



# PACIFIC AVIATION PROGRAM EVALUATION

**SUSTAINABLE PACIFIC AIR CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM AND  
SUSTAINABLE PACIFIC AVIATION PROGRAM 2020 TO 2024**

2 December 2025

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The views expressed in this report are those of the independent consultants, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or the Australian Government or any of the stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full name</b>
<b>AsA</b>	Airservices Australia
<b>AACTL</b>	Timor-Leste Civil Aviation Authority
<b>AIFFP</b>	Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific
<b>ASI</b>	Adam Smith International
<b>ATSB</b>	Australian Transport Safety Bureau
<b>The Bureau</b>	Bureau of Meteorology
<b>CAAs</b>	Civil Aviation Authorities
<b>CASA</b>	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
<b>DITRDCA</b>	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
<b>EPOO</b>	End of Program Outcome
<b>ESHC</b>	Essential Services and Humanitarian Corridor
<b>FIMR</b>	Final Investment Monitoring Report
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEDSI</b>	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
<b>IO</b>	Intermediate Outcome
<b>IOSA</b>	International Air Transport Association (IATA) Operational Safety Audit
<b>KEQ</b>	Key Evaluation Question
<b>MC</b>	Managing Contractor
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
<b>P4A</b>	Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation
<b>PARS</b>	Pacific Airlines Reimbursement Scheme
<b>PASO</b>	Pacific Aviation Safety Office
<b>PASSP</b>	Pacific Aviation Safety Support Program
<b>PPF</b>	Pacific Flights Program
<b>PRES</b>	Pacific Recovery Economic Support
<b>PRIF</b>	Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility
<b>RMI</b>	Republic of Marshall Islands
<b>RSOO</b>	Regional Safety Oversight Organisations
<b>SMS</b>	Safety Management System
<b>SPA</b>	Sustainable Pacific Aviation
<b>SPACP</b>	Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program
<b>VNS</b>	Pacific Aviation Section (VNS), Office of the Pacific, DFAT Canberra

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has commissioned an evaluation of the **Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program** (SPACP) and the **Sustainable Pacific Aviation** (SPA) program. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide an evidence-based assessment of SPACP and SPA:

- i. To inform the final investment monitoring reporting (FIMR) for SPA and SPACP including program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency of implementation approach, sustainability of outcomes and benefits attained from the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Risk Management systems.
- ii. To identify lessons and insights about efforts to strengthen Pacific aviation that can inform Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) programming, including informing the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The primary users of this evaluation are personnel involved in the P4A program including DFAT (Pacific Aviation Section [VNS], P4A DFAT, DFAT Posts), the P4A Managing Contractor, P4A Advisers, and whole of government partners).

The evaluation builds on findings from a previous rapid review of SPACP, undertaken in August 2022<sup>1</sup> (hereafter SPACP Rapid Review), to provide an overall assessment over the lifetime of SPACP and SPA.

The evaluation covers the period from September 2020 to June 2024. It assesses program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability while identifying lessons to answer the five key evaluation questions outlined in the findings table below.

This is a summative evaluation applying a mixed methods approach, combining key informant interviews, passenger perception surveys, a document and literature review and data analysis. Gender equality and disability inclusion dimensions were also considered throughout the evaluation.

## About the programs

With an investment of A\$68.3 million (Sept 2020–June 2024) ([Table 1](#)), the SPACP and SPA programs were delivered through two phases:

- Phase 1 - SPACP: from September 2020 to June 2022 and
- Phase 2 - SPA: from May 2022 to June 2024.

The joint **overall goal** of SPACP and SPA was:

*To contribute to a stable, prosperous and secure Pacific in the wake of COVID-19 and the **objective** was to contribute to COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery in Pacific island countries and Australia, and support the development of a more sustainable, resilient aviation sector in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.*

SPACP aimed to ensure that essential air services remained functional during COVID, connecting the Pacific with the rest of the world. It was implemented from 2020-2022 as a shorter-term program with the humanitarian and economic objectives explicit in End of Program Outcome (EOPO) 1:

*Safe, reliable air connectivity is maintained between Pacific island countries and Australia, contributing to COVID-19 responses, economic stability and resilience, and the continued viability of the aviation sector.*

The SPA program represented a transitional strategy while Australia developed its long-term Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) program.<sup>2</sup> It shifted focus from the emergency connectivity of SPACP and its EOPO1, to advisory support, whole of government partnerships and scholarships in support of a

<sup>1</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>2</sup> KII with DFAT officers, November to December 2024

sustainable, safe regional aviation enabling environment. It was implemented from 2022 to 2024 with the medium-term learning, development and sustainability objectives outlined in EOPO 2:

*Pacific aviation stakeholders plan and implement measures addressing key areas of need in the aviation sector to support a stronger regional enabling environment, improve aviation safety, and increase coordination and connectivity between Pacific island countries.*

## Findings

The evaluation made findings against each of the key evaluation questions. Where critical findings emerged from the evidence that have informed recommendations, the evaluation also made findings at the sub-question level. (Please see the Performance Rating Key at the end of this section.)

### KEQ 1: How relevant were SPACP and SPA to the policy and operational context? (RELEVANCE)

Rating: Good

**Finding 1:** SPACP was highly relevant to the challenging policy and operational context during the COVID-19 response. Many stakeholders consider that Australia's support laid the foundation for a more rapid post-COVID recovery.

Rating: Reasonable

**Finding 2:** SPA remained relevant to post COVID efforts to support a stronger regional enabling environment for Pacific aviation but was not always able to adapt to address partner government or regional reform priorities.

Evaluation Sub-question 1.2 How have the investments adapted to changes in the operating context, and to what extent have they remained relevant to shifting partner priorities and beneficiary needs?

Rating: Good

**Finding 3:** The investments demonstrated high levels of adaptation to an ever-changing operating context.

Rating: Reasonable

**Finding 4:** While both investments sought relevance to shifting partner priorities across substantive changes to context, SPA faced additional challenges. It navigated a more established context post-COVID, and partners reported both alignment but also that some local priorities were not addressed.

### KEQ 2: Was SPACP/SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes? (EFFECTIVENESS)

Rating: Good

**Finding 5:** SPACP was effective in achieving EOPO 1. Pacific partners and external analysis credit Australia's intervention, alongside other donors, with maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries, contributing to COVID 19 responses, economic recovery and the continued viability of the aviation section (see section 2.1)

Rating: Reasonable

**Finding 6:** SPA demonstrated mixed effectiveness in achieving EOPO 2. SPA effectively increased connectivity throughout the post-COVID period, delivering important benefits to Pacific island countries. Outcomes related to improved aviation safety and coordination were partially achieved (see section 2.2 – 2.6).

Evaluation Sub-question 2.2 What evidence is there of program activities contributing to organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific?

Rating: Reasonable

**Finding 7:** SPACP achieved its objective of maintaining the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) core services during COVID. SPA rapidly scaled up a range of activities which aimed to address more ambitious aviation safety outcomes through advisory support, whole of government partnerships and ongoing support to PASO. This has established relationships which could form the basis of future work on

aviation safety. However, the evidence available points to limited contributions to organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety within the period under review.

Evaluation Sub-question 2.3 What evidence is there of specific activities and/or partnerships influencing coordination, cooperation and collaboration including but not limited to policy dialogue and partnerships?

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 8:** SPACP and SPA built strong bilateral coordination, collaboration and partnerships with Pacific island countries. However, gaps in coordination with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA), select DFAT Posts, other donors and development finance institutions limited the effectiveness of the program in influencing policy dialogue and partnerships at the regional level.

