of Practice, creating a dedicated, focused and decentralised network of security cohorts that is accessible by a wider range of security practitioners from across the region and that is able to offer advice and support and high-level mentoring on a range of difficult security issues.
3. DFAT should consider increasing funding to the College in the order of \$1-2 million per year to support its efforts in building a partnership with a Pacific-based co-host and to establish and maintain a security-focused community of practice based in the Pacific.

## Learning and training

The following two Learning and Training recommendations should be implemented immediately while the current iteration of the program is still running with a view that the partnership with the Australia Awards program is in place at the start of the next iteration of the College:

4. DFAT should facilitate a partnership between the College and the Australia Awards program for a number of scholarships to be used to target participants in a College course who wish to pursue further post graduate study at ANU.
5. The Technical Assistance Register which was included in the original design of the College is redundant and should cease to operate; it should not be included in the planned design refresh.

## Dialogue

The following two Dialogue recommendations should be piloted during the next PRNSC, with the process for co-creation formalised in the design refresh and implemented during the next phase of the College:

6. The College should seek to co-create a contemporary annual agenda for every Pacific Regional and National Security Conference ensuring that all aspects of the expanded definition of security under the Boe Declaration are regularly included.
7. The College should draw Conference speakers from a wider variety of sources, including community representatives and people with lived experience of the impact of security challenges.

## Operational

With the exception of recommendation 10 which should be implemented immediately, the other three Operational recommendations should be implemented during the next iteration of the College:

8. The Advisory Board of the College should develop guidelines establishing the range of experiences and geographic and cultural diversity it seeks to maintain on the Board. This should be agreed with DFAT and new members recruited accordingly. The size of the Board should balance the need for a range of views to be aired during substantive discussions, with all members afforded an opportunity to contribute, while also keeping costs at a reasonable level.
9. As part of the next design of the College, DFAT should clarify the role of the Advisory Board, and who it reports to, to maximise its value to the College and DFAT.
10. The College should push for equality of opportunity for women, men and gender diverse people in terms of access to training courses and speaking opportunities at the Pacific Regional and National Security Conference, in line with the College's Gender Action Plan.
11. DFAT should reconsider the reporting requirements for the College and ensure that they are fit for purpose. Given the nature of the work bi-annual reporting, with more regular update meetings is sufficient to properly oversight the program.

## Introduction

The Australia Pacific Security College was contracted to the Australian National University (ANU), initially funded through an Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment of \$15 million from July 2019 to September 2022. The ANU's contract has been extended to September 2026, with continued annual DFAT ODA funding of approximately \$4.7 million per year.

**The College was designed to assist Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) members with implementation of the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security**, which affirmed an expanded concept of security, including both traditional and non-traditional security issues.

**The College changed its name to the Pacific Security College in December 2023 to better reflect that the College is a regional initiative, an asset of and for the PIF and the Pacific's shared responsibility for security.**

The goal of the College is “to build deeper and stronger cooperation that addresses security challenges in the Pacific” which is expected to be brought about through three end of program outcomes – to be delivered by September 2026 - with associated intermediate outcomes:

1. Forum Island Countries develop and implement relevant and effective national security strategies
  - 1.1. More state and Pacific agencies seek and accept more offers of support from the College and its partners
2. Forum Island Countries are capable of collaborating effectively on regional security challenges
  - 2.1. Pacific regional organisations engage with the College on security issues and derive benefits from the College's activities that enhance communication flows
3. Forum Island Countries have access to a skilled Pacific security officials' network
  - 3.1. The College's alumni members share more information about Pacific security challenges and responses

An independent mid-term review of the College was commissioned by DFAT in 2021. This review acknowledged positive progress made by the College in its start-up phase, but also made significant recommendations for improving its modality, operations, governance and management. DFAT has worked with the College to address the recommendations which included updated End of Program Outcomes<sup>1</sup>. These new proposed end of program outcomes have not yet been formally adopted. A redesign of the program will take place upon completion of this independent evaluation and will consider the end of program outcomes proposed in the mid-term review recommendations when developing a revised theory of change for the next iteration of the College.

Although this review is required to measure performance against the outcomes noted above, the review team is cognisant of the fact that DFAT and the College have been discussing the new objectives including noting them in annual investment monitoring reports.

In order to achieve its objectives, the College arranges its work around three main areas of effort:

- Learning and training
  - Short courses, workshops, exercises and skills building courses on areas identified by Pacific partners
  - Executive Leadership program for senior partner government officials leveraging ANU and Australian Government expertise
- Policy Engagement
  - Support Pacific countries to develop, implement, review and update their national security strategies
- Regional collaboration
  - Co-convener of the annual Pacific Regional and National Security Conference
  - Build a regional community of security experts, including through an alumni network

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed revised end of program outcomes from the mid-term review are:

1. The College supports the growth and development of FICs' capacity to discuss, analyse, and progress relevant and effective national security policies, strategies, and implementation mechanisms.  
2. The College actively pursues and facilitates activities that enhance FICs' effective collaboration on regional security challenges and responses.  
3. With College support and collaboration, FICs benefit from relationships, research, and analysis on Pacific security related topics

# Review Features

## The task

Strategic Development Group was contracted to undertake a review of the College's performance. The period under review is limited to September 2022, the date when the initial contract was extended, through to the present. This period also largely coincides with the appointment of a new Director of the College who commenced the role in February 2023.

The Terms of Reference for the review (full copy at Annex 2) articulate two overarching evaluation objectives.

Firstly, to assess the College's impact and progress towards its objectives, specifically:

- a) examine program progress and impacts with regards to intermediate outcomes
- b) review progress towards the end of program outcomes set out for the program
- c) taking account of these and other indicators of performance and achievement, including the results of the Partner Performance Assessment, determine remedial actions in the event of unsatisfactory progress

And secondly to consider the operations of the College itself:

- a) assess progress towards; fidelity to; and implementation and appropriateness of the recommendations and changes made following the 2021 review of the College
- b) offer feedback on the effectiveness of College operations, including the funding model, structure and staffing, partnerships between DFAT and the College and between the College and partner governments and effectiveness of the Advisory Board in advising DFAT
- c) inform a design update of the College investment beyond the current investment term (ending in September 2026).

As part of the design review process, the review team will consider how incorporating gender equality, disability equity and rights and climate change, including climate and disaster risk, can be included in the design refresh.

Two reports have been produced by the review team, broadly in line with the split of review objectives above. The first, a public facing report that addresses the College's performance against its stated objectives and makes recommendations for strengthening the College that are intended to be incorporated into the subsequent program design refresh. This is a public document, with the primary audience being not only **DFAT, as the funder of the program, the College's Advisory Board, and senior management of the College itself, but also other interested parties such as** Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Forum Subcommittee on Regional Security, relevant regional organisations and national Security Focal Points across the region.

**The second report is an internal document with the primary audience of is DFAT, the College's Advisory Board, and senior management of the College itself.** This report is focused solely on operational matters related to the College and its response to the recommendations of the mid-term review. The report contains no classified information and DFAT and the College may choose to disclose contents of the report to other partners at their discretion.

## Key evaluation questions

The Terms of Reference list the following key evaluation questions (public facing report):

1. To what extent is the Pacific Security College (the College) investment on track to deliver on the end of program outcomes and made progress against each of the intermediate program outcomes?
  - a. To what extent do College offerings support quality, resilient and inclusive security in the Pacific region?
  - b. To what extent are College activities responding to the security needs of Pacific Island countries?
2. How well do the current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms serve program and DFAT needs?
3. What were the key challenges and opportunities the college encountered and how were these addressed, in progressing towards outcomes?\*
4. Based on lessons learned, what are the key priorities:
  - a. to the end of this funding period (including ways to incentivise progress)\*
  - b. to inform the next stage of the program.

During the project inception, the scope of the review was broadened, with the approved review plan including additional questions more closely aligned with five of the six the OECD-Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria:

- Relevance – is the College doing the right things [– both from an Australian perspective and from a Pacific partners perspective]? Are the College’s objectives right?
- Effectiveness – is the College achieving its stated objectives?
- Efficiency – are the College’s resources being used well? Is the balance of resources being spent in FICs operationally as opposed to research and administration, correct?
- Impact – what difference is the College making to the FICs’ capacity to identify country risks as well as close regional security issues and address them?
- Sustainability – How “Pacific” is the Pacific Security College?

Both sets of evaluation questions were considered by review team, with appropriate evidence gathered by provide considered responses to all.

Questions above marked with (\*) are not dealt with in an individual section but are considered throughout the report; all other questions are identified and evidence presented in discrete sections.

## Methodology

To fulfil the task, the review team used a variety of approaches to collect data for findings and to support recommendations. Methods used include:

- Document review
  - Key College foundational documents
  - College annual plans for the period under review
  - Annual investment monitoring reports and partner performance assessment reports (DFAT’s quality assurance processes)
  - Outcomes documents from the 2024 and 2025 Pacific Regional and National Security Conference
  - College thematic plans such as gender action plan, disability action plan and alumni strategy
  - National Security Strategies and associated documents from selected Pacific countries
- One-on-one interviews and group discussions with a range of Australian Government officials
  - Senior DFAT officials from the Office for the Pacific
  - Relevant DFAT officials responsible for managing the College contract
  - Directors and other Canberra based officials with responsibility for bilateral programs in 12 Pacific Island countries
  - Australian Government staff at the High Commissions in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Tonga (remotely) and the Embassy in Palau
- One-on-one interviews and group discussions with Pacific Government and other government officials:
  - National Security Focal points from five Pacific Island countries
  - Heads of Mission and / or security leads for six Suva based Pacific Islands country missions
  - United States Embassy in Palau
  - New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade officials based in Wellington
- One-on-one interviews and group discussions with representatives from relevant regional organisations
  - PIF Secretariat
  - The Pacific Community (SPC)
  - Pacific Fusion Centre
  - University of the South Pacific (USP)
  - Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police
- One-on-one interviews with program implementing partners:
  - All members of the College Advisory Board
  - Senior management of the Crawford School and the College
- Survey of College alumni
- Ono-on-one interviews with six College alumni
- Review of website analytics

A full list of people consulted as part of the review can be found at Annex 1.

