

2018 INDEPENDENT EVALUATION – AUSTRALIA’S ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Summary of management response

DFAT welcomes the *Evaluation of Australia’s Electoral Assistance to Papua New Guinea 2015-2017* as a timely and important review of our longstanding program of support to elections management in PNG. We note the report’s overall finding that Australia’s contribution was reasonable in difficult circumstances and that our support was appreciated by the PNG Electoral Commission and aligned to its needs.

The report usefully recognises that our work was constrained by factors outside the control of the Australian Government. PNG elections are some of the world’s most challenging and expensive (per capita) to deliver, due to PNG’s difficult terrain, security and institutional capability issues. The evaluation report states that our program of support was delivered in an efficient and cost-effective manner in the face of these constraints.

DFAT broadly accepts the recommendations put forward in the evaluation report. In incorporating these findings into our future strategy, an important challenge will be to balance our interest in long-term planning and consistent support, with the need to remain responsive to PNG Government funding issues and reform priorities.

Where this report recommends the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) plays a stronger coordinating role, we acknowledge the potential benefits of this approach, while noting that detailed discussions will need to be taken forward with the AEC. We also note instances where the evaluation has made recommendations that can more appropriately be addressed through other programs, such as *the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* initiative.

DFAT’s next priority for our program of elections support to PNG is to develop an investment design to guide our approach over the current electoral cycle (2018-2022). This evaluation may have been more useful in informing this upcoming design process if it had included a more thorough discussion of the individual contributions of each of DFAT’s delivery partners and a more detailed set of recommendations to guide future activity.

Nonetheless, the broad approaches and principles recommended by this report are important and will be a critical input to DFAT’s future strategy for electoral support in PNG.

Individual management response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Strategic Recommendation 1:</u></p> <p>Electoral Support Program Design – that DFAT prepare a new investment design to guide its elections support to PNG over the future electoral cycle (2018-2022).</p>	Agree	DFAT’s current investment (INJ466 – Supporting Electoral Processes in PNG) is concluding. A new investment for the future cycle is being developed.	<p>Investment design risk assessment, concept note and procurement of design team underway.</p> <p>Engagement planned with PNB, GFB and MPB.</p> <p>Key contracts to support continuity of assistance to the PNGEC will be extended to the end of the second quarter of 2019.</p>	Finalise new investment design by second quarter 2019.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Strategic Recommendation 2:</u></p> <p>Continued whole-of-cycle electoral support – Australia should continue to provide electoral assistance to PNG over the whole-of-cycle.</p>	Agree	A whole-of-cycle approach will be maintained, while also encouraging flexibility in response to PNG Government priorities.	To be reflected in 2018-2022 investment design, which will include investments on electoral support activities at appropriate points in the cycle.	Ongoing

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Strategic Recommendation 3:</u></p> <p>AEC-PNG Twinning Program – inclusion of the Australian Electoral Commission as a partner in the Institutional Partnerships Program (IPP).</p>	Agree	DFAT agrees there would be value integrating the twinning element of the program into the IPP. Coordination between DFAT and AEC is now taking place.	To be progressed by DFAT and AEC and reflected in 2018-2022 investment design.	1 July 2019

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<p><u>Strategic Recommendation 4:</u></p> <p>Specialist Election Expertise – DFAT should build its expertise within the governance unit in order to maintain its knowledge base in the area of electoral support to PNG.</p>	Agree in part	DFAT has central electoral expertise in Development Policy Division, augmented by officers in Pacific Division (Canberra) and at the High Commission (Port Moresby). Our partnership with the AEC is designed to augment and enhance Australian Government expertise in this portfolio. Consistent with past practice, greater staffing resources will be dedicated to the election support program in the lead up to the 2022 national election.	Officers to continue to build expertise and deepen relationships with PNGEC and key stakeholders and ensure effective handovers to future program managers.	Ongoing

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Strategic Recommendation 5:</u></p> <p>Enhanced coordination and consolidation – consolidate management arrangements for the various electoral support modalities.</p>	Agree in part	DFAT sees value in exploring this recommendation through the design process. The AEC has a limited staffing profile in PNG and resource constraints may limit its ability to play a leading coordination role.	Include consideration of this recommendation in the terms of reference for the investment design team.	Finalise new investment design by second quarter 2019

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Strategic Recommendation 6:</u></p> <p>Provincial Engagement – focus on provincial engagement and ensure electoral assistance is informed by, and responsive to regional variation.</p>	Agree	DFAT’s program will continue to support the PNGEC’s decentralisation efforts and focus engagement at the provincial level.	To be reflected in new investment design (2018-2022).	Ongoing