Evaluation Sub-question 2.4 What opportunities for enhanced gender equality and disability inclusion in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about the promotion of gender equality and disability in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 9:** SPA increased its focus on gender equality and disability after the SPACP Rapid Review which found gaps in SPACP's response to gender and disability. SPA introduced gender advisory support to the program, supported partners in strengthening approaches to GEDSI and the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) and began planning for future work on disability inclusion equipment upgrades in airports. However, Pacific partners were less clear on gender equality measures supported by the program and the planned disability inclusion measures did not progress during SPA. The program did not systematically document learning on gender or disability. The program took appropriate opportunities to address climate change.

**KEQ3: Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes?**

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 10:** The investment made efficient use of time and resources during COVID. Less suitable modalities and weak governance, risk management and MEL systems reduced efficiency for the post COVID period of the investment.

Evaluation Sub-question 3.1 To what extent was the implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes?

**Rating:** Good

**Finding 11:** SPACP had an effective implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes efficiently.

**Rating:** Weak

**Finding 12:** DFAT continued to implement SPA directly, with an approach and modalities that largely retained the bilateral focus and existing partners. It needed instead a more coordinated, demand driven approach to more effectively respond to regional priorities and deliver SPA outcomes.

Evaluation Sub-question 3.3 To what extent did the MEL system generate credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability? What aspects would you retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan?

**Rating:** Weak

**Finding 13:** SPA's MEL system, risk management and governance arrangements did not sufficiently inform program decision making, outcomes and learning.

**KEQ 4: To what extent has SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector? (SUSTAINABILITY)**

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 14:** SPACP and SPA contributed to sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector. However, gaps in engagement with regional actors, local ownership and planning for exit of key investments pose risks to sustainability.

### Performance Rating Key<sup>3</sup>

**Rating:** Good

Performance is good, and no actions required

**Rating:** Reasonable

Performance was reasonable, however suggested actions are needed to strengthen outcomes either now or in a new phase

**Rating:** Weak

Performance is less than desirable, and urgent action is required

### Lessons and recommendations

The evaluation team has identified five key lessons and associated recommendations for DFAT arising from the findings of the evaluation. Three of the recommendations are strategic, two are operational. Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 are considered high priority.

#### LESSON 1

DFAT's hands on delivery, ability to rapidly mobilise funding during a crisis and identify Pacific priorities via its network of Posts was a key success factor for the SPACP program during the COVID response, reflecting findings from the SPACP Rapid Review,<sup>4</sup> and Findings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 11 of this evaluation.

**Recommendation 1:** Maintain DFAT capacity to respond to aviation crises, backed by specific funding, capacities and MEL indicators to determine the success of short-term emergency interventions (Findings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11) (Strategic, medium priority).

#### LESSON 2

Efforts made to reorient the program towards regional priorities under SPA could have been further strengthened to achieve EOPO 2. Direct delivery via PRES increased over the period, while delivering on regional priorities requires a greater shift in focus towards working through regional architecture. This reflects Findings 4, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 14.

**Recommendation 2:** DFAT's Pacific Aviation Team should strengthen the regional delivery approach, ownership by local stakeholders and program sustainability by aligning program priorities and delivery modalities more closely with Pacific priorities. This will mean rebalancing investments away from direct delivery towards building coalitions and implementing primarily through partners (Findings 4, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 14) (Strategic, high priority).

- a. Increase engagement with Australian government agencies that have Pacific aviation responsibilities to agree a whole of government approach that informs how Australia engages in aviation markets and strengthen coherence with Australia's broader policy engagement on the Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting, the ICAO council and PASO (Findings 8, 12 and 14).<sup>5</sup>
- b. Agree more measurable, strategic objectives with Pacific and aviation stakeholders that align with the regional architecture. Consider replacing Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) in the program logic with these priorities (Findings 2, 4, 10, 13 and 14).

<sup>3</sup> Good = 5 or 6; Reasonable = 3 or 4, and; Weak = 1 or 2 under DFAT's Investment Monitoring Report system

<sup>4</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>5</sup> DFAT, P4A Investment Design Document, DFAT, February 2023. KILs with DFAT staff, whole of Government partners,

- c. Consult Australian and Pacific partners to incorporate expert perspectives in the selection of appropriate partners, aiming to reduce the reliance on technical advisers (Findings 4, 6, 12 and 14).
- d. Establish coordination and governance systems that identify and consider Pacific priorities in decision making, and promote transparency of decision-making (Findings 4, 12 and 14).
- e. Consider establishing a Strategic Advisory Group with representatives of relevant agencies to support coordination, prioritisation, ownership and governance. Recommended membership: DITRDCA, International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO), PASO, Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF), a representative of a Pacific Island Country and a development bank (Findings 8 and 14).
- f. Prioritise planning for the next phase of the air connectivity routes financially supported by DFAT, to allow stakeholders and travellers to plan in advance, maximise the potential for sustainability and minimise future disruptions (Findings 4 and 14).
- g. When considering future financial support to air connectivity in the Pacific, consult with DITRDCA and contract an expert route analysis to inform the decision, including likely liability, time to handover and any remaining community service obligations (Findings 8 and 13).
- h. Review the P4A roles and responsibilities across DFAT Canberra, DFAT Nadi Office and the Managing Contractor for clarity and value add (Section 3.4) (Findings 8, 10, 12).

### LESSON 3

Support for aviation safety is critical and high risk and should be led by expert agencies in aviation safety, with an appropriate governance mechanism. This reflects Findings 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13.

**Recommendation 3:** review investments in aviation safety and strengthen the approach to risk management (Finding 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13) (Operational, high priority).

- a. Re-balance support for aviation safety investments to align more closely with regional aviation safety architecture, in particular to agencies that lead aviation safety e.g. PASO, CASA, rather than individual advisers through PRES (Findings 6, 12 and 14).
- b. Seek an expert internal review or audit of the program's approach to risk management to identify opportunities to ensure alignment with DFAT standards, with a focus on aviation safety. If agreed by the internal expert, engage an aviation industry expert to develop a tailored activity level risk management framework that combines industry standard risk tools with capacity assessment approaches. Apply this risk framework at activity level (Finding 12).
- c. Ensure the governance system (Recommendation 2d) provides appropriate technical skill and oversight of aviation safety risks (Finding 12).
- d. Review advisory rosters and strengthen project controls to ensure that advisers are only providing support on areas they would be qualified to deliver in Australia or Pacific Countries, especially related to aviation safety (Findings 6, 7 and 12).

### LESSON 4

Implementing DFAT's GEDSI priorities can be challenging in the Pacific aviation context and requires dedicated attention. This reflects Finding 9.

**Recommendation 4:** Complete the interim GEDSI strategy and ensure it is agreed with stakeholders (see Recommendation 2) (Finding 9). Given DFAT's increased attention to climate change, consider also agreeing an approach to climate change with stakeholders. (Strategic, medium priority).

### LESSON 5

A light-touch and late governance and MEL system did not offer the strength of evidence and oversight that may have supported the full achievement of EOPO 2 (Findings 6, 7, 9, 12, 13 and 14).

**Recommendation 5:** Strengthen governance and MEL systems to ensure evidence and learning informs program decision-making and achievement of EOPOs, in line with DFAT standards (Findings 6, 7, 9, 12 and 13) (Operational, medium priority).

# INTRODUCTION

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has commissioned an evaluation of **the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (SPACP)** and the **Sustainable Pacific Aviation (SPA)** program. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide evidence-based assessment of SPACP and SPA:

- iii. To inform the final investment monitoring reporting (FIMR) for SPA and SPACP including program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency of implementation approach, sustainability of outcomes and benefits attained from the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Risk Management systems.
- iv. To identify lessons and insights about efforts to strengthen Pacific aviation that can inform Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) programming, including informing the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The primary users of this evaluation are personnel involved in the P4A program including DFAT (VNS, P4A DFAT, DFAT Posts), the P4A Managing Contractor, P4A Advisers, and whole of government partners.