Surveys were sent to College alumni to gather information about their impressions of the College and the usefulness of their engagement to their daily work. Data privacy issues meant that surveys were sent to alumni by the College with anonymous responses being returned directly to the review team. The College's 2024-25 Annual reports states that it has 395 people in its alumni network; it is unclear how many are regularly active. A total of 23 responses were received which is considered a solid result based on previous College experience with alumni surveys. Thirteen individuals indicated a willingness to further discuss their views on the College, but time could only be scheduled with six alumni.

## Limitations

While the review team is confident that the review process has established a solid evidence base from which to review the performance of the College, draw conclusions about its performance and make recommendations to inform the design of the next iteration of the College, the review process did have some limitations. Despite the team receiving excellent support from DFAT and College staff, and repeated direct efforts from the review team, only nine of the 18 PIF Members were consulted as part of the review. Those consulted included a mix of Ambassadors and High Commissioners based in Suva, some of whom had relatively little engagement with the College, as well as national security focal points. In two cases, New Zealand and Cook Islands, both the security focal point and representative in Fiji were consulted. Engagement with the review team was geographically diverse and included countries with smaller populations as well as larger countries. Notable countries that the review team was not able to consult with security focal points include Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, although alumni from both countries were consulted including a member of the Solomon Islands parliament who participated in the Executive Leadership program.

Countries with a range of security arrangements were consulted including New Zealand Realm countries and a United States Compact country as well as independent states.

While the College was pleased with the number of responses received from the alumni survey (23), the estimated response rate is only six per cent. While this is higher than some alumni survey response rates<sup>2</sup>, data derived from the survey is treated with some caution throughout the report. Some comfort is gained in the fact the less than half of the respondents had received training or support in the past 12 months, mitigating potential skewing of the data to people who engaged recently with the College.

## Regional Security Architecture

**Pacific regional security architecture is complex and multifaceted.**

**It is also important to note that a review of the broader regional architecture, which includes the security architecture, is currently underway.** Leaders at the 52<sup>nd</sup> PIF Leaders' Meeting, held in November 2023, tasked the Forum Officials Committee with delivering the review of regional architecture in time for the 2024 Leaders' Meeting. The 54<sup>th</sup> PIF Leaders meeting was held in Solomon Islands in September 2025 with no announcement of the progress on the review. Despite the slow progress, the review of the regional security architecture was a regular talking point during consultations and something the College will need to actively monitor to ensure they maintain relevance within the system.

## Overview of key regional security documents

The 54<sup>th</sup> PIF Leaders meeting in September 2025 endorsed the Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration. It is too early to know how Member States will operationalise the Ocean of Peace Declaration and what impact this will have on the work of the College. A brief overview of key documents is provided below.

### *The Boe Declaration on Regional Security*

The Boe Declaration is the most significant regional security document for the Pacific and, along with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, is one of the principal documents that guides the work of the College. Agreed by Pacific Leaders in 2018, the Boe Declaration recognised an expanded concept of security that increased the focus on non-traditional security considerations whilst maintaining efforts in the traditional security spaces. The Declaration explicitly acknowledged climate change as the greatest threat to the Peoples of the Pacific and called for increased emphasis on human security, including humanitarian assistance, environmental and resource security, transnational crime and cybersecurity.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Australian Volunteers Program, <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/assets/documents/Alumni/Alumni-Survey-Report-2025.pdf>

## *The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent is a long-term strategy that articulates the vision of how Pacific Peoples will work together to achieve the future that they want for the region. Agreed by Leaders in 2022, the Strategy identifies seven key thematic areas of which Peace and Security is one. The Strategy aligns with the expanded concept of security articulated in the Boe Declaration.

### *Ocean of Peace Declaration*

This Ocean of Peace Declaration was launched at the PIF Leaders Meeting in the Solomon Islands in September 2025. The strategy, which builds upon the Boe Declaration and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, makes a strong pivot from security towards Peace, where Pacific people have a right to Peace; a right to a Pacific Ocean which is free from conflict and an Ocean where all the countries present in the Pacific should behave with respect and cooperation with others.

### *Other relevant Pacific security documents*

The below are included primarily to highlight the development of regional security thinking in the past 30 years:

- 1992 Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation: recognises that an adverse law enforcement environment could threaten the sovereignty, security and economic integrity of Forum members and jeopardise economic and social development
- 1997 Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation: provides principles governing security cooperation in the region
- 2000 Biketawa Declaration: sets the framework for regional crisis management and conflict resolution initiatives
- 2002 Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security: recognises the need for immediate and sustained regional action in response to the current regional security environment
- 2014 Framework for Pacific Regionalism: sets out a robust process through which regional priorities will be identified and implemented to achieve the vision of the Pacific as a region of 'peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives'.

## Key Findings

### Relevance

*Key Evaluation question: Is the College doing the right things – both from an Australian perspective and from a Pacific partners perspective? Are the College's objectives right? To what extent are College activities responding to the security needs of Pacific Island countries?*

**The College has become a relevant part of the Pacific security ecosystem in a short period of time.** Without exception amongst partner government respondents, the College is as primarily seen as an academic institution which undertakes training, including as a lead partner for the PRNSC, and teaching and is scholastic in nature.

**Relevance was built into the design of the College; its guiding document is the Boe Declaration, the main security-related document endorsed by the Pacific Leaders.** Clause eight of the Boe Declaration states:

*We recognise that national security impacts on regional security, and therefore commit to strengthening our respective national security approaches by:*

1. developing our national security strategies; and,
2. strengthening national security capacity including through training.

The College's work supporting the development of National Security Strategies and its targeted capacity development initiatives, including building leadership capacity through its Executive Leadership courses for parliamentarians, directly align with the Pacific Leaders commitments on the approach required to strengthen regional security. All alumni consulted by the review team were of the view that the training they had engaged with was of high quality and they would like to be undertake further courses with the College. The review team spoke to two security focal points who had worked closely with the College developing their National Security Strategies (out of five in the period under review). They both spoke very highly of the support they received and in one

instance had continued engaging with the College on steps to implementation. A strong majority of stakeholders consulted viewed the College's training offerings and technical support favourably.

**Clause nine of the Boe Declaration also commits to strengthening the regional security architecture.** While a review of the regional security architecture is an ongoing process, the College has found a useful niche in which to operate and is making contributions to a number of the actions the Leaders committed to in clause nine such as: facilitating open dialogue and strengthened information sharing; promoting regional security analysis, assessment and advice; and improving coordination amongst existing security mechanisms.

While recognising the role the College has contributing to regional security across the Pacific, a number of interlocutors noted that **the strength of the College lay in the fact that it is not part of the official security architecture and can therefore initiate discussions on issues that may be difficult to have in more formal settings.** The College should continue to engage closely with the PIFS and other regional organisations but should retain its independence from the official regional security architecture.

The need for information and a critical assessment of the current events in the region - such as the launch of missiles in the northern part of the region, the flotilla of China PLA Navy crafts in the Tasman sea - are a few of the actual events which recently occurred in the region but have passed without analysis or assessment from College as to how it impacts the regional security framework, or advice to the Board as to how these incidences should be addressed by the Board, PIFS Leaders and the membership of the PIF. Strengthened communication flows between the Board, the College and DFAT about current events could be improved.

**Much of the College's contribution to the dialogue and collaboration aspects of the Boe Declaration are attributable to it co-hosting the annual PRNSC.** The Conference was mentioned by many interlocutors as a valuable addition to the security sector, bringing together senior government ministers and officials from across the region along with academics and civil society representatives. The Australian High Commission in Fiji raised concerns about the Conference potentially overshadowing the Forum Subcommittee on Regional Security (FSRS) – the Conference is held in the first half of a week and the FSRS meeting is held in the second half - and stretching the resources of smaller countries by scheduling the events together. This concern was not shared by the six Fiji-based Pacific High Commissions consulted. They noted that representatives from their countries often attended to the FSRS and/or the Conference and that the timing of the Conference is appropriate, reducing transaction costs for partner governments who are able to attend the two events in a single trip. Some stakeholders consulted were both country representatives in Fiji and FSRS members. This influential group all touted the success of the two PRNSC's held to date, but were eager to see future PRNSC's shift focus toward implementation of responses to security threats, to maximise the benefits of bringing such a high-level group of leaders together.

**For the Conference to remain relevant it must renew itself annually, developing a fresh agenda each year.** It was noted that some of the most engaging speakers on the panels at the 2025 Conference were not people who usually engaged in 'security' discussions, but people who could speak from lived experience of the impact of the deterioration in some of the non-traditional security elements of the Boe Declaration. Future Conferences could consider, for example, traditional leaders from communities impacted by climate change or natural disasters including droughts, or health professionals dealing with epidemics in the region. Emphasising the impact of policies, or of policy inaction, through lived experience can be powerful, especially when discussed with policy and decision-makers. A board member considered that the need to understand the full breadth of the Boe document came in the form of acknowledging the pressing circumstances of Pacific people living in poverty, with no clean water supply and public resources squandered through corruption and mismanagement, which is exacerbated by climate impact and the loss of safety, home and shelter.

**The College has demonstrated its relevance to the Pacific security ecosystem.** To maintain its relevance, it must continue to evolve its offerings to match the growing understanding the interlinked nature of security as is it is understood in Pacific context and the increased capacity across the region that it has contributed to. It must also remain aware of the potential risks which its members alliances, and potential shifts in those alliances, bring to the region. In short, the College must grow alongside its partners, and its objectives for the next 10-years must reflect this.