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 1</u></p> <p>Capacity Building of PNGEC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ongoing technical assistance associated with the PNGEC’s capacity should be continued. – A diagnostic assessment should also be undertaken to ascertain areas where assistance can most usefully be targeted. – Capacity building should be designed to strengthen ongoing relationships between implementing partners, the development cooperation program, and the PNGEC. – Capacity building work should be designed in a manner that ensures provincial needs are met. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT agrees technical assistance should be focused on critical areas of PNGEC operation. A diagnostic assessment will be undertaken prior to the AEC joining the IPP.</p>	<p>To be reflected in new investment design (2018-2022)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 2</u> Support to Election Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Australia should continue to provide short-term logistical support through the Australian Civilian Corps (and ADF) in the lead up to and conduct of elections. – Results reporting tools should be designed to provide ease of use and maximum electoral transparency. 	Agree	Support to election delivery will remain a core part of Australia’s support. DFAT will continue to engage Australia Assists (the successor program to the Australian Civilian Corps) and the ADF on elections in PNG.	To be reflected in new investment design (2018-2022).	Ongoing

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 3</u> Gender & Social Inclusion	Agree in part	Additional steps to support gender inclusivity will be a high priority for	To be reflected in new investment design	Finalise new investment design by second quarter 2019.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender and inclusivity should be prioritised in the new Electoral Support Design Document. – Opportunities to advance the case for Temporary Special Measures should be identified and capitalised as they arise. – Candidate training funding should continue across the coming electoral cycle. The program should gather evidence of the benefits of participation. – Consideration should be given to identifying and supporting women candidates at the sub-national level. – Linkages with <i>Pacific Women</i> and other relevant programs should be identified and built upon. – Further strategies to support women in the PNGEC should continue to be explored. – Efforts should be made to explore ways of ensuring women’s safety during polling. 		<p>consideration in the new program design (2018-2022). Additionally, DFAT’s electoral support program will look to improve linkages with <i>Pacific Women</i> and related initiatives. Specific support to female candidates in PNG more appropriately falls under the <i>Pacific Women</i> initiative, including the Women in Leadership Support Program.</p>	<p>(2018-2022) and DFAT’s <i>Pacific Women</i> initiative.</p>	

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<u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 4</u> Electoral Roll <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with roll-related issues, but Australia should not lead efforts to improve the roll. 	Agree	DFAT agrees roll improvement is a high priority, but recognises this is an issue that requires PNG Government leadership.	To be reflected in new investment design (2018-2022).	Finalise new investment design by second quarter 2019.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 5</u> Voter Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be testing of varying approaches to voter awareness. The overall objectives of voter awareness need to be sharpened. Strategies to promote voter awareness should be clearly articulated and customised to the context. Operational funding for the dissemination of voter awareness products should be well-scoped. 	Agree	<p>Options to expand voter awareness efforts will be considered through the new investment design process.</p> <p>Support to voter awareness could also be considered under the broader PNG-Australia Governance Partnership.</p>	To be reflected in the new investment design (2018-2022).	Finalise new investment design by second quarter 2019.

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<p><u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 6</u></p> <p>Electoral Reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify the principles and objectives of Australia’s influence on PNG electoral reform. – Continue to look for opportunities to support PNG-led electoral reforms with strong prospects of success. – Support the development of feasible reform options in areas of mutual interest and continue to advocate for improved electoral processes. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>PNG is considering significant reforms of its electoral system over the current cycle. DFAT is closely following developments and support for agreed reforms will be reflected in the new investment design.</p>	<p>Retain focus on supporting PNG electoral reform in new investment design and use forums such as the Development Partners Electoral Support Steering Committee to advocate for sound policy.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
<p><u>Operational Recommendation Grouping 7</u></p> <p>Implementing Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Outline the roles of the various implementing partners and clearly structure their coordination. – AEC engagement should be continued and its role should form the centrepiece of the electoral assistance partnership. – IFES’s role should be driven by demand for electoral support from the PNGEC and fit with Australia’s broader strategy for the program. – The Governance Partnership facility advisers should be maintained in an ongoing manner on finance and ICT work. – Barring exceptional circumstances, support provided by the Australian Civilian Corps should be of a similar magnitude to that provided in 2017. – Implementing partners working on areas of relevance to upcoming local level government elections should be maintained. 	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>Improving coordination between implementing partners is a priority for DFAT’s management of the program and will be considered in the new investment design (2018-2022).</p> <p>DFAT will retain discretion to deploy short-term technical advisers in response to specific requests from the PNGEC.</p>	<p>To be clarified and reflected in the new investment design (2018-2022).</p>	<p>Finalise new investment design by second quarter 2019.</p>