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**WORLDWIDE REACH. HUMAN TOUCH.**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International SOS Australasia Pty Ltd is pleased to provide a submission to the development of a new Australian international development policy.

As a recognised partner of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), International SOS has delivered and continues to support the delivery of Official Development Assistance (ODA) across the Pacific, supporting and extending DFAT's capacity to deliver development outcomes. Our submission is provided as industry advice, outlining ways in which the private sector can be leveraged to support Australia's national interest.

**Commercial providers are an essential partner for delivering the Australian ODA program.** The private sector has extensive reach in the Pacific, enduring partnerships across communities, and access to local workforces and local procurement. These complement government and NGOs, providing capability and flexibility to deliver development outcomes to the local communities while strengthening the relationship with the partner government. Commercial providers also provide a rapid mobilisation capability augmenting the Australian Government's capabilities in an environment of almost continuous crisis deployments.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information or clarification. We are located in Canberra and able to meet with the review team at any time. My point of contact in this matter is Sybil Wishart, General Manager - Government, [sybil.wishart@internationalsos.com](mailto:sybil.wishart@internationalsos.com), 0418 243 115.



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## OVERVIEW

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International SOS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new International Development Policy. International SOS is a long-term partner of the Australian Government on the delivery of ODA and disaster relief in the Pacific and beyond. The global pandemic has highlighted the importance of building resilient health capability in the Pacific while concurrent natural disasters have required significant Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) support. The private sector has a critical role to play in Australia's ODA program and consultation is vital for achieving positive outcomes in the region.

## ABOUT INTERNATIONAL SOS

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Established in Indonesia in 1985, International SOS is the world's leading health and security services company. Services provision is spread across government, the private sector, and NGOs. As of 2022, International SOS has:

- 1,000 locations across 92 countries,
- 12,000 employees, including 5,200 medical professionals,
- 12,000 global clients,
- 91,800 trusted providers across 239 countries and territories.

**Our work in the Australian Aid Program** - International SOS is a long-term strategic partner for the Australian aid program in the Pacific. We have been active in the region for over 25 years and are the most trusted provider of medical and security services – no other assistance company has comparable resources. This includes an extensive network of approved suppliers and the ability to rapidly deploy equipment, personnel, and capabilities in response to natural disasters and other national emergencies. For example, supported from our 24/7 Sydney Assistance Centre, International SOS provides medical and security advice to the Australian Aid Program, including most of the major managing contractors and NGOs.

**COVID-19** - During the COVID-19 pandemic, International SOS delivered vaccinations on behalf of the Australian Government, provided medical logistics expertise to Pacific countries, deployed testing capabilities, and helped build institutional health expertise. International SOS has also provided health services in response to natural disasters and civil unrest, including Australia's response to the Tongan volcano and the riots in Solomon Islands.

## ODA AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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Business and development outcomes are mutually reinforcing, and International SOS welcomes the Government's commitment to working with the private sector to revitalize Australia's ODA program. The private sector already contributes to the four focus areas identified in the review's terms of reference and is helping to build a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific. The private sector is already delivering ODA across the Pacific including immunisation programs, capacity building, and disaster response. It has responded during the recent pandemic and supported the Australian and Pacific Island governments during recent natural disasters. Business brings unique expertise and capabilities including flexible and scalable capabilities, as well as an enduring presence and local workforce in countries of critical importance to Australia's national interest.

If the Australian Government is to revitalize the international development sector during a time of severe budgetary constraint, the main focus will be on the efficiency and effectiveness of programs. In many cases the private sector, with its established local partnerships and supply chains, will be best placed to deliver these programs. In other cases, NGOs will be able to deliver the preferred outcome and in other cases a combination of partnerships across government, NGOs and the private sector will offer the best development outcomes for the region.

The new international development policy should create a policy environment that fosters business confidence and facilitates investment and activity in Australia's ODA program. An ODA program that imposes unnecessary costs and

## Submission

complexities will discourage the private sector from participating, potentially limiting available options and capability for Australia.

**Recommendation 1: Australia's International Development Policy adopts a provider agnostic approach to the delivery of ODA which is focused on outcomes.**

**Recommendation 2: Encourage business investment and participation in Australia's aid program.**

### Case Study: Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), International SOS has delivered over 40,000 vaccines in partnership with the PNG and Australian governments using vaccination hubs in Port Moresby and Lae. International SOS is also providing a mobile vaccination clinic based out of Lae to provide in reach for businesses and access to remote communities. In addition to administering the vaccine rollout, International SOS has been supporting DFAT's communication strategy to combat vaccine hesitancy and misinformation among frontline healthcare workers and the public..