## Effectiveness

*Key evaluation question: How well do the current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms serve program and DFAT needs?*

As noted earlier, the College has been effectively operating with two sets of end of program outcomes since a mid-term review in 2021. Adding to the confusion, the monitoring and evaluation framework in the original design includes different intermediate outcomes to those used in reporting by the College and DFAT (in Investment Monitoring Reports). No baseline data was collected at inception, rendering performance indicators identified in the monitoring and evaluation framework largely meaningless. It should be noted that national security baseline assessments, providing a comparative snapshot of national security capacities across the Pacific were completed in the 2024-25 year by the College and will prove a useful marker for the next iteration of the program.

DFAT and the College have been developing annual workplans which have served as the basis for the College's work. The College has been largely producing quarterly activity reports detailing who they have been engaging with and the types of assistance they have provided. They are doing a good job of collecting disaggregated data of course participants. The College been producing outcomes reports from the PRNSCs, detailing the discussions that were held by each panel.

While the monitoring and evaluation system has been disjointed, reporting has allowed DFAT to monitor the work being undertaken by the College. The analysis below is based on a literal reading of the outputs and outcomes, noting the lack of baseline data. Establishing a more formal, coherent monitoring and evaluation system, with a single agreed upon set outcomes will be a priority for the next iteration of the program.

*Key evaluation question: To what extent is the College investment on track to deliver on the end of program outcomes and made progress against each of the intermediate program outcomes? Is the College achieving its stated objectives?*

As noted, the College has three official end of program outcomes. The terms of reference includes intermediate outcomes, immediate outcomes and output levels as follows:

**Table 1 - EOPO 1: Forum Island Countries (FICs) develop and implement relevant and effective national security strategies**

<i>Intermediate outcomes</i>	<i>Immediate outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
1.1 More states and Pacific agencies seek and accept more offers of support from the College and its partners	1.1.1 FIC's have access to high quality technical advice	1.1.1.1 Security capacity assessments are undertaken 1.1.1.2 Capacity development workshops are implemented

**Table 2- EOPO 2: FICs are capable of collaborating effectively on regional security challenges**

<i>Intermediate outcomes</i>	<i>Immediate outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
2.1 Pacific regional organisations engage with the College on security issues and derive benefits from the College's activities that enhance communication flows	2.1.1 Participation of women and people with disability taking part in "Women in National Security" 2.1.2 Dissemination of research, analysis and ideas on security challenges and responses	2.1.2.1 Communication Materials are Produced and Distributed

**Table 3 - EOPO 3: FICs have access to a skilled Pacific security officials' network**

<i>Intermediate outcomes</i>	<i>Immediate outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
3.1 The College's alumni members share more information about	None noted	3.1.1.1 Security stakeholder engagement activities (formal and informal)

<i>Intermediate outcomes</i>	<i>Immediate outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
Pacific security challenges and responses		

- **EOPO 1: Forum Island Countries (FICs) develop and implement relevant and effective national security strategies**

The first EOPO is very difficult to achieve with factors outside of the College's control affecting whether it is achieved or not. With no baseline data available and no target specified in the monitoring and evaluation framework it is difficult to assess whether this outcome will be achieved. Not all FICs will have developed and be implementing national security strategies by September 2026. Many will have developed strategies, with or without the College supporting the process, and some will have begun implementation. The intermediate outcome is being achieved – there is demand for College services – as is the immediate outcome – the College is providing high quality technical advice that can accessed – and the outputs – capacity assessments have been undertaken, and training and workshops have been conducted.

The College has worked with four FICs over the past three years to support the development of their National Security Strategies; Cook Islands (2023), Niue (2025 - collaboratively with New Zealand), Tonga (2025 - consultations complete, drafting in progress) and Tuvalu (2025 – in progress, expected to be completed in 2026). All these engagements have been successful, with support provided by the College during the consultation and drafting phases, as well as support with design and publication of the final product.

The College's preferred approach of remaining demand-driven, guided by national preferences, and of having a national consultant lead the process (or an international consultant with significant experience and a high-level of respect in the country as was the case Niue) has garnered the most success and been well-received by partner countries. An international consultant is usually contracted to support the national consultant as required. This approach contributes to the sense of local ownership, ensures a deep understanding of local context and culture, leverages existing, trusted relationships, and allows conversations to be held in local language where necessary to ensure all nuance is captured.

Three FICs already had National Security Strategies or had developed them independently of the College but sought the College's support to develop action plans and performance assessment frameworks: Papua New Guinea (2025), Solomon Islands (expected to be completed in 2026) and Cook Islands (2024). This type of support, and capacity development to assist with implementation is expected to grow in the coming years as more countries begin implementing strategies and policies. This will require capacity development in influencing skills also, as without budget allocations to support implementation, responsible government departments will not be able to progress actions they have responsibility for. Understanding the local context is important, as where the country is at in its election cycle often has a bearing on resource allocation.

National security baseline assessments have been completed in all FICs. This involved extensive research, consultation and in-country missions over the period under review. It is understood that this is the first time such a region-wide assessment has been completed.

The College also sponsors four early career Pacific scholars to complete their doctoral research at the ANU. This represents a strong investment in developing local research capacity, while also making a contribution to contemporary research on issues countries are attempting to address through their National Security Strategies. The College should explore with DFAT the option of expanding the program to include Masters and other post graduate students, co-funded by the College and the Australia Awards program. The administration of the program would be handled by Australia's existing scholarships program ensuring consistency of experience and reducing the burden on the College. This collaboration could act as a catalyst for a greater number of early career Pacific scholars to advance their careers and produce high quality research on important issues facing the regional security sector.

- **EOPO 2: FICs are capable of collaborating effectively on regional security challenges**

In the original design of the College, the indicator associated with this EOPO is the number, or examples of, collaboration on regional security challenges. This is difficult for the College to track and monitor, as ideally the collaboration is occurring without the involvement of the College. Given the expanded definition of security under the Boe Declaration, and the sensitive nature of some traditional security issues, it was ambitious to expect FICs to be collaborating effectively on security issues. Discussions with College alumni suggest that there is an appetite for collaboration amongst practitioners, and capability to do so, but formal collaboration at a government level requires significant levels of trust that takes time to build. Based on the indicator in the monitoring framework at design, it is unlikely that the College will achieve this EOPO.

**At the intermediate outcome level, the College has made excellent progress.** The PRNSC, discussed earlier, demonstrates the willingness of Pacific regional organisations<sup>3</sup>, and partner governments, to engage with the College on security issues. Attendees of the PRNSC stated that they benefited from attending and that the outcomes documents were well presented and enhance communication flows. Bringing the Pacific community together to talanoa is an excellent achievement. However, the manifestation of what the Pacific longs for, and its aspirations for a secure future (spoken during the conferences), adding the new initiative of the 'Ocean of Peace' launched at Honiara in August 2025, requires Pacific leaders and voices to lead on a path which safeguards all from atolls to islands to continent.

### Gender equality, disability equity and rights

Gender equality and disability equity and rights are core tenets of the Australian aid program; they are included as an immediate outcome under EOPO 2.

**The College developed a Gender Action Plan and a Disability Action Plan in 2021; both were revised in 2024.** Both plans commit to greater participation of women and people with disabilities in courses and at the PRNSC. The College started reporting gender and disability disaggregated data from all of its training courses and the Executive Leadership program in 2024 -2025. Of the 179 people trained across the year, 36 per cent were women while eight people (5 per cent) identified as having a disability<sup>4</sup>. Only one course, the Analysing Pacific Security course in Vanuatu during the year, saw more women than men participate.

A similar disparity can be seen in the speakers at the PRNSC. Whilst the 2025 PRNSC included a Women, Peace and Security panel (similar panel at the 2024 Conference also) which included an all women panel, overall, only 33 per cent of speakers were women, with all keynote addresses delivered by men. **While eight of the twelve panel discussions were moderated by women, there were multiple panels where all speakers were men.** The College should strive for gender equality on all panels in future iterations of the PRNSC.

The College is making efforts to address the disparity in speakers at the Conference. The final agenda is often quite different from the initial proposed agenda which includes close to gender parity across speakers. It can be difficult to achieve gender parity - there are significantly fewer female national security advisors, police commissioners, and government ministers and department heads in security-related portfolios across the region – and finding women replacements should a female speaker be unavailable is challenging. Including speakers from diverse backgrounds, including community representatives and people with lived experience, will help broaden the pool of potential women speakers.

**Contributing to an increase in the number of women in leadership positions in the sector is also a stated aim of the Gender Action Plan.** While it is difficult to exert too much influence on who countries choose to attend training courses delivered by the College, it is likely that by increasing participation of women, and gender diverse people, in training courses will, in the medium-long term, increase the pool of women in senior national security positions within government also. Earmarking scholarships for emerging female and gender diverse academics who can contribute to regional discussions should also be considered.

**But gender equality must go beyond just representation and ensure that gender perspectives are included in all training materials and actions included in national security strategies and policies address structural barriers to**

<sup>3</sup> The 2025PRNSC was co-sponsored by the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Fusion Centre, Pacific Immigration Development Community, Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, Pacific Islands Forum, Pacific Islands Law Officers Network, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program, University of South Pacific and the Oceania Customs Organisation.

<sup>4</sup> Disability rates across the Pacific are estimated by the World Bank to be 17 per cent

**inclusion, ensuring that benefits accrue equally to both men and women.** The 2024-25 College Annual Report notes that gender and disability considerations were included in training packages with ‘facilitators encouraged to explore the differentiated impacts’ of security policies on different marginalised groups. Encouragement is not sufficient. The College should ensure that consideration of the differentiated impacts of security policies on different marginalised groups is mandatory in all training. The College must support people delivering the courses to ensure they understand how to deliver these messages and content in a culturally appropriate way.