The evaluation builds on findings from a previous rapid review of SPACP, undertaken in August 2022 (hereafter SPACP Rapid Review), to provide an overall assessment over the lifetime of SPACP and SPA.<sup>6</sup> The Pacific Airlines Reimbursement Scheme (PARS) was originally in the Terms of Reference (**Annex 1**), however it was removed from the scope of this evaluation by DFAT as it had already been assessed through the SCACP Rapid Review.

## BACKGROUND

DFAT's support to the Pacific aviation sector was initiated in response to the severe disruptions caused by COVID-19, which drastically reduced air travel and threatened economic stability across Pacific island countries. Australia's approach evolved from providing emergency support (under SPACP, aligning with End of Program Outcome 1) (EOPO 1) to activities that aimed to foster a more resilient and well-connected Pacific aviation sector (under SPA, aligning with EOPO 2).

Overall, the program provided support to 13 Pacific partners: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Through the Pacific Flights Program, Australia aimed to assure essential air connectivity, facilitated vaccine delivery and maintained access for passengers travelling between Australia and the Pacific, including labour mobility workers and returning citizens. Beyond the immediate crisis response, the program also transitioned into activities to strengthen aviation safety and regulatory compliance through collaboration with the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), partnerships with Australian whole of government aviation partners (including the Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau), the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), and Airservices Australia (AsA), as well as advisory support to Pacific partners and scholarships to Griffith University and Fiji National University.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2020-2024

With an investment of A\$69.3 million (Sept 2020–June 2024), the program was delivered through two phases (Phase 1 - SPACP: from September 2020 to June 2022 and Phase 2 - SPA: from May 2022 to June 2024) ([Table 1](#)).

<sup>6</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

**Table 1: Overview of SPACP and SPA Funding and Partners<sup>7</sup>**

Investment	Modality	Funding Period	Amount AU\$
Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (SPACP)	Pacific Flights Program (PFP), PASO, PRES, BOM	September 2020 to June 2022	\$24.9 m, including \$16.8 m for the Pacific Flights Program
Sustainable Pacific Aviation (SPA) Program	PFP, PASO, PRES, whole of government (BOM, ATSB, CASA, AsA)	May 2022 to June 2024	\$44.4 m
<b>TOTAL</b>	N/A	<b>2020 - 2024</b>	<b>\$69.3 m</b>

Source: Evaluation team constructed from program data

The joint **overall goal** of SPACP and SPA was:

*To contribute to a stable, prosperous and secure Pacific in the wake of COVID-19 and the **objective** was to contribute to COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery in Pacific Island Countries and Australia, and support the development of a more sustainable, resilient aviation sector in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.*

The program was delivered through two End of Program Outcomes (EOPOs) and nine Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) (see the program logic at **Annex 2**).

**SPACP (September 2020 to June 2022)** had one EOPO and three IOs which aimed to capture the shorter-term humanitarian and economic objectives of the program. IO 1.1. focussed on human development objectives, IO 1.2 focussed on economic development and IO 1.3 on aviation safety and compliance. The EOPO and IOs were developed between January to May 2023.<sup>8</sup> SPACP was implemented through the Pacific Flights Program (PFP), the Pacific Aviation Safety Support Program (PASSP, supporting PASO) and the Pacific Airlines Reimbursable Scheme (PARS) (which was dropped after one year as it was found not to be effective).<sup>9</sup> The main activity under SPACP was support for a loss offset model which underwrote the costs of five Pacific and Australian airlines serving nine Pacific and Timor Leste Countries: PNG, Timor Leste, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, Tuvalu, Samoa and Tonga at a cost of A\$16.8 million<sup>10</sup> between 2020 to 2022 (**Figure 1**). SPACP also funded PASO to maintain services during COVID (**IO 1.3, Table 3**).

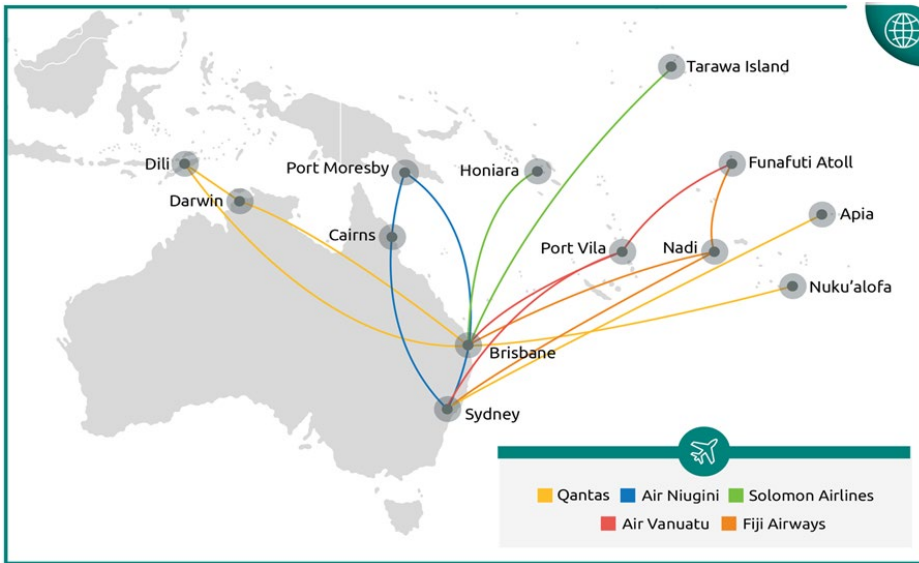
<sup>7</sup> Note on figures: unless stated otherwise, all dollar figures are in Australian dollars. Dates refer to Australia's financial year (July to June). For example, 2022-2023 refers to the 1 July 2022 to 30 June financial year.

<sup>8</sup> DFAT, SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, May 2023

<sup>9</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>10</sup> Table 4: Funding expensed by partner (SPACP and SPA). - Source: Financial overview\_SPACP\_INN626, Financial overview\_SPA\_INO014. Funding allocated to partners by the evaluation team

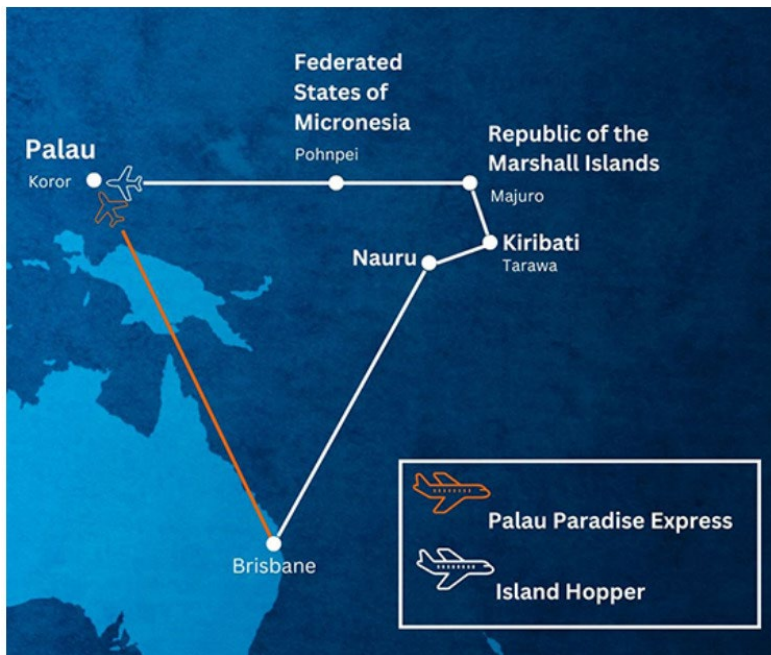
**Figure 1: Loss offset routes supported by SPACP during COVID**



Source: DFAT PFP Flights Report shared with the evaluation team in October 2024

**SPA (May 2022 to June 2024)** had one EOPO and six IOs (**Annex 2**). The EOPO aimed to address medium-term learning, development and sustainability objectives. IOs 2.1 to 2.3 focussed on learning, design and piloting. IO 2.4 addressed the aviation enabling environment. IO 2.5 focussed on coordination and connectivity while 2.6 focussed on safety and compliance. SPA was implemented through the PFP, PASO Support, support to Pacific airlines for safety and quality initiatives, airport support, CASA/ASA/the Bureau Pacific Initiatives, better Pacific airline interoperability, aviation safety and quality forums and support to airline strategy and coordination. SPA continued to fund two loss offset routes, the Australia North Pacific Connector (previously known as the Island Hopper) and the Palau Paradise express. A map of loss offset routes funded under IO 2.5 is at **Figure 2**. SPA activities by modality and country is at **Table 3**.