## THE PRIVATE SECTOR'S RELATIONSHIPS

The Australian government can better utilise the private sector's unique and extensive relationships through more deliberate engagement. The private sector has a persistent presence in the Pacific, and its relationships in the Pacific are unique and enduring. Businesses typically invest for horizons over multiple years and employ a local workforce from the communities where Australia seeks to engage. Commercial providers often have global footprints, with staff working in regional locations, Pacific Islands and capital cities around the world. International SOS, for example has 12,000 staff working across 92 countries including approximately 400 staff in Papua New Guinea, the majority of whom are local employees and over 60% are women.

Businesses generally have relationships with a broad cross section of society. For example, International SOS works closely with many regional government agencies, commercial enterprises and extractive industries across the region. Due to the different nature of these relationships, businesses have unique insights into regional and local dynamics not always available to the Australian Government. In many contexts, local stakeholders will be franker with business than with government, offering a nuanced understanding of the local environment that is critical, particularly in times of crisis.

The government can better access and use these relationships through more deliberate engagement mechanisms. Building a more formal private sector engagement capability can help facilitate information flow and build the government's understanding of the region.

Efforts to increase Australia's influence through government-to-government relationships need to be complemented by efforts to increase business-to-business relationships. Australia's new ODA policy should continue to facilitate an environment that builds relationships between businesses in the region to build economic capability and people-to-people relationships.

**Recommendation 3: Establish a more formal engagement mechanism for businesses to engage with government on ODA. Specifically in relation to:**

- Identifying opportunities for Australia in the region,
- Improving the government's ability to access expertise and advice for the design and delivery of ODA in the Pacific.
- Making it easier for business to build relationships with relevant teams in government.

## HEALTH SECURITY INITIATIVE (HSI) FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

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The HSI is a critical tool for building resilience in the health systems of Pacific Island countries. Building resilience delivers better health outcomes and is more cost effective than emergency interventions. International SOS works with a range of institutions in the Pacific to build capacity and recognises the importance of the HSI as a key pillar of Australia's ODA program.

International SOS notes the HSI is due to expire in 2022 and would welcome its continuation with increased funding. International SOS also notes the strategic framework drafted in 2018/19 will expire in 2022. International SOS has welcomed the opportunity it has been given to participate in round table and other workshops to assist in setting priorities for the second phase of the HSI.

**Recommendation 4: Continue HSI funding beyond 2022 and update the HSI strategic framework with input from the private sector.**

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF (HADR)

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A new aid policy should examine the sustainability of Australia's HADR response capability. The scale and frequency of recent natural disasters has increased the speed of health asset deployments in Australia and the region. These concurrent domestic and regional support initiatives combined with labour shortages in the health sector have strained government capability including the ADF and AUSMAT. Looking into the next decade and beyond, rapid deployments will be a feature of Australia's engagement in the region.

Commercial health providers can deploy quickly due to both their national and global footprint, and the business continuity provided by working with government and commercial partners. For example, International SOS works closely with many regional government agencies, commercial enterprises and extractive industries across the region. This provides the basis for a large and continuous staffing presence, with enabling medical supply chains and equipment providers located around the world.

While AUSMAT is an extremely effective response capability, the immense burden on healthcare systems across Australia and our region is diminishing AUSMAT's capacity to meet medium to long term healthcare needs. Private sector health service providers often have access to well qualified and experienced Emergency Response Teams which can be deployed at short notice to provide a longer-term solution, following AUSMAT's initial assessment and emergency work. The enduring nature of private sector presence also means private providers are often already on the ground during and after natural disasters. The persistent footprint of businesses in the Pacific also allows for the rapid delivery of effects on behalf of the government. With workforce, stores and visas already in place, business can reduce, and eliminate the delays associated with recalling, preparing, and deploying the ADF on short notice.

**Recommendation 5: Increase the use of private sector providers for the delivery of HADR to reduce the stress on AUSMAT and the Australian Defence Force (ADF).**

## NEW COLOMBO PLAN

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International SOS supports the continuation of the New Colombo Plan as an important initiative to strengthen people-to-people and institutional connections. Business plays an important role in the New Colombo Plan and it is critical for young Australians to build their knowledge of the private sector in the region. As a global company, International SOS sees the advantages of workforce mobility in the region and the impact of cross-cultural people-to-people connections. We remain keen to assist with placements for New Colombo Plan recipients in our offices across the region.

**Recommendation 6: Maintain the New Colombo Plan and continue to involve the private sector in the program.**