



## Fisheries Development Assistance in the Pacific 2010-2025 DFAT Management Response to the End of Investment Evaluation

### Context

Australia has supported sustainable fisheries management and economic development in the Pacific for several decades. Since June 2010, most of DFAT's Pacific fisheries development assistance has been directed through Australia's Fisheries Development Assistance in the Pacific investment (INJ201), from June 2010 to June 2026 and a value of over \$135 million.

The Investment has supported 54 fisheries-related agreements in the Pacific since 2010. 70% of Investment expenditure was allocated to core and program funding for the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Pacific Community's Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division (SPC FAME) (Australia is a founding member and partner of the SPC and the FFA), aiding their members to sustainably manage their valuable ocean resources, with the remaining 30% of the Investment directed towards project funding for coastal fisheries, maritime boundaries and addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

### The Evaluation

The Pacific Fisheries and Maritime Section (PFO) in Office of the Pacific (OTP) commissioned an independent evaluation of the investment to inform the preparation of the Final Investment Monitoring Report and identify lessons to shape DFAT's current and future Pacific fisheries programs. The Strategic Development Group Pty Ltd was contracted to conduct the evaluation January- August 2025<sup>1</sup>. The evaluation considered the effectiveness and efficiency of the INJ201 investment.

Overall, the evaluation found that over the past 15 years, Australia's Investment has yielded substantial results across all intended outcomes, strengthening regional partnerships and governance, while contributing to economic improvements, maritime security and a reduction in IUU fishing. Support for regional organisations and community-based initiatives were key pillars of the investment's success.

The evaluation also noted that cross-cutting outcomes such as gender equality and climate resilience have received increasing attention and have shown some progress over the lifetime of the investment, but achieving disability equity requires substantial future effort.

The evaluation included 5 recommendations that relate to current and future DFAT investments in Pacific fisheries and DFAT's action plan in response to the recommendations is in the following table.

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<sup>1</sup> The report represents the independent views of the consultants and not necessarily the views of DFAT.

## DFAT Management response to specific evaluation recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan
<p>1. DFAT should consider adapting its core funding to the FFA to include both a fixed part and a variable part. The variable part will be based on funding linked to targets agreed between DFAT and the FFA and will be linked to measurable results.</p>	<p>Partially Agree</p>	<p>DFAT has considered using performance- based funding for the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Secretariat core funding, however adopting this approach with the FFA would be inconsistent with the principles in our <a href="#">partnership agreement</a> to provide predictable funding to support the FFA Secretariat deliver on its mandate.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue to engage with the FFA regularly to monitor performance against program objectives, including through active participation in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FFA-Australia–New Zealand annual High Level Consultations</li> <li>• Regular Forum Fisheries Committee meetings and</li> <li>• the FFA Small Working Group established to implement the recommendations of the Independent Refresh and Performance Review of the FFA.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Ensure implementing partners of future discrete investments develop Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Frameworks that meet <a href="#">DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standards</a>.</p>	<p>Partially agree</p>	<p>PFO acknowledges that strong monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems are important to manage programs effectively. PFO's investments are predominately partner-led and contribute to core work undertaken by regional organisations.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue regular engagement with our partners including the FFA and the Pacific Community (SPC) to monitor progress against implementation of their relevant business plans.</p> <p>DFAT will encourage partners to use a strong MEL framework, based on the DFAT standards, when renewing or revising their relevant strategic plan and associated business plans, noting that the FFA Secretariat is preparing the FFA's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and SPC's divisional business plans for the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystem (FAME) and Geoscience, Energy and Maritime (GEM) divisions are due to be renewed in 2027.</p>

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3. GEDSI goals must be explicitly integrated into the design and plans of future discrete investments, underpinned by rigorous analysis.	Agree.	PFO agrees that all people should benefit from Australia’s development assistance, consistent with DFAT’s international development policy. DFAT will continue to drive integration of gender equity and disability inclusive approaches in program delivery across all programs.	DFAT will work with partners to conduct or draw upon existing gender analysis to inform GEDSI goals into future designs and strategic planning documents. PFO will encourage FFA to incorporate strong GEDSI goals in the new business plan, drawing upon recommendations from the Independent Refresh and Performance Review.  PFO will continue to advocate for SPC FAME to incorporate disability inclusiveness and gender equality actions in its results framework and discuss progress on GEDSI at 6-monthly discussions.  PFO will engage with the SPC GEM team as they prepare a gender analysis to inform implementation of the Pacific Maritime Boundaries Program.
4. Explicitly integrate climate change adaptation and resilience objectives into all relevant future discrete investments.	Agree.	Climate change is the greatest security threat to the Pacific and PFO is committed to strengthen climate resilience across our development programs.	PFO will work with partners to more explicitly integrate climate change into designs and regional organisation strategic documents, including through encouraging inclusion of climate change objectives in the new SPC FAME and GEM divisional business plans in 2027  DFAT will encourage SPC FAME and GEM Divisions to align their respective results frameworks to reflect reporting with SPC flagships (including on climate change and gender equality).
5. Develop a plan for strategically communicating Australia’s contributions to enhancing Pacific fisheries management across all of its investments.	Agree	DFAT acknowledges the importance of raising awareness of our contributions to enhance Pacific fisheries management and agrees to develop a strategic communications plan.	PFO will develop a dedicated communications strategy by the end of Q1 2026 and work closely with partners AFMA, ABF, FFA, SPC and Pacific posts to better raise awareness of DFAT’s fisheries support.