**Figure 2: Loss offset routes supported by SPA**



Source: DFAT PFP Flights Report shared with the evaluation team in October 2024. Note: Island Hopper = the Australia North Pacific Connector

**Table 2: Key activities delivered under SPACP and SPA (excluding loss offsets)**

Modality	Activity	Intermediate outcomes (IO)*	Countries supported
PASO	Aviation safety audits and surveillance in 10 Pacific countries	IO 1.3 (SPACP) IO 2.6	Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu
Whole of government partnerships	<b>Bureau of Meteorology (BOM):</b> Weather systems upgrades and training	IO 2.1, 2.4, 2.6	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Tuvalu, Fiji, Nauru, and Samoa
Whole of government partnerships	<b>Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA):</b> Work placements, access to online learning system and ad hoc technical support	IO 2.6	Tonga
Whole of government partnerships	<b>Air Services Australia:</b> Sponsored attendance at the Southwest Pacific Safety Forum on Navigation Aide Management	IO 2.6	Fiji, Nauru, Solomons, Vanuatu PNG attendance was funded by DITRDCA
Whole of government partnerships	<b>Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB):</b> MOU to provide technical assistance to an accident investigation in the Solomon Islands. Support for Tonga to certify an accident investigator	IO 2.6	Solomon Islands, Tonga
Adviser Deployments	1,253 days of advisory <sup>11</sup> support	IO 2.1	Tonga, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Nauru, Tuvalu, Fiji, RMI
Governance training	Training for aviation boards in Kiribati in May 2024	IO 2.4	Kiribati
Scholarships	8 Aviation Management scholarships to Griffith University in 2024	IO 2.1 to 2.3**	Tonga, Fiji
	12 Bachelor of Aviation Engineering at Fiji National University in 2024	IO 2.1 to 2.3**	Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu

Source: Evaluation team reconstructed from interviews and program documents. \*In most cases, DFAT and partner reporting under SPACP or SPA did not refer to the IOs under the Joint M&E Framework (see [Section 3.3](#)). The allocations in this table are based on the judgement of the evaluation team drawing from document review and interviews. \*\* The decision to allocate scholarships to IO 2.1 to 2.3 is based on the DFAT's classification in the 2024 IMR (INO014).

## EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation covers the period from September 2020 to June 2024. It includes the 13 Pacific partners supported by the program: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The evaluation assesses how the program integrated gender equality, disability inclusion, and climate change. The evaluation also assesses program relevance, sustainability, and efficiency while identifying lessons, to answer the following five key evaluation questions:

**KEQ 1:** How relevant were SPACP and SPA to the policy and operational context? (**RELEVANCE**)

<sup>11</sup> As of December 2024

**KEQ 2:** Was SPACP/SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes?  
(**EFFECTIVENESS**)

**KEQ3:** Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes? (**EFFICIENCY**)

**KEQ 4:** To what extent has SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector? (**SUSTAINABILITY**)

**KEQ5:** Lessons from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding (**LEARNING**)

The evaluation matrix, including each of the sub evaluation questions, is at **Annex 3**. The evaluation plan is at **Annex 4**.

One change was introduced to the scope of the evaluation. The original TOR (**Annex 1**) requested an evaluation of the Pacific Airlines Reimbursement Scheme (PARS). However, DFAT requested the evaluation team remove this from scope as it had already been covered sufficiently by the SPACP Rapid Review. The Rapid Review found that, while airline stakeholders were grateful for the support provided under PARS, it was, in isolation, not significant enough to incentivise them to continue operating unprofitable routes. The program was also administratively burdensome. As a result, the program ceased after one year of operation in mid-2021.<sup>12</sup>

P4A is outside of the scope of this evaluation. However, the evaluation team reviewed P4A program documentation to address KEQ5: Lessons from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding. DFAT staff described SPACP, SPA and P4A as a continuum of Australia's evolving support to the Pacific aviation sector.

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<sup>12</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This is a summative evaluation applying a mixed methods approach, combining key informant interviews, passenger perception surveys, a document and literature review and data analysis. The evaluation disaggregated and analysed all data collected by gender and disability status and considered specific inclusion related findings and recommendations.

## Phase I: Document review and literature review

The review covered over 58 internal program documents and publicly available reports for SPACP and SPA, progress reporting from SPA implementing partners (PASO, the Bureau of Meteorology, CASA), DFAT program data, external analysis on the impact of COVID on the Pacific aviation sector, white papers, reviews, fact sheets, briefing papers, scoping studies and gap analyses.

Particularly important to the review were:

- The Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (Carpenter, 2022);
- The SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, approved in May 2023;
- Annual Investment Monitoring Reports (2022, 2023, 2024);
- DFAT program databases that captured information on the Pacific Flights Program and Adviser deployments under PRES;
- SPA partner reporting;
- Australia's Aviation White Paper, Towards 2025;
- Australia's International Development Policy;
- Post Covid-19 Pacific Short-Term Aviation Strategy – A scoping study (L&B Worldwide Australia and PRIF, October 2020) and the update published in March 2022.

A full list of the documents reviewed is at **Annex 5**.

## Phase II: Interviews and surveys

Overall, the evaluation team consulted 127 stakeholders (46 women, 79 men, 2 prefer not to say; 68 of whom were from Pacific island countries) through Passenger Perception Surveys and Key Informant Interviews.<sup>13</sup> This exceeded the target set in the evaluation plan of 114 people (57 women, 57 men).

### Passenger Perception Surveys

The evaluation conducted a total of **53 passenger perception surveys (27% women, 71% men, 2 prefer not to say)** between 20 to 24 November 2024 on the Australia-North Pacific Connector. Overall, 56% of those interviewed identified as originating from a Pacific Island nation including 11 from Nauru, 7 from Marshall Islands, 7 from Kiribati, 2 from Solomon Islands and 1 from each of Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Samoa and Fiji (14 were from Australia and 10 from other countries). Most of the surveyed population (90%) were aged between 25-64, 6% were 15-24 years of age and only 4% were above the age of 65. One passenger identified as having a disability. Participants were questioned regarding the purpose of their travel, choice of flights, challenges, concerns, alternatives and the role of Australia in supporting airline connectivity.

The decision to conduct passenger interviews on the Australia-North Pacific Connector was based on a convenience sampling method. Because it stopped at multiple destinations, it provided a better opportunity

<sup>13</sup> For the key informant interviews, we did not ask people to identify where they were from. The count of people from Pacific Island countries includes foreigners who are based in Pacific Island Countries

to interview a diverse mix of nationalities, women and men and ability status compared to the Palau Paradise Express. The full sampling frame is in the evaluation plan (**Annex 4**).

### Key Informant Interviews

The evaluation team conducted 53 Key Informant Interviews (KII) with **74 Pacific aviation experts, airlines, airport authorities, regional bodies, Australian aviation agencies, DFAT staff, advisers and Posts** (32 women, 42 men; 38 based in the Pacific) (Target = 36 interviews with 54 people, 27 women, 27 men). The list of organisations consulted is at **Annex 6**,

Interviews were semi-structured with new lines of enquiry added iteratively to triangulate and test early responses. The evaluation team sampled stakeholders for in-person and remote interviews based on a purposive sampling method, which mapped the 13 SPACP and SPA partner countries against three criteria: (1) presence of key program stakeholders (airlines, airports, aviation authorities, national, regional or international bodies); (2) engagement during COVID (SPACP), and; (3) engagement post COVID (SPA). The overall sampling includes interviews in 9 of the 13 countries, with a mix of passengers, airline staff, airport staff, aviation authorities, DFAT Post, whole of government partners, technical experts and regional international aviation and infrastructure financing bodies. A breakdown of interviews by location and stakeholder category is at **Annex 7**.

Countries for in person interviews were selected based on the number of different stakeholders available for interview. The evaluation team then selected countries for remote interviews to provide a sample of COVID and post-COVID engagement countries. Sampling also adapted to logistical constraints. For example, the team were able to visit Fiji, however, were only able to conduct remote interviews in Kiribati on instruction from DFAT.

### Phase III: Synthesis and reporting

The evaluation team organised evidence from the document review, DFAT program data, key informant interviews and survey against a structured analysis template. This template mapped the evidence collected against a structured matrix that identified early findings against each sub-evaluation question, the type of evidence, the strengths/limitations of the evidence, a rating of the extent to which the evidence supported the finding, and links to other sections of the evaluation (**Annex 8**).

The evaluation team held internal analysis workshops throughout the evaluation to map evidence against emerging findings, identify and address bias, test the rigour and strength of findings and the evidence supporting it and to identify emerging gaps for further data collection. Emerging themes from interviews were tested in subsequent interviews.

The evaluation tested and refined emerging findings with DFAT in an aide memoire presentation on 4 February 2025 and with approximately 20 Pacific country, regional, donor, whole of government partners and program advisers on 17 March 2025. Feedback from both consultations was used to refine evaluation findings and recommendations.

The evaluation team used a modified framework to assess the strength of evidence, based on DFAT's Design, Monitoring and Learning Standard 10.8, adapted to reflect the need to rely more heavily on primary evidence (see **limitations**).

**Table 3: Framework for assessing evidence**

Rating	Criteria
Strong evidence	Evidence triangulated against at least three sources (for example documents or program data and a majority (60% or more) of respondents across at least two categories of stakeholders in interviews).

Rating	Criteria
Adequate evidence	Evidence triangulated against at two sources (for example documents or data and stakeholder interviews, or a majority (60% or more) of respondents across at least two categories of stakeholder interviews). In cases where stakeholders were uniquely qualified to provide evidence, such as Pacific country partners commenting on the relevance of the program to their priorities, the evaluation rated the evidence as adequate if the view was triangulated across a majority (80% or more) of stakeholders within that category.
Weak evidence	Non-validated assertions, personal opinions and anecdotes

Source: Evaluation team. For stakeholder categories, see the stakeholder mapping attached to the Evaluation Plan at **Annex 4**.

The evaluation team only used strong or adequate evidence to formulate findings and recommendations.

## Limitations

There were no significant limitations that undermined the evaluation team's ability to gather sufficient triangulated evidence to give confidence in the findings presented, especially for SPA. The analysis approach set out in the Evaluation Plan proceeded as originally intended. The inception phase, data collection, submission of Draft 1 and Draft 2 were delivered on time and on budget. The final draft was delayed in agreement with DFAT to address comments on alignment with the evaluation questions.

The evaluation team experienced the following issues but were able to adapt and mitigate any impact on the overall evaluation.

The evaluation team MEL expert (Alberto Correia) was unable to secure a visa for the data collection mission. To address this, Alinea brought in an additional MEL and GEDSI consultant from Tonga, Telusa Tuionetoa, to support the data collection. Including the MEL and GEDSI consultant had the advantage of bringing some gender balance and stronger Pacific expertise to the evaluation team. The change was made very early in the evaluation process and the MEL expert continued to support the evaluation methodology. As a result, this change did not impact on the overall evaluation process.

The team were unable to conduct external stakeholder consultations for Vanuatu due to the earthquake response and reduced availability of the government there. As a result, this evaluation report does not generate specific lessons and findings applicable to the aviation sector in Vanuatu.

The evaluation team found it difficult to identify Pacific aviation stakeholders who were in their positions during the COVID response, speaking to only three Pacific stakeholders with a direct involvement and memory of this period. As a result, the findings on Australia's COVID response are more heavily based on the SPACP Rapid Review and other documents, validated by interviews with select DFAT Posts and regional aviation experts with a direct knowledge of this period.

There was limited program reporting available to inform the evaluation, particularly against program outcomes. To address these evidence gaps, the evaluation leaned more heavily on interviews with stakeholders to generate primary data (see the evaluation plan at **Annex 4**). Neither SPACP nor SPA produced consolidated reporting against the program MEL plan. SPACP had a more solid evidence base, including a mid-term review and external research published by PRIF assessing the overall impact of aviation support delivered during COVID, including Australia's. Partners provided reporting under SPA but, with the exception of the Bureau of Meteorology, it was mostly not linked to the program outcomes, indicators or baselines which made it difficult to track progress against plans. DFAT produced one

Investment Monitoring Report for SPACP (2022) and two for SPA (2023 and 2024) which primarily outlined planned activities or activities in progress rather than program outcomes (see **Section 3.3**).

Because the aviation industry has a higher proportion of men than women, the evaluation team was not able to achieve gender balance as planned in the stakeholder interviews. 32 key informants were women, compared to 42 men. Women made up only 14 of the 53 passengers interviewed by the evaluation team. The evaluation team ensured that responses from women were particularly considered in the data analysis phase. The evaluation team was not able to interview air crew on the Australia-North Pacific Connector as the busy flight schedule and multiple stops did not allow time for interviews.

A last limitation, the evaluation team acknowledges that participants included in this evaluation may have political or personal bias or motives that lead to subjective views on the program (e.g., attitudes towards the SPACP and SPA team personnel, etc). Similarly, the evaluation findings may be skewed, because the field visit sites represent areas that are more accessible and performing relatively well. As a mitigation measure, the evaluation team used a range of probing questions and interactive methods to ascertain accuracy and relevance of information, and the sample selection criteria encompassed a balance between areas that were performing well and less well. Findings were based on evidence triangulated from multiple sources and stakeholder categories.

# FINDINGS

## RELEVANCE

### KEQ1: How relevant were the SPACP and the SPA to the policy and operational context?

**Rating:** Good

Finding 1: SPACP was highly relevant to the challenging policy and operational context during the COVID-19 response. Many stakeholders consider that Australia's support laid the foundation for a more rapid post-COVID recovery.

**Rating:** Reasonable

Finding 2: SPA remained relevant to post COVID efforts to support a stronger regional enabling environment for Pacific aviation but was not always able to adapt to address partner government or regional reform priorities.

### SPACP (2020 TO 2022)

There is **strong evidence** from program passenger data, the mid-term program review and external publications by PRIF, triangulated against interviews with Pacific aviation authorities, regulators, airlines, tourism authorities and regional stakeholders, that SPACP remained relevant to the policy and operational context over the lifetime of the investment.

Pacific partners, airlines, tourism authorities and regional research institutions credit DFAT's support under SPACP with helping to maintain the flow of crucial workers and supplies during COVID and helping to support a more rapid rebound of Pacific connectivity and Pacific economies post-crisis.<sup>14</sup> This support also complemented broader COVID response efforts under the essential services and humanitarian corridor, reducing the need for charter flights to move essential equipment and personnel.<sup>15</sup>

*“DFAT stepped up in the Pacific when it was needed. Countries are really appreciative of DFAT’s support to maintain minimum connectivity during COVID.”*

Pacific regional organisation, December 2024

There is **strong evidence** from program documents, triangulated against interviews with Pacific government partners, airlines, tourism authorities, Posts, DFAT staff, regional stakeholders and advisers, that demonstrates that SPACP displayed very good flexibility in adapting to changes in context and partner priorities. Partners interviewed for the final evaluation valued DFAT's capacity in crisis response, particularly its ability to quickly mobilise significant funding and rapidly align with Pacific countries' priorities and needs on the ground via its network of embassies (**See Section 1.2**).