**The College has taken positive steps in its communications; enhancements to its website to enhance accessibility features is a positive step.** The creation of a Women in Security video series, launched early in 2025, raises the visibility of women in the sector. These are positive steps, but as noted, future efforts in gender equality and disability equity should focus on addressing structural barriers and ensuring full and meaningful participation of women and people with disability in discussions and policy formulation.

- **EOPO 3 – FICs have access to a skilled Pacific security officials' network**

As noted earlier, the PRNSC has contributed significantly to developing a security officials' network by bringing over 200 participants together annually to discuss security related issues. The Conference has become an important annual event on the regional security calendar and provided it continues to evolve to meet the needs of the sector will remain an important place of connection and building networks.

Since the start of the College in 2019, just under half of all participants have joined the College's alumni network. In that same period, just over 1 in 5 people who have engaged with the College through a course or other activity have participated in a subsequent College course of activity<sup>5</sup>. International research suggests that this is a relatively high rate of alumni membership and also a high return rate and reflects the value the people who have engaged College, place on that engagement<sup>6</sup>.

The results from the alumni network survey undertaken as part of the review indicate lower levels of engagement, with 44 per cent of the respondents indicating that they had none or one-off engagement with the College since their initial engagement. Fewer than 1 in 10 respondents indicated that they had regular engagement with College.

Interviews conducted with alumni indicated a willingness to engage more with a professional network, but there was a sense that the College had not resourced alumni network properly and this was a significant missed opportunity. Alumni were seeking more regular communication highlighting opportunities for further education and courses, security related webinars and in-person events, and information on latest research and analysis conducted by the College.

In 2024, the College formalised its approach to the alumni network through the development of the ‘PSC Alumni Strategy’:

*The primary goal of the PSC Alumni Network is to create a dynamic and engaged community of officials across various governmental functions in the Pacific who will continue to contribute to the region's security long after their training has ended.<sup>7</sup>*

The Strategy establishes four pillars of effort – professional development, networking, support (mentoring), and advocacy. It contains details actions, deliverables and success metrics for each pillar, as well as establishing a formal governance framework. Actions that should be in place at the time of the review include:

- Launch of initial online courses and webinars (Jul – Dec 2024)
- Launch of the alumni portal (Jul – Dec 2024)
- Facilitating initial short-term exchanges among alumni and organisations (Jan – Jun 2025)
- Develop mentorship program framework and identify potential mentors (Jul – Dec 2024)
- Develop criteria and guidelines for the PSC Alumni Grant (Jul – Dec 2024)

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<sup>5</sup> PSC Annual Report 2024-25, p.7-8

<sup>6</sup> No comparable data is available for Australia Awards; the international non-profit organisation Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) surveyed 264 educational institutions, including from Australia, finding that approximately 30 per cent of possible alumni are members of a network and 6 percent of alumni attend an event with another 1 per cent volunteering for the organisation. The College's rate of just under 20 per cent far exceeds this rate.

<sup>7</sup> PSC Alumni Strategy: Establishing a Sustainable Network for the Pacific Security College (2024-2030)

- Launch the PSC Alumni Grant program (Jan – Jun 2025)

As at the beginning of October 2025, some action has been taken on three of the above, but progress has generally been limited.

The alumni strategy contains a SWOT Analysis which includes, under Opportunities, the possibility of partnership expansion with other academic, government and private sector partners. The same analysis, under Threats, notes the competitive landscape with competing initiatives and institutions offering similar programs. **The network may be one place where the College can carve out a discrete piece of work that can be located in the Pacific.** It could be rebranded as a Pacific Security Community of Practice with it administered by a full-time PSC-funded administrator based at the University of the South Pacific (USP). An alumni network implies that the College remains at the centre of the network, a community of practice, or other similar term, implies a more diffuse group that belongs to all and **better reflects the point of the network, to foster an inclusive and ongoing community of professionals across government, academia and civil society.** While the College may continue to fund the administrative hub of broader professional network, the sustainability of such a network is more likely if based out of USP, with communal ownership of practitioners rather than passive membership of an alumni network.

**Locating the Community of Practice at USP may also help to reduce duplication amongst institutions, bringing together various alumni networks in one place.** Even with the expanded definition of the security under the Boe Declaration, the security sector remains small. It is not useful, or an efficient approach for each institution who offers security related courses to maintain separate networks, using precious resources to do so. A Community of Practice provides a platform for a wider range of people than just College alumni to share ideas, participate in discussions and contribute to the security ecosystem across the region. Data sharing and security issues can be managed, with all members consenting to join the community. Systems can be developed so that people who have joined through the PSC, or another institution, are easily identified and can be targeted for specific events or reunions. Importantly, a community of practice, rather than individual alumni networks, signals to the region the importance of open cooperation and collaboration in the security sector, rather than reinforcing a culture of competition.

### **Beyond the specific outcomes**

**The College has achieved much beyond the specific program outcomes identified in the original program design.** The relationships that the College has with security actors from across the Pacific is impressive and through these it has accrued significant convening power. The list of speakers and panellists at the 2025 PRNSC reflects this.

**The Advisory Board is an effective asset for the College.** The majority of Suva-based Heads of Mission consulted noted the quality of people on the Advisory Board. The Board comprises of a range of highly experienced, impressive current and former members of governments, leaders of regional organisations and security practitioners. Their experiences and skills encompass both traditional and non-traditional security domains. The quality of Advisory Board brings gravitas to the College, which given it is still relatively young for a regional organisation is valuable. The Advisory Board members are drawn from across the Pacific which helps build the College's profile across the region and increases the professional network that the College can draw on. To ensure this diversity of skills and experience and geographic and cultural diversity is maintained, the Board should develop guidelines to assist with future recruitment to the Board.

**The Board has been historically male dominated, although the College has taken steps to identify and appoint a number of qualified women to join the Board over the coming year.** This will result in gender parity on the Board for the first time. It will also increase the size of the Board to ten people. For the Board to continue to operate effectively, the guidelines recommended above should be used to ensure diversity continues, while also ensuring the Board remains at a size where all members can actively participate in substantive discussions and costs are maintained at a reasonable level.

**A number of interlocutors noted that the College is a long-term endeavour and that its success should not be determined by what it has achieved in the first five years of operation.** It was noted that the most important thing the College has done to date is to shift the regional conversation around security, broadening conversations to reflect the definition of security in the Boe Declaration and starting the process of 'softening the silos' to reveal the

interconnected nature of the security challenges facing the Pacific. It was noted that while the College has done well in establishing itself as part of the security ecosystem, it has only taken the first step on what is a long-term project to help build a stronger regional security system across the Pacific.

**The College is in an enviable position as probably the best resourced security-focused regional organisation in the Pacific.** It has done a commendable job in supporting and promoting other regional organisations. For example, the official program for the PRNSC 2025 has the logos of 11 Pacific regional organisations, all the same size, on the back cover of the program, promoting each as partners in delivering the Conference. Another example is in the relationship the College has established with the Pacific Fusion Centre (PFC) where the College delivers a one-week introductory security analysis training to new PFC analysts.

**A number of interlocutors, from regional organisations and from partner governments, noted that it is important for the long-term effectiveness of the College, and more importantly the overall effectiveness of the Pacific security ecosystem as a whole, that the College uses its position to create space for other voices to be heard, fostering a spirit of collaboration.** The College should encourage and support emerging and established academics at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and other national universities, such as Solomon Islands National University or Fiji National University as well as emerging research centres at New Zealand-based universities, to contribute to security debates and ensure operational agencies are also engaged in debates. This approach is consistent with the goal of the program to build deeper and stronger cooperation to address security challenges.

**The College is most effective when it leads from behind, ensuring local leadership of national security strategies, delivering demand-driven training for partner countries, and using its convening power to create space for a range of voices from across the Pacific to be heard.**

A common view amongst Forum members is that, having very successfully drawn the regional security players together in 2024 and 2025, the College should seek to support partner governments in the coming years to:

- progress the implementation plans for Boe, focusing on the expanded definition of security and the associated social aspects
- advance the preparation of the National Security Strategies for PIF members
- ensure that the plans are consistent with and contribute to meeting the new 'Ocean of Peace' initiative launched at the PIF Leaders Forum

### **Independence of the College**

**The perceived independence of the College was raised as an issue by a small minority of people consulted. The perception that the College is an extension of Australia's national security interests and is pushing a pro-Australia agenda, appears to have significantly weakened in recent years as the work of the College and its approach becomes more well known.** The change of title from the Australia Pacific Security College to the Pacific Security College (in December 2023) was noted by a number of interlocutors as an important signal from the College to the Pacific region, that an initiative launched in November 2019 and operating from Canberra, Australia, had formally recognised its geographical context, and would reflect the input of FICs and territories in its work, delivery and approach to regional security.

With the use of the Pacific label, expectations were elevated amongst Pacific stakeholders that the College would bring a robust examination of the security concerns being imposed on PIF members, by a well-established and internationally reputable institution able to identify, analyse and produce material which would support the approach to be adopted by members in addressing those concerns and implementing policy plans. Support would also be provided in setting national priorities in an effort to minimize the security risks to each member and ensure their part of the Pacific fabric remains strong and woven into the regional security architecture.

Those interviewed remarked upon the name change, and an apparent shift in approach by the College, resulting in a change in perception of the College itself from an Australian institution implementing Australian security policies, to a body which is more clearly tethered to the concerns and interests of FICs. The development of strong relationships amongst member countries with the College (through the successful convening of security leaders during the 2024 and 2025 PRNSC) and the increasing use of Pacific expertise in the work of the College, as examples of greater Pacific engagement and collaboration were cited as examples of this. The initial suspicion of the independence of the College has been largely dispelled and may be further muted with some of the recommendations aimed to strengthen the Pacific aspect of the College.

**A tension still exists between the College being exclusively housed at ANU and the view that the College should be more ‘Pacific’.** The association with ANU and the Crawford School has brought status to the College and its work, as have the activities of the College in the past two years in particular. However there is a strong desire amongst FICs to move to implement some of the plans and policies in the non-traditional security areas (expanded by the Boe Declaration) which present immediate threats to livelihoods and homes in the region, and require direct intervention whether as part of a plan for climate resilience or as the implementation of actions to address the Boe security threats. Support for these types of activities may be strengthened with a stronger regional footprint.

**The greater exposure of Pacific researchers, academics, and analysts in the work of the College was also seen as a positive indicator that it is indeed a College belonging to the Pacific.** The role of existing regional bodies (such as USP and PIFS) were raised as a means of spreading the reach of the College and ensuring that they too contribute to the College’s overall work and analysis.

## Efficiency

*Are the College’s resources being used well? Is the balance of resources being spent in FICs operationally as opposed to research and administration, correct?*

**The College operates on a relatively small budget of approximately \$4 million per annum. The outcomes achieved from this level of funding is solid. The investment in the College represents good value for money for DFAT.** One interlocutor who was initially critical of the effectiveness of the College, changed perspective when informed of the operating budget. A little over half of that is spent on 14 staff which are well balanced between academic and operational staff with additional technical resources contracted to meet requests for support from partner governments if required. Of the remaining budget approximately \$1.5 million is spent on program activities and the balance on operating costs, including travel. This represents a significant amount of resources for the Pacific security sector.

**However, there are inefficiencies in the operations of the College that mainly place a burden on the use of staff time rather than a sub-optimal use of program funds.** For example, the College currently provides DFAT with quarterly update reports. Given the type of activities that the College undertakes – longer term support to develop strategies, bespoke training programs, and an annual conference – bi-annual reports, supplemented by scheduled monthly program discussions is sufficient oversight for the program. Quarterly reporting paces unnecessary burden on the College senior management team for little additional value.

**The Advisory Board meetings are held in different countries across the region.** This is an inefficient approach as travel options can be limited for some places which usually results in increased cost on less served routes but serves an important purpose for the College. Holding the Advisory Board meeting in the same central location would be more cost effective and easier for the College administration to organise. However, these benefits must be balanced against the benefits of holding the meetings around the region. The College serves the region; different locations provide opportunities to promote the work of the College across the region and for the Advisory Board members to meet with senior government officials in the margins of the Board meetings. Locations of meetings can be chosen to coincide with other College activities such as policy development and training courses, with the Advisory Board members providing additional gravitas to those activities.

**The original program design includes a Technical Assistance Register – a database of experts that have been pre-vetted and can be drawn on as required.** While the register has been developed in accordance with the program design, in practice it has been lightly used relative to the time involved in maintaining the register. The College has indicated it would prefer the register was not included in the design refresh; the review team sees no reason to disagree with this position.

While it is beyond the scope of this review to make recommendations around the operations of ANU, it has been noted that an area of inefficiency for the College lay in their use ANU systems which are geared towards traditional university activities involving staff and students and the running of under- and post-graduate courses and qualifications. The College must utilise these systems as ANU hold the contract with DFAT and have ultimate responsibility for managing its finances. The College have noted the systems are not designed with a program like the College in mind; for example it can be difficult for the College to respond quickly to a request for technical assistance from a partner government by executing a consulting contract at short notice, or gain approval for last minute travel arrangements for a senior figure speaking at the PRNSC for example. The Deputy Director of the College has worked hard to develop relationships with the appropriate people in centralised functions, such as

ANU's travel team and contracts department, and this has helped to speed up some processes, but internal discussions may be able to find some flexibility in ANU's delegation protocols that can improve the efficiency of the administration of the College.

## Impact

*Key evaluation question: What difference is the College making to FICs' capacity to identify country risks as well as close regional security issues and address them?*

**The College is still in its infancy having started operations in 2019 and then having them heavily curtailed during the COVID pandemic, it has really only been able to be fully operational for 3-4 years.** This is a very short timeframe for a new institution to have an impact. But there is evidence of impact from the College's work.

A survey of alumni completed as part of this review noted that **91 per cent of respondents<sup>8</sup>** were applying what they learnt from their engagement with the College to their daily work. The most common examples of skills being used were around better analytic skills and ability to better understand, develop and structure policies. Respondents also noted a greater appreciation for security and the links between other sectors – alluding to a greater appreciation for the broader definition of security under the Boe Declaration. An improved understanding of specific security issues such maritime security and cyber security were also mentioned by respondents.

**What is notable about these results is that 70 per cent of respondents had engaged with the College in 2024 or prior.** For a significant proportion of respondents to have attended a College training program at least 10 months ago and still be reporting that they continue to use what they have learnt in their daily work is an impressive result.

**The same survey found that 70 per cent of respondents felt that the College was contributing to a safer Pacific.** The most common reasons given to support this assertion were: through information sharing; training / capacity building; and networking and collaboration. No respondents said the College wasn't contributing to a safer Pacific, the remaining 30 per cent thought the College may be contributing but could do more citing increased training and a greater focus on geopolitics and acting as a catalyst to the creation of a regional security organisation.

**While it is too early to state definitively that the College is having a lasting impact on security in the Pacific there are positive signs that those who have engaged with the College value its work and apply what they are learning into their daily work.** There is an early sense that the College is contributing to a safer Pacific, and with more engagement over a longer period it is likely that this view will only strengthen.

## Sustainability

*Key evaluation question: How "Pacific" is the Pacific Security College? What are the key priorities to inform the next stage of the program?*

**For the College to become sustainable it must consistently demonstrate its value to Pacific partners, and more than that, demonstrate that it listening to Pacific partners and being led by them.** In many ways the approach taken by the College is as important, if not more important, than the products being delivered. Building of strong relationships take time and maintaining strong relationships takes constant effort. Senior College leadership should be commended on the approach that has been adopted, with partners commenting on the quality of relationships with College leadership and the cultural understanding displayed in personal interactions and ways of working adopted by the College. Partnering with other Pacific-based institutions will further strengthen the College.

**The increased profile of the PRNSC, and its seeming acceptance as part of the annual calendar of regional security events, is an indicator that the College is adding value to the sector.** Speakers at the 2025 Conference included two Pacific Prime Ministers, eight Pacific government ministers and wide range of heads of regional organisations and national universities, senior public servants from key ministries across the region, civil society leaders and academics. The convening power demonstrated by the College at the Conference, and subsequent discussions with senior participants, indicates the Conference is valued by partners who are keen to see it continue into the future. As noted earlier, to maintain the Conference's relevance, the College should ensure that the agenda is co-designed with partners to reflect their interests and the speakers chosen are varied and include people with lived experience of the security issues being discussed.

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<sup>8</sup> The survey was sent to 894 College alumni. 23 responses in total were received; 21 reported that engagement with the College was helping them with their daily work. Two respondents stated engagement with the College had helped them a little with their daily work and no respondents said it had not helped.

**There is a general sense among partner governments that the College is making progress towards becoming increasingly Pacific-led.** The increased number of College staff from the Pacific has contributed to this perception as the has the model of using local consultants wherever possible to lead the development of National Security Strategies, with international consultants in a supporting role. Some interlocutors noted that previous reservations held by some in the Pacific about the influence of the Australian Government over the College has largely dissipated; this was attributed to some of the measures noted above, promoting Pacific leadership with the College 'leading from behind'.

### **Proposed community of practice**

**The College's alumni network is an important piece for the sustainability of the College.** People who have engaged with the College rate their initial engagement very highly. Post engagement surveys, conducted immediately after a training course, record very high satisfaction scores (often 100 per cent satisfied or very satisfied).

Depending on the refreshed objectives of the College that come from the redesign following this review, repurposing the network as a community of practice, or similar, and relocating and supporting the administration of the community of practice in the region increases the likelihood of success of the community. Conversations should also take place with other institutions to try to consolidate as many similar lists as possible into a single community of practice, to facilitate information sharing as widely as possible.

Establishing and maintaining a community of practice will require additional funding beyond the existing resource envelope. The community of practice is seen as a key element of moving towards Pacific ownership of the work, and elevating Pacific voices.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Overall Conclusions**

**The College has made significant progress since September 2022 when the original contract was extended for an additional four years.** But that only provides a good foundation from which the College should build. DFAT should view the College as a long-term investment that is contributing to a strengthened regional security ecosystem. Even if not all of its stated objectives are fully achieved by the end of the first phase of the program, it has exceeded expectations by lifting the discussion on security in the Pacific and broadening it to reflect the interconnected nature of traditional and non-traditional security aspects as articulated under the Boe Declaration.

**The College has successfully leveraged the strong reputation of the ANU, and under the highly regarded leadership of Professor Dave Peebles, established itself within the Pacific security ecosystem.** The College has established strong relationships with key security focal points across FICs and has contributed to the development of four National Security Strategies and delivered training courses across the region as well as Executive Leadership courses for Parliamentarians from Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. The quality of the training courses is considered high.

The PRNSC has established itself as a permanent fixture on the regional security calendar of events. The convening power of the College is demonstrated through the list of speakers, panellists and attendees at the 2025 Conference.

But there remain challenges for the College in the years ahead; it must adapt its offerings as the needs of partner countries change and as capacity in the security sector across the region increases. Having a National Security Strategy is a good start, but implementing a strategy is often more difficult than developing one. The College has assisted Cook Islands in developing an Action Plan to implement its strategy, this shift to supporting implementation through training course and technical assistance is likely to continue in the future as more countries' strategies are ratified by their parliaments. Whilst the PRNSC is well regarded, it must also ensure it remains fresh by providing a variety of speakers and a contemporary agenda co-developed with partners if it wants to remain relevant.

**Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the College is how it better embeds itself in the Pacific, how it manages to strike the balance of maintaining its strong connection with the ANU and the credibility and expertise that brings with the need to be more Pacific led, to have an even stronger connection to other Pacific academics, experts and institutions.**

*Applicability of findings and conclusions to other Australian government programs*

The success of the College is due to the relationships it has built across the security sector throughout the Pacific. The way the College has worked for the past three years has been at least as important as what it has delivered. Having the ANU implement the College has assisted the program, leveraging ANU's reputation throughout the Pacific.

Recognising the importance of collaborating with other regional organisations has helped embed the College within the security ecosystem. Working closely with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has positioned the College adjacent to the regional architecture while also maintaining its independence.

These approaches have contributed to significant public diplomacy benefits for Australia, not with the wider public, but with partner governments and senior officials throughout the region. The College is building a reputation as providing trusted, independent advice in the security sector.

None of this happens quickly; programs that require a strong social licence to operate, especially regional programs in a sensitive sector like security, must take a long-term view. Placing equal importance on how a program is implemented, as what it is delivering is critical in these types of programs. Having some flexibility in expected outcomes, or lower levels of ambition in the initial years, allows the managing contractor to establish and build strong relationships that are critical to establishing the social licence of the program to operate.

## Recommendations

### Partnerships

The following three Partnerships recommendations should all be included in the design refresh and implemented during the next iteration of the College:

1. The College should enter into negotiations with suitable academic institution(s) in the region with a view to co-locating staff and undertaking joint activities in the short term and in the medium to long-term developing a shared ownership model of the College.
2. The College transition its alumni and professional networks into a broader Pacific Community of Practice, creating a dedicated, focused and decentralised network of security cohorts that is accessible by a wider range of security practitioners from across the region and that is able to offer advice and support and high-level mentoring on a range of difficult security issues.
3. DFAT should consider increasing funding to the College in the order of \$1-2 million per year to support its efforts in building a partnership with a Pacific-based co-host and to establish and maintain a security-focused community of practice based in the Pacific.

### Learning and training

The following two Learning and Training recommendations should be implemented immediately while the current iteration of the program is still running with a view that the partnership with the Australia Awards program is in place at the start of the next iteration of the College:

1. DFAT should facilitate a partnership between the College and the Australia Awards program for a number of scholarships to be used to target participants in a College course who wish to pursue further post graduate study at ANU.
2. The Technical Assistance Register which was included in the original design of the College is redundant and should cease to operate; it should not be included in the planned design refresh.

### Dialogue

The following two Dialogue recommendations should be piloted during the next PRNSC, with the process for co-creation formalised in the design refresh and implemented during the next phase of the College:

1. The College should seek to co-create a contemporary annual agenda for every Pacific Regional and National Security Conference ensuring that all aspects of the expanded definition of security under the Boe Declaration are regularly included.
2. The College should draw Conference speakers from a wider variety of sources, including community representatives and people with lived experience of the impact of security challenges.

### Operational

With the exception of recommendation 10 which should be implemented immediately, the other three Operational recommendations should be implemented during the next iteration of the College:

1. The Advisory Board of the College should develop guidelines establishing the range of experiences and geographic and cultural diversity it seeks to maintain on the Board. This should be agreed with DFAT and new members recruited accordingly. The size of the Board should balance the need for a range of views to be aired during substantive discussions, with all members afforded an opportunity to contribute, while also keeping costs at a reasonable level.
2. As part of the next design of the College, DFAT should clarify the role of the Advisory Board, and who it reports to, to maximise its value to the College and DFAT.
3. The College should push for equality of opportunity for women, men and gender diverse people in terms of access to training courses and speaking opportunities at the Pacific Regional and National Security Conference, in line with the College's Gender Action Plan.
4. DFAT should reconsider the reporting requirements for the College and ensure that they are fit for purpose. Given the nature of the work, bi-annual reporting, with more regular update meetings is sufficient to properly oversight the program.

## Annex 1: List of People and Organisations Consulted

### Australian Government Officials

- Craig Chittick - Deputy Head of the Office for the Pacific
- Rob Krauss - Assistant Secretary – Pacific Security Branch
- Michael Crowe – Director - Pacific Security Cooperation section
- Joy Clements – Assistant Director – Pacific Security Cooperation section
- Scott Kelleher – Director – Kiribati section
- Mona Balram – Director – Nauru section
- Mia Thornton – Director - North Pacific section
- Rachel Walshe – Director – Papua New Guinea Political section
- Louise Ellerton – Director – Samoa and French Pacific section
- Ben Rhee – Director – Vanuatu section
- Hugh McClure – Assistant Director – Nauru section
- Caitlin O’Shannon – Assistant Director – Tuvalu section
- Ezabell Jee – Policy Officer – Tonga section
- Lorna Lucas – Vanuatu section
- Antoinette Beaumont – Pacific Cyber Cooperation section
- Lewis Baker – Pacific Cyber Cooperation section
- Elisabeth Parkin – Australian High Commission – Fiji
- Scott Robertson – Australian High Commission – Fiji
- Uriah Turner – Australian Border Force, Australian High Commission – Fiji
- Jim Anderson – Regional Director Pacific, Department of Home Affairs, Australian High Commission – Fiji
- David Whitehead – Department of Home Affairs, Australian High Commission – Fiji
- Henry Stimpson – Department of Defence, Australian High Commission – Fiji
- Hilary Brazel – Department of Defence, Australian High Commission – Fiji
- Toby Sharpe – Australian Ambassador to Palau – Palau
- Brett Pelttari – Australian Deputy Head of Mission – Palau
- Thomas Underwood – Australian High Commission – Papua New Guinea
- Nicholas Yates – Australian High Commission – Solomon Islands
- Callum Findlay – Australian High Commission – Tonga
- Cassandra Choake – Australian High Commission – Vanuatu

### Consultations with Pacific Government and other government officials:

- Antonina Brown – Deputy High Commissioner for Cook Islands, Fiji
- Junior Aini – Ambassador for the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Fiji and the Pacific, Fiji
- Aliioaiga Feturi Elsaia – Ambassador for Samoa, Fiji
- Michael Aroi – High Commissioner for Nauru, Fiji
- Viranria Brown – High Commissioner for Vanuatu, Fiji
- Rachel Bennett – New Zealand High Commission, Fiji
- Beverley Pallister – New Zealand High Commission, Fiji
- Maara Tetava – National Security Director - Cook Islands
- Akuila Savu – Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs – Fiji
- Peleni Talagi – Secretary of Government – Niue
- Sarah Lee – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
- Patrick Fitzgibbon – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
- Ayanna Ramarui – Policy Analyst – Palau
- Marsten Morgan – United States Embassy, Palau

### Consultations with relevant regional and other organisations

- Virginia Dawson – Director of Policy – Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- Alifeleti Soakai – The Pacific Community (SPC)
- Viliame Bovoro – Director – Pacific Fusion Centre

- Dr Manumatavai Tupou-Rosen – Acting Vice-Chancellor, University of the South Pacific
- Associate Professor Sandra Tarte – University of the South Pacific
- Aneet Kumer – Manager Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships – University of the South Pacific
- Nicholas Brown – Director – Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police
- Julian Bianco – Executive Coordinator – Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police

#### **Pacific Security College and Australian National University**

- Professor Janine O’Flynn – Head of the Crawford School at ANU
- Professor Dave Peebles – Director – Pacific Security College
- Naomi Oxenham – Business Manager – Pacific Security College
- Mark Binkin – Chair, PSC Advisory Board
- Ross Ardern – PSC Advisory Board
- Rhea Moss-Christian – PSC Advisory Board
- Rimbink Pato – PSC Advisory Board
- Litea Seruiratu – PSC Advisory Board
- Tuiloma Neroni Slade – PSC Advisory Board
- James Battley – Department of Pacific Affairs – ANU

#### **Pacific Security College alumni**

- Five alumni of the Pacific Security College (anonymous interviews)

## Annex 2: Terms of Reference

### Terms of Reference

#### Review of the Pacific Security College 2025

##### **1. Background**

The Pacific Security College (College) was launched in November 2019 to assist Pacific Islands Forum members with implementation of the *2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security*. The initiative was first announced in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper as the Australia Pacific Security College.

The College was contracted to the Australian National University (ANU), initially funded through an Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment of \$15 million from July 2019 to September 2022. The ANU's contract has been extended to September 2026, with continued annual DFAT ODA funding of approximately \$4.7 million per year.

The initiative is delivered by the ANU as a standalone College within the Crawford School of Public Policy. The College's Director reports to the Head of the Crawford School and the College's functions are supported by ANU corporate services.

The College's inaugural Advisory Board (the Board) was appointed in December 2019. Under the Board's Charter, the Chair is a Ministerial appointment while the Department appoints Board members. The Board is not a governing body. Its purpose is to advise and act as a sounding board for the Department and College management on strategic matters, to strengthen the College's outcomes and impact. It fulfils these purposes by providing high-level oversight of the College and through engaging in strategic discussions of the College's role in the Pacific. An independent mid-term review of the College was commissioned by DFAT in 2021. This review acknowledged positive progress made by the College in its start-up phase, but also made significant recommendations for improving its modality, operations, governance and management. DFAT has worked with the College to address the recommendations.

Professor Dave Peebles commenced as Director of the College in February 2023, replacing Professor Meg Keen who resigned from the position in April 2022.

The College changed its name to the Pacific Security College in December 2023 to reflect that the College is a regional initiative, an asset of and for the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific's shared responsibility for security.

The 2025 Review should include College operations and the mandatory review requirements set out in the contractual arrangements with DFAT (Services Order) for a Mid Term Review of the College. The Review should evaluate progress toward the intermediate and end of program outcomes and the overall effectiveness of the College in progressing Australia's national interests, including to what degree the College and its offerings are recognised as addressing Pacific Island Forum countries' security requirements. The Review will inform a Design Update ahead of the College's current investment term concluding in September 2026.

##### **2. Purpose of the Evaluation**

As part of DFAT program management, a Mid-Term Review (MTR) needs to be undertaken in accordance with Clause 3.9 of the Services Order. Its scope includes:

- d) examine program progress and impacts with regards to intermediate outcomes
- e) review progress towards the end of program outcomes set out for the program; and
- f) taking account of these and other indicators of performance and achievement, including the results of the Partner Performance Assessment, determine remedial actions in the event of unsatisfactory progress.

In addition, the Review should:

- g) Assess progress towards; fidelity to; and implementation and appropriateness of the recommendations and changes made following the 2021 review of the College
- h) Offer feedback on the effectiveness of College operations, including the funding model, structure and staffing, partnerships between DFAT and the College and between the College and partner governments and effectiveness of the Advisory Board in advising DFAT.

- i) Inform a design update of the College investment beyond the current investment term (ending in September 2025).

The ANU/College has three end of program (EOP) outcomes and several intermediate outcomes to deliver in its contract.

**EOPO 1:** Forum Island Countries (FICs) develop and implement relevant and effective national security strategies.

**Intermediate Outcome 1.1:** More states and Pacific agencies seek and accept more offers of support from the College and its partners

**Immediate Outcome 1.1.1:** FICs have access to high quality technical advice

**Output 1.1.1.1:**

Security capacity assessments are undertaken

**Output 1.1.1.2:**

Capacity development workshops are implemented

**EOPO 2:** FICs are capable of collaborating effectively on regional security challenges.

**Intermediate Outcome 2.1:** Pacific regional organisations engage with the College on security issues and derive benefits from the College's activities that enhance communication flows.

**Immediate Outcome 2.1.1:** Participation of women and people with disability taking part in "Women in National Security"

**Immediate Outcome 2.1.2:** Dissemination of research, analysis and ideas on security challenges and responses

**Output 2.1.2.1:** Communication Materials are Produced and Distributed

**EOPO 3:** FICs have access to a skilled Pacific security officials' network.

**Intermediate Outcome 3.1:** The College's alumni members share more information about Pacific security challenges and responses

**Output 3.1.1:** Security stakeholder engagement activities (formal and informal). The evaluation will inform management decisions such as whether to extend the program, whether to involve a new partner and whether to consider a new modality for a future program.

### **3. Key evaluation questions (for publication in main report)**

1. To what extent is the Pacific Security College (the College) investment on track to deliver on the end of program outcomes and made progress against each of the intermediate program outcomes?
  - a. To what extent do College offerings support quality, resilient and inclusive security in the Pacific region?
  - b. To what extent are College activities responding to the security needs of Pacific Island countries?
2. How well do the current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms serve program and DFAT needs?
3. What were the key challenges and opportunities the college encountered and how were these addressed, in progressing towards outcomes?
4. Based on lessons learned, what are the key priorities?
  - a. to the end of this funding period (including ways to incentivise progress)
  - b. to inform the next stage of the program.

#### **4. Key evaluation questions for strategic element of the review (findings to be annexed - not for publication)**

1. How effective is the College model and its partnerships in policy influence, policy dialogue and planning?
2. How well are partnerships between the College, DFAT and Forum Island Countries being nurtured and sustained – can we improve Pacific stakeholders’ satisfaction?
3. Is the current funding arrangement and relationship between DFAT and the College fit-for-purpose?
  - a. What alternate models could be more effective, efficient, and enable other partners to contribute?
4. How appropriate is the staffing and Advisory Board structure for delivering on program outcomes?
5. To what extent is the Advisory Board and its current structure (including composition and governance arrangements) effective in supporting DFAT’s management of the College? What improvements and efficiencies could be found?
6. Are there further measures DFAT and the College could take to strengthen the College’s regional presence, and the confidence of Pacific stakeholders?

The scope of the review is the College’s performance from the date of the contract extension (September 2022) through to the present.

#### **5. Team composition**

The evaluation team should comprise no more than 3 individuals including a Team Leader with relevant expertise. The team collectively should have the following skills/experience:

- a) experience in development monitoring and evaluation strategies and plans
- b) experience in development investment design
- c) knowledge and expertise in the implementation of government and regional national security and strategic policy priorities
- d) knowledge and expertise working in the Pacific, particularly on regional security matters
- e) expertise or background in the education sector or academia
- f) excellent interpersonal skills, including an ability to quickly develop effective relationships with a range of stakeholders, including international partners
- g) strong written communication skills including an ability to deliver timely and high-quality written reports
- h) a Negative Vetting 1 (NV1) security clearance held by the primary or secondary reviewer would be advantageous.

#### **6. DFAT Role and Responsibilities**

- DFAT will manage the Review process and will have the responsibility to plan, select and manage the consultant, and finalise and approve the final review document.
- DFAT is to ensure that the Review complies to its Monitoring and Evaluation Standards.
- DFAT staff should be engaged as part of stakeholder consultations. DFAT may nominate DFAT officers to participate in the Review process, including consultations with stakeholders.

#### **7. Reporting and deliverables**

The reviewer or review team will be responsible for undertaking and delivering:

- 1) an inception Report, covering the evaluation objectives, proposed evaluation methodology, stakeholder engagement plan and review plan to be provided within 10 working days of commencement
- 2) a draft report (no more than 20 pages in length), to be shared with DFAT and ANU for feedback, with at least 20 business days for review. The draft Evaluation Report will be in accessible format, include an executive summary of no more than two pages, evaluation objectives, methodology, findings and recommendations. Annexes should include sensitive findings (not for publication) related to the strategic operations of the College, the Terms of Reference, a list of interviews/stakeholders consulted and sources of evidence.

3) a final report (no more than 20 pages in length) outlining recommendations, incorporating DFAT feedback with an executive summary of no more than two pages.

The final review paper is to be published on the DFAT website, as per DFAT's Development Evaluation Policy. DFAT will provide and publish a management response to the review.

## 8. Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this review should include but not be limited to:

- A review of key documents – including updated versions where relevant – noting this list is not exhaustive:
  1. College Services Order for Core Management Services
  2. DFAT Deed of Standing Offer – Contract for Delivery
  3. Operating Procedures Manual
  4. Investment Design Document
  5. 2021 Mid-term Review Report
  6. Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning and Adapting (MERLA) Plan
  7. Annual Work Plans
  8. Quarterly and Annual Progress Reports
  9. Partner Performance Assessments
  10. Investment Monitoring Reports
  11. Alumni Strategy
  12. Branding Strategy
  13. PSC Sustainability, Gender and Disability Action Plans
- Stakeholder consultations with DFAT and the College, including an optional half day joint workshop.
- Virtual and/or in-person engagement with national security officials and other stakeholders from the Pacific region as identified through consultation with (and subject to the agreement of) DFAT.

## 9. Timeline and Duration

The review needs to be completed by the end of October 2025.

**Table 4 - Timeline of contract including milestones**

Milestone	Date
Milestone 1 – Contract commencement	28 July
Preparatory meeting/online discussion between provider and DFAT	July
Preparatory meeting/online discussion with the College	August
Milestone 2 Delivery of Inception Report	To be delivered by 15 August
Stakeholder consultations and half day workshop.	August/September
Milestone 3 Draft review report covering: - the review criteria as per the reviewer Services Order; - the key evaluation questions; - the intermediate outcomes as per the College's MERLA.	To be delivered by end September.
Discuss draft report with DFAT	October
Milestone 4 – Final report	To be delivered by end October.

## Annex 3 – not for public release

This annex is provided for the internal use of DFAT only. DFAT may choose to share this report with the Pacific Security College at its discretion. This annex should be read in conjunction with the main review report.

The **primary aims of this review** are as follows:

- a) Assessing progress towards; fidelity to; and implementation and appropriateness of the recommendations and changes made following the 2021 review of the College
- b) Offering feedback on the effectiveness of College operations, including the funding model, structure and staffing, partnerships between DFAT and the College and between the College and partner governments and effectiveness of the Advisory Board in advising DFAT
- c) Inform a design update of the College investment beyond the current investment term (ending in September 2025)

The following Key Evaluation Questions were considered in relation to this Annex:

1. How effective is the College model and its partnerships in policy influence, policy dialogue and planning?
  - a. Is a university the right environment to deliver the College investment?
  - b. To what degree might the College moving closer to the University of the South Pacific or other Pacific-based education providers (potentially in a partnership model) enable more effective delivery of the College's programs?
2. How well are partnerships between the College, DFAT and Forum Island Countries being nurtured and sustained – can we improve Pacific stakeholders' satisfaction?
3. Is the current funding arrangement and relationship between DFAT and the College fit-for-purpose?
  - a. What alternate models could be more effective, efficient, and enable other partners to contribute?
4. How appropriate is the staffing and Advisory Board structure for delivering on program outcomes?
5. To what extent is the Advisory Board and its current structure (including composition and governance arrangements) effective in supporting DFAT's management of the College? What improvements and efficiencies could be found?
6. What is the unique value proposition of the College for Australia and what is the unique value proposition of the College for the Pacific?
  - a. Are there further measures DFAT and the College could take to strengthen the College's value proposition, regional presence, and the confidence of Pacific stakeholders?

### Discussion of key issues

#### *Influence*

The College has demonstrated exceptional convening power as evidenced by the speakers and panellists at the 2025 Pacific Regional and National Security Conference (PRNSC). Its reputation for delivering quality courses has also been enhanced through the Executive Leadership programs that it has delivered for members of parliaments and other leaders from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. To have the quality of participants attend the College and organised activities for five full days is a testament to the quality of the programs. One of the alumni interviewed participated in the Executive Leadership program and was a current member of their country's parliament. They stated that they see value in holding the course annually as having parliamentarians outside of the country, in a neutral environment, allowed them the space and freedom to have conversations that they would not have at home, and this was beneficial to their country.

As noted in the main report, the College has had a significant influence on security discussions across the region in a short space of time it has been operating. A number of interlocutors stated that the most important thing that the College has done to date is to shift the regional conversation around security, broadening conversations to reflect the definition of security in the Boe Declaration and starting the process of 'softening the silos' to reveal the interconnected nature of the security challenges facing the Pacific. The PRNSC is seen as the leading regional security conference and as such can influence security-related discussions through the issues it includes, and as importantly excludes, from the Conference agenda in any given year.

### *Location*

The College is well situated in an academic institution such as university. Given the breadth of the definition of security under the Boe Declaration, being able to draw on a wide range of expertise that can be found at a university is important. The only real alternative to a university is for the College to be situated within an Australian Government department, but this risk putting the Collage in a silo; for example, if it was situated in the Department of Defence that would most likely result in things being seen through a defence lens, likewise if it was located in the Department of Health, the likelihood of meaningful engagement with traditional security actors is relatively low.

The College has also had to work hard to shake off the perception that it is a foreign policy arm of the Australian Government. Locating the College within the Australian Government would make that virtually impossible and cause significant damage to the prospects of the College becoming a meaningful contributor in the Pacific security ecosystem.

A number of interlocutors noted the credibility that the College has across the region because of its association with a well-regarded Australian university, such as ANU. It was noted that a number of key people in the Pacific security ecosystem are alumni from the Crawford School at ANU. The reputation of ANU has no doubt contributed to the College's ability to rapidly establish itself in the region.

Having said that, a balance should be struck between leveraging the ANU's reputation and moving the College towards being more Pacific led. There are a number of ways that this can be achieved:

- Increased recruitment of Pacific-based academic staff
  - A number of interlocutors acknowledged the increased Pacific profile among College staff, noting the value of this in increasing Pacific perspectives in research and engagement, and bringing additional networks and relationships to the College
  - The College should continue to prioritise recruitment of Pacific-based academics and staff wherever possible
- Formalised or strengthened partnership with a Pacific-based entity
  - The University of the South Pacific (USP) is the most likely partner should the College seek a Pacific based institution to partner with.
    - USP has campuses in 12 Pacific countries giving it a large footprint across the region
    - A partnership was explored with USP when the College launched but did not eventuate
      - Greater clarity over how the College is contributing to the regional security ecosystem allows for a more detailed and tangible partnership proposal
      - Changes in leadership in both organisations provides a fresh start to negotiations
  - The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat values the work of the College and would welcome closer cooperation
    - As noted in the main report, the aims of the College are probably best served by part of the regional security ecosystem rather than part of the formal architecture
    - Being too close to PIFS may limit the College's ability to raise difficult issues for fear of damaging the relationship
      - The security section in PIFS is under resourced; the College should explore options for collaborating with PIFS when it makes sense to do so such as around the PRNSC.

### *Relationships with Forum Island Countries*

The College has developed and nurtured an array of relationships with key figures across the Pacific security sector. It is hard to disentangle whether the relationships are with the College or with individuals who happen to currently work at the College. This is particularly the case with Professor Dave Peebles, the Director of the College, who is held in the highest regard across the Pacific. Almost without exception, all interlocutors noted that Professor Peebles' approach demonstrated a high degree of cultural competency and a willingness to listen that has resulted in the highest levels of respect for Professor Peebles from Pacific security leaders. Much of the College's success is attributable to the respect afforded to Professor Peebles by partners.

A number of interlocutors noted that the main reason for Professor Peebles' success in the role was due to the unique combination of a strong academic background, experience working in the Pacific security sector, and

diplomatic skills. A number of interlocutors noted his background as a diplomat provided a level of insight and understanding around policy formation and relationship management that was unique.

This does raise the potential issue of key person risk for the College and the need to ensure that high quality, preferably Pacific-based successor(s) are identified and nurtured.

One factor that has proven successful in helping countries to develop their National Security Strategies has been the use of local consultants to lead the process. Although personalities also play a significant role in working relationships, one of the most significant issues that has arisen during the period under review was the breakdown of the relationship between the National Security Advisor in Nauru and a consultant contracted by the College to support the development of the countries National Security Strategy. There were a number of factors contributing to the breakdown in this relationship, but the College's approach of using a national consultant to lead the process was not used on this occasion to the detriment of the project.

#### *Relationships with DFAT*

Relationships between the College and DFAT, particularly at Post, were hard to ascertain due to the limited number of Posts that the review team was able to engage with. In some countries it is clear that the College has as strong, if not stronger relationships, with senior members of government and senior officials. This can cause issues at Post where informal engagement between the College and partners occurs and Post hears about it via a source other than the College itself. It will always be a balance for the College who need to maintain their independence from DFAT if they are to remain a trusted provider of technical assistance in a sensitive sector. But it is equally important that they maintain good working relationships with relevant officials at Post. At a minimum the College should advise Post when Canberra based staff are travelling to their countries. Post would also appreciate being advised when a conversation of substance has taken place with a partner government member or official. This does not mean a detailed readout of the discussion is provided to Post, nor does it mean that all conversations are significant, and Post should be advised. The College should use its discretion and strike the balance between independence and cooperation with DFAT Posts.

#### *Funding model*

ANU is the current managing contractor of the College having won an open tender process when the College was first established. This is currently the first phase of the College, with funding due to expire in September 2025 when a new contract will be entered into with a preferred supplier.

DFAT tends to use managing contractors to implement its programs. Over the past ten or so years, organisations that have previously received grant funding to support their work, and who have demonstrated positive development outcomes over a long period of time, such as the Australian Volunteers International, have had to bid to win the contract to implement newly designed programs which are effectively their core business. This shifts their funding model from an upfront grant basis to an invoice in arrears basis.

The current contracting model remains the most appropriate for the next iteration of the College. However, if the College continues on its current trajectory by continuing to make a significant contribution to regional security and can demonstrate that it has effectively implemented its gender and disability action plans –key Australian development priorities– then DFAT should consider moving the funding model to a grant basis. This would recognise that DFAT is comfortable with the work the College is doing and has trust in it to continue to deliver high quality outcomes for the region.

#### *Staffing and Advisory Board structure*

The staffing structure of the College appears adequate with one notable exception. The alumni network requires additional resources for it to maintain the level of engagement that is sought by members surveyed. If, as recommended, the alumni network becomes a community of practice that attempts to consolidate smaller networks being run by individual organisations this burden will only increase. But the potential for the community of practice to become a thriving centrepiece of the regional security ecosystem is worth the investment.

Partnering with the Australia Awards program could relieve some of the administrative burden of managing scholarships currently managed by the College.

The Advisory Board structure seems appropriate. The Board is not a formal governance mechanism but rather provides strategic security advice to the College Executive. DFAT retains the program oversight function, including risk management functions. The composition of the Board provides the College with significant levels of gravitas which is important given that the College is relatively young for a regional organisation. The geographic spread of Board members helps raise the profile of the College.

A number of members of the Advisory Board remain well connected to the highest levels of government in their home countries. They still hold significant levels of influence. Greater opportunities exist for the College to share information more freely with Board Members who can help garner support for ideas generated through College research that will enhance regional security. Two-way information flows could be improved between the College and the Board, further strengthening the role of the Board.

The location and venue of future Advisory Board meetings should be considered as part of the design of the next iteration of the program. While it is more efficient to always hold meetings in the same, easily accessible location, there are benefits to holding meetings throughout the region. It is the review team's sense that the reputational benefits for the College of the Board members meeting with parliamentarians and senior government officials in different countries in the margins of the Board meetings outweigh the additional costs of moving the meeting around, at least while the College is still building its reputation. The quality of people the College has attracted to the Advisory Board is a real asset of the College and this should be leveraged wherever possible.

The Advisory Board should be capped at ten people, with gender parity a mandatory requirement.

#### *Value proposition*

The College has successfully positioned itself as the primary 'track 1.5' security organisation in the Pacific. It's location within an academic institution is critical to this positioning giving it credibility to engage with politicians from across the region whilst also having the freedom to engage with a wider range of stakeholders than is usual for a government or even regional membership-based entity.

The expanded definition of security under the Boe Declaration created a space for an entity to try to 'soften the silos' within and between traditional and non-traditional security actors. Existing regional organisations tend to focus on a specific element of security, such as the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) or the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). The Pacific Community (SPC) is the largest multi-disciplinary regional organisation, but it is a technical agency with a focus on science and research and is not well positioned to lead regional security discussions.

As a new entity, bringing significant new resources to the sector, the College brings real value to the region by creating space for discussion, building capacity and contributing to the security knowledge base across the region and providing practical support to countries seeking to implement the actions described in the Boe Declaration. Without the work of the College, implementation of the Boe Declaration would not be as advanced as it currently is.

Under Australian procurement guidelines, the contract to implement the next iteration of the College must go out to tender. The tender must be an open, competitive process. It should be acknowledged that some of the College's value, but by no means not all, lay in the fact that the College is based in ANU. ANU, and the Crawford School of Public Policy in particular, enjoys a strong reputation throughout the Pacific with a number of regional leaders having studied there. This connection was noted by a number of interlocutors during consultations.

Balancing the value of being based in an Australian university with the need to be more closely linked to Pacific institutions will be the challenge for the coming five years. A partnership with USP is the most obvious place to base the College in the Pacific although this will bring greater complexity to the College and will require ongoing relationship management. This approach will have to be carefully considered during the design phase of the next iteration of the program.

#### *Other considerations*

The review notes that the College should seek to partner with the Australia Awards program to facilitate scholarships.

Australia also supports a number of other security-related programs and initiatives throughout the region that the College should consider collaborating with. It must be noted that there is a risk in being too closely associated with other Australian Government efforts noting that the College has had to work hard to change perceptions around its connections to Australia's security apparatus.

For example, the College could consider collaborating on trainings with include the SEA-PAC Cyber program which includes a significant cyber security capacity building element.

The College (or DFAT) should consider developing a map of all programs with a security related focus to better inform opportunities for coordination and collaboration.