### SPA (2022 TO 2024)

There is **strong evidence** from program reporting and Pacific regional aviation strategies, triangulated against passenger surveys on the Australia North Pacific Connector and interviews with Pacific aviation authorities and regulators, DFAT staff and program advisers, that while SPA remained relevant to the policy and operational context the program was not always able to adapt to address Pacific partner government or regional reform priorities. Pacific partners (aviation authorities, regulators, airlines and airports) interviewed

<sup>14</sup> KIIs with Pacific aviation stakeholders, airlines, tourism authorities, research organisations, advisers, DFAT staff and Posts November to December 2024. Pacific Flights Program data FY20-21 to FY 23-24, September 2024. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>15</sup> KIIs with DFAT officers at Post during COVID, November to December 2024. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

for this evaluation welcomed Australian support for aviation skills development and exchanges with Australian aviation agencies.<sup>16</sup> However, while a number of negotiations took place, SPA had no formal mechanism to document and approve agreed priorities with Pacific partners. This made it difficult for the program to articulate how country level support aligned with and responded to partner government priority needs.<sup>17</sup> Pacific government partners interviewed for this evaluation reported areas of alignment, but also misalignment with their reform priorities (see **Section 1.2**).<sup>18</sup> Regional stakeholders, donors and whole of government partners interviewed for this evaluation saw the potential for the program to contribute strongly to regional reform priorities, and encouraged stronger collaboration to address potential risks of misalignment (see **Section 2.3**).

There is **adequate evidence** from passenger surveys and interviews with Pacific government partners that SPA's outcomes were aligned with beneficiary needs. Pacific travellers on the Australian North-Pacific Connector (AusNPC) interviewed for the end of program evaluation in November 2024 overwhelmingly reported that the service supported stronger business, health, education, tourism, labour mobility, government and people to people links. Eighty-nine per cent said there would be a somewhat severe or severe impact if the flight was not available and 88% said that Australia should continue to support Pacific aviation as a priority.<sup>19</sup>

The evaluation team's review of cables, press releases and program documents, triangulated against interviews with DFAT staff, advisers and Posts, provided **strong evidence** that SPA was relevant to Australia's foreign policy objective of promoting a peaceful, prosperous and connected Pacific. SPA supported International Development Policy commitments to strengthen connections with Australia and regional architecture. It enabled DFAT to project solidarity through visible, tangible support to partner governments in times of crisis. Improved safety and connectivity benefits both Pacific and Australian travellers and businesses.

## 1.1 To what extent were the IOs aligned and tailored to partner government priorities and responsive to beneficiary needs?

### SPACP

There is **strong evidence** from PFP passenger and flight data, the SPACP Rapid Review and regional aviation strategies, triangulated against interviews with Pacific partners, regional actors, donors, DFAT staff, post and advisers, that SPACP's IOs were highly aligned and tailored to partner government priorities and responsive to beneficiary needs.

SPACP aimed to ensure that essential air services remained functional during COVID, connecting the Pacific with the rest of the world. It was implemented from 2020-2022 as a shorter-term program with the humanitarian and economic objectives explicit in EOPO 1:

*Safe, reliable air connectivity is maintained between Pacific island countries and Australia, contributing to COVID-19 responses, economic stability and resilience, and the continued viability of the aviation sector.*

**The intermediate outcomes to deliver SPACP 2020-2022 and EOPO1 are:**

Human development	IO 1.1 Australia and the Pacific/Timor-Leste maintain open lines of movement for the exchange of people and goods while safeguarding Australians during the Pandemic.
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<sup>16</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, November to December 2024

<sup>17</sup> Evaluation team review of DFAT and partner reporting under SPA, Nov to Dec 2024. KIIs with DFAT staff, Pacific partners and program advisers, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>18</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>19</sup> Passenger perception surveys, Australia North Pacific Connector, November 2025

Economic development	IO 1.2 The currency and commercial viability of the Pacific aviation sector is maintained during the COVID-19 period, supporting economic resilience and recovery of Pacific island countries and Australia.
Safety and compliance	IO 1.3 The Pacific Aviation Safety Support Program is supported to deliver its core services to members during the COVID-19 period with safety and compliance outputs maintained

SPACP's IOs supported both emergency human development needs during the pandemic and a faster economic recovery. IO1.1 supported air connectivity, which was crucial for economic stability, access to goods and services and a lifeline for crisis response in Pacific countries. The spillover effects of aviation on supply chains, tourism and remittances accounts for up to 50% of GDP in Vanuatu, over 40% in Tonga and Fiji and between 10% to 20% in Nauru, Tuvalu and Kiribati.<sup>20</sup> The collapse in Pacific aviation capacity from 250,000 people per month to less than 5,000 a month from January to May 2020, a 92% reduction on pre-COVID capacity, represented an existential threat to Pacific economies, the ability of Pacific people to access essential services and the commercial viability of Pacific aviation.<sup>21</sup>

DFAT's decision to offset the losses of five airlines through IO 1.2, connecting nine countries to Australia during COVID responded to priority economic, health and social needs. It supported 38,878 passenger movements and 3,219 tonnes of air freight – including vaccines, protective equipment and humanitarian supplies – and helped to maintain Pacific workers, a key source of remittances for many countries.<sup>22</sup>

DFAT's support to PASO under IO 1.3 helped to maintain core safety and compliance services during COVID. This was a key regional priority for governments in the region, documented in the Port Moresby Declaration on Aviation Safety and Security of June 2021 and the Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy proposed by the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) in October 2020.<sup>23</sup>

## SPA (2022 TO 2024)

There is **strong evidence** from PFP passenger and flight data, the SPACP Rapid Review and regional aviation strategies, triangulated against interviews with Pacific partners, regional actors, donors, DFAT staff, post and advisers, that SPA IOs were partly aligned and tailored to partner government priorities and partly responsive to beneficiary needs.

The SPA program represented a transitional strategy while Australia developed its long-term P4A program.<sup>24</sup> It shifted focus from the emergency connectivity of SPACP and its EOPO1, to advisory support, whole of government partnerships and scholarships in support of a sustainable, safe regional aviation enabling environment. It was implemented from 2022 to 2024 with the medium-term learning, development and sustainability objectives outlined in EOPO 2:

*Pacific aviation stakeholders plan and implement measures addressing key areas of need in the aviation sector to support a stronger regional enabling environment, improve aviation safety and increase coordination and connectivity between Pacific island countries.*

<sup>20</sup> Kelly Wyett and David Carpenter, The Impact of Aviation on the Economies of Pacific Island Countries, in Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A), February 2023. ATAG, Benefits Beyond Borders, 2020. World Bank Development database

<sup>21</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. PRIF/ASPA (2022) Pacific Aviation Workshop, June 2022. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. KIIs with Pacific aviation stakeholders, airlines, research organisations, advisers and DFAT staff, November to December 2024

<sup>22</sup> DFAT PFP Flight Data, shared with the evaluation team in October 2024. DFAT IMR INN626, 2021-22 and INO014 2022-23 and 2023-24. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KIIs with DFAT staff and Posts, October to November 2024

<sup>23</sup> The Port Moresby Declaration on Aviation Safety and Security endorsed by the Pacific Island Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting on 30 June 2021. Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy / Pacific Aviation Safety Office. Port Vila, Vanuatu: Pacific Aviation Safety Office, 2022. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>24</sup> KII with DFAT officers, November to December 2024

### The intermediate outcomes to deliver SPA 2022-2024 and EOPO2 are:

Learning, design	IO 2.1 Country-specific activities are piloted as tailored responses to urgent priorities and needs in Pacific aviation which have been collaboratively identified with partners and stakeholders
	IO 2.2 Lessons learned and knowledge and capacities developed through implementation experience are used to inform ongoing programming and investment design
	IO 2.3 Opportunities for enhanced gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability in the Pacific aviation sector are identified and targeted as objectives for longer-term investment
Enabling environment	IO 2.4 Aviation authorities, airports and airlines are supported to identify areas of need and develop plans for improving regulations, policies and strategies that strengthen the Pacific aviation sector
Coord & connectivity	IO 2.5 Regional air connectivity is maintained, expanded and sustained
Safety and compliance	IO 2.6 Greater engagement with Pacific states' regulatory and safety systems improves their safety and compliance performance

### Learning, design, piloting and inclusion (IO2.1, 2.2, 2.3)

At the country level (IO 2.1), Pacific partner governments interviewed for this evaluation welcomed Australian support for aviation skills development and exchanges with Australian aviation agencies.<sup>25</sup> However, while a number of negotiations took place, the evaluation found no formal mechanism to document and approve agreed priorities with Pacific partners to evidence that urgent needs and priorities are collaboratively identified with partners and stakeholders as IO 2.1 requires.<sup>26</sup> Pacific partners (Aviation authorities, regulators, airlines and airports) interviewed for this evaluation reported good engagement with SPA program advisers and DFAT staff. However, they also reported confusion around how partners and priorities were selected for SPA implementation and how they could influence DFAT's decisions on outcomes and activities.<sup>27</sup> Further discussion of government priorities is in **Section 1.1**.

The evaluation team's review of program reporting and documents, triangulated against interviews with DFAT staff, found that the SPA program did not systematically capture lessons learned to influence program design, required to deliver IO 2.2 (see **section 3.3**).

IO 2.3 and its focus on enhancing gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability in the Pacific aviation sector is highly relevant to the Australian Government and ensuring inclusive outcomes. Navigating partner support for this programming aspect has been challenging. When asked about GEDSI outcomes, Pacific partners reported that their priority was maintaining a functioning airline over promoting equality in the sector (see **section 2.4**).<sup>28</sup>

### The enabling environment, coordination and connectivity, safety and compliance (IO2.4, 2.5, 2.6)

IOs 2.4 (bilateral support for regulations, policies and strategies), 2.5 (regional air connectivity) and 2.6 (regulatory and safety compliance) were directly aligned and tailored to partner government priorities. Pacific partners welcomed DFAT's ongoing support in the post-COVID period, citing gaps in their own capacity and

<sup>25</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, November to December 2024

<sup>26</sup> Evaluation team review of DFAT and partner reporting under SPA, Nov to Dec 2024. KIIs with DFAT staff, Pacific partners and program advisers, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>27</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>28</sup> KII with Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2024. Evaluation team review of key guiding documents, including program reporting, the Port Moresby Declaration on Aviation Safety and Security endorsed by the Pacific Island Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting on 30 June 2021. Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy / Pacific Aviation Safety Office. Port Vila, Vanuatu: Pacific Aviation Safety Office, 2022. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

the crucial role that aviation plays in supporting economic development, access to goods and services, labour mobility, government-to-government and people-to-people links and post disaster recovery.<sup>29</sup> Seven Pacific countries accepted DFAT's offer of advisory support on aviation infrastructure, operational support, aviation policy and regulatory development, training and capacity building, business planning and financial management under IO 2.4 which speaks to the relevance of the offer.<sup>30</sup>

SPA launched two new activities to expand regional connectivity (IO 2.5). The loss-offset support for improved connectivity between Australia and Palau launched in April 2023 directly aligned with priority of the Palau Government. The evaluation team also saw evidence of close engagement with Palau to improve and refine the service as it was implemented.<sup>31</sup> The loss-offset support for the Australia-North Pacific Connector did not always align with the priority needs of the Pacific governments and business communities along the route, some of whom favoured stronger connectivity with the US. However, DFAT staff noted that several north Pacific countries have regular air connections to the US and the Australia-North Pacific Connector was introduced to address a gap in connectivity to the South Pacific and Australia.<sup>32</sup> The Australia-North Pacific Connector was valued by people travelling on the route. Eighty-eight per cent of travellers interviewed by the evaluation team on the Australian-North Pacific Connector (IO 2.5) cited Australian support to Pacific aviation as a priority need.<sup>33</sup>

Improved regional connectivity (IO 2.5) and regulatory safety and compliance (IO 2.6) are key priorities for the region, as documented in the Port Moresby Declaration on Aviation Safety and Security of June 2021, the Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy agreed by Pacific Aviation Ministers in 2022 and post-COVID recovery strategy proposed by the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) in March 2022.<sup>34</sup>

## 1.2 How have the investments adapted to changes in the operating context, and to what extent have they remained relevant to shifting partner priorities and beneficiary needs?

Rating: Good

Finding 3: The investments demonstrated high levels of adaptation to an ever-changing operating context

Rating: Reasonable

Finding 4: While both investments sought relevance to shifting partner priorities across substantive changes to context, SPA faced additional challenges. It navigated a more established context post-COVID, and partners reported both alignment but also that some local priorities were not addressed.

There is **strong evidence** from DFAT strategy and MEL documents, triangulated against interviews with Pacific partner countries, DFAT staff, Posts and SPA advisers that both SPACP and SPA were highly adaptable, but that SPA faced additional challenges remaining relevant to partner priorities in the more established post-COVID context.

DFAT's support to Pacific aviation grew organically and flexibly from the COVID crisis. The program expanded from loss-offset support to maintain emergency humanitarian connectivity (August 2020), to

<sup>29</sup> KIIs with Pacific aviation stakeholders, airlines, tourism authorities, research organisations, advisers, DFAT staff and Posts November to December 2024. Pacific Flights Program data FY20-21 to FY 23-24, September 2024. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>30</sup> Evaluation team analysis of adviser days per country and IO shared by DFAT with the evaluation team in February 2025

<sup>31</sup> KII with DFAT, Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2025. Evaluation team review of press releases and cables on Australia's support

<sup>32</sup> KII with Pacific partners and DFAT, Nov to Dec 2025

<sup>33</sup> 51 of 53 passengers answered the question, "What role do you think Australia should play in supporting airline connectivity in the Pacific region?" Of those 51, 5 said they were unsure and 1 (from outside the Pacific) thought that Australia should spend the money at home. The remaining responses supported an ongoing or expanded role for Australia in supporting Pacific aviation. 51-5-1=45/52=0.882. Passenger perception survey, North Pacific Connector between Brisbane to Majuro return, 20 to 24 November 2025

<sup>34</sup> The Port Moresby Declaration on Aviation Safety and Security endorsed by the Pacific Island Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting on 30 June 2021. Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy / Pacific Aviation Safety Office. Port Vila, Vanuatu: Pacific Aviation Safety Office, 2022. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19

support for regional aviation safety via the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) (September 2020) to bilateral support for aviation safety, sustainability and skills through Australian whole of government partners (June 2022), advisers (July 2022) and scholarships (January 2024).

DFAT planned to transition away from emergency support (SPACP / EOPO 1) following the end of the COVID response towards support for a sustainable and safe regional enabling environment (SPA / EOPO 2).<sup>35</sup> While SPA began to focus more on regional investments, Pacific country partners reported both alignment and misalignment by the program, highlighting examples where their priorities were not met, including assistance to meet ICAO standards, aviation infrastructure and equipment, and domestic connectivity for economic growth and disaster response.<sup>36</sup> (See **Section 3.1** for a more detailed discussion of activity alignment.) The DFAT SPA team and advisers reported the need to strike a careful balance between responding to partner priorities while managing the extension into areas beyond the program's budget, scope or expertise.<sup>37</sup> The lack of documented processes for striking this balance and determining priorities has made it hard for the program to articulate how country level support aligned with and responded to partner government priority needs (see the discussion of SPA IO 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 under **Section 1.1**).

### 1.3 What factors have influenced program relevance and adaptability, and what challenges or barriers have limited their effectiveness?

As discussed above, particularly regarding SPACP / EOPO 1, DFAT identified and addressed critical needs that were highly relevant to partner priorities and beneficiary needs. DFAT was very adaptive to changes to the context. Contributing factors include:

- The crucial role of aviation in supporting Pacific economies meant that partners were willing to engage.
- The flexible and hands on approach of DFAT staff implementing SPACP and SPA allowed the program to rapidly adjust to changes in the operating context.
- DFAT's ability to rapidly mobilise funding at scale allowed it to respond to emerging needs.
- DFAT's network of embassies allowed it to rapidly identify and align with Pacific country needs.

The program faced challenges in adapting from the emergency phase to the medium-term support provided under SPA / EOPO 2. The context changed significantly from one where needs were clear and operational, with few stakeholders able to meet those needs, to a context dominated by a large number of specialised agencies, many of whom have been working on complex and challenging aviation reform for decades (see **Text Box 1**). A majority of Pacific government partners, other donors and regional experts interviewed for this evaluation reported that they had a limited understanding of how priorities, delivery modalities and partners were selected under the SPA program. Country level support under SPA was perceived as somewhat ad hoc.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> DFAT, Joint M&E Framework for the Sustainable Pacific Aviation Connectivity Program 2020-2022 (SPACP) and Sustainable Pacific Aviation Program 2022-23 (SPA), 25 May 2023. KIIs with DFAT staff, November and December 2024. DFAT, P4A Investment Design Document, February 2023

<sup>36</sup> KIIs with Pacific countries,

<sup>37</sup> KIIs with DFAT staff and SPA advisers,

<sup>38</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, regional partners, whole of government partners and donors, November to December 2024

### Text Box 1: List of key aviation stakeholders

- Pacific and Australian Departments of Transport lead their countries' engagement with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting.
- National Civil Aviation Safety Authorities oversee compliance with aviation safety rules.
- A number of Pacific countries joined together to form a Regional Aviation Safety Oversight Organisation (RSOO), the Pacific Aviation Safety Organisation (PASO) in 2007.
- Australia's Air Transport Safety Bureau, Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Bureau of Meteorology, and Airservices Australia play a key role in the overall safety ecosystem.
- Pacific airlines and airports operate under a mix of structures spanning state-owned enterprises to private companies and mixed government/private sector models. Fleets and airports are financed by commercial banks, infrastructure financing facilities like the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and Pacific taxpayer funding.

## EFFECTIVENESS

### KEQ2: Was SPACP / SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes?

The evaluation found that SPACP was effective in achieving EOPO 1, while SPA had mixed effectiveness in delivering EOPO 2. This is discussed below in sections 2.1 to 2.6.

**Rating: Good**

**Finding 5:** SPACP was effective in achieving EOPO 1. Pacific partners and external analysis credit Australia's intervention, alongside other donors, with maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries, contributing to COVID 19 responses, economic recovery and the continued viability of the aviation sector (see Section 2.1)

**Rating: Reasonable**

**Finding 6:** SPA demonstrated mixed effectiveness in achieving EOPO 2. SPA effectively increased connectivity throughout the post-COVID period, delivering important benefits to Pacific island countries. Outcomes related to improved aviation safety and coordination were partially achieved (see **Section 2.2 – 2.6**).

SPACP and SPA effectively delivered important outputs that supported the Pacific during the COVID response and recovery and has laid the foundation for future work to support a stronger regional enabling environment. A summary of overall SPACP/SPA achievements are in **Figure 3** and further details on how the program achieved its connectivity, safety and coordination objectives, or not, is in **Sections 2.1 to 2.6** below. The discussion of how the program addressed key areas of need, collaboratively identified with Pacific partners, is a **Section 1.1 and 1.2**.

Figure 3: Key program achievements



Source: Program data, constructed by the evaluation team

## 2.1 To what extent did SPACP contribute to mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 by maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries and Australia?

### SPACP (2020 TO 2022)

There is **adequate evidence** from program data, the SPACP Rapid Review and external publications by PRIF to suggest that SPACP strongly contributed to mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 by maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries and Australia. Given staff turnover since COVID, the evaluation team were not able to fully triangulate this with stakeholders external to the program (see **limitations**). However, interviews with the three Pacific country partners, donors and DFAT Post stakeholders who had direct knowledge of the COVID response confirmed the positive results outlined in the documents.

As COVID-19 cases spiked and states introduced lockdowns and travel restrictions, Pacific passenger numbers collapsed from an average of 250,000 people per month to less than 5,000 a month from January to May 2020, a 92% reduction on pre-COVID capacity. This raised serious concerns for the economies of Pacific partners given their economies' reliance on aviation.<sup>39</sup>

In August 2020, DFAT launched a loss-offset model. Under the model, the SPACP program went to the market to invite airlines to bid on the cost of providing an identified route. The program funded the agreed price minus the revenue earned from passengers and cargo.

Under IO 1.1, SPACP underwrote the costs of five Pacific and Australian airlines serving nine Pacific and Timor Leste Countries: PNG, Timor Leste, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, Tuvalu, Samoa, Tonga. DFAT subsidised 563 flights during COVID, carrying 38,878 passengers and 3,219 tonnes of cargo at a cost of A\$16.8 million.<sup>40</sup> Critical cargo included personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 testing kits and vaccines. An estimated 1 million vaccines were transported to Timor-Leste alone.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. PRIF/ASPA (2022) Pacific Aviation Workshop, June 2022. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. KIIs with Pacific aviation stakeholders, airlines, donors, research organisations, advisers and DFAT staff, November to December 2024

<sup>40</sup> DFAT PFP Flight Data shared with the evaluation team in October 2024

<sup>41</sup> DFAT IMR INN626, 2021-22 and INO014 2022-23 and 2023-24. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KIIs with DFAT staff and Posts, October to November 2024. Note: The 1 million vaccines provided

The loss-offset funding also allowed airlines to maintain currency on key safety and regulatory standards and maintain a minimum level of commercial viability during COVID (IO 1.2). SPACP disbursed A\$16.8 million to five airlines to maintain minimum connectivity to nine Pacific countries,<sup>42</sup> contributing to the sustainable recovery of the Pacific aviation sector. Airlines reported that DFAT's funding was crucial in helping them to maintain staff and equipment and stay current with aviation regulations and standards.

Under IO 1.3. DFAT funded PASO to maintain aviation safety regulation activities for Pacific island countries. Pacific partners, research published by PRIF and the SPACP Rapid Review credit this support, alongside complementary funding from New Zealand, with helping Pacific Islands to maintain key safety audits, inspections, and regulatory oversight at a time when member contributions had reduced sharply due to COVID (IO 1.3).

Pacific partners, airlines, tourism authorities and regional research institutions credit SPACP's support with helping to maintain the flow of crucial workers and supplies, keeping market functions operational and supporting economic recovery in the Pacific by maintaining supply chains and facilitating seasonal worker mobility to Australia.<sup>43</sup> Regional aviation experts airlines and Pacific partners reported that, without DFAT and New Zealand's support, post-COVID recovery would likely have been slower and more challenging, both for the Pacific aviation sector and the Pacific economy more broadly.<sup>44</sup> See [Figure 3](#) for a summary of important program achievements, including both SPACP and SPA.

*"We would have gone belly up without Australia's support."* CEO of a Pacific airline, December 2024.

DFAT's support for safety in SPACP was delivered via PASO (IO 1.3) (see **Section 2.2 below**). The SPACP Rapid Review found a high degree of overlap between PASO safety work and SPACP flights supported by the loss-offset model, suggesting that the safety components of the program (IO 1.3) were underpinning the connectivity goals (IO 1.1).<sup>45</sup>

## SPA (2022 TO 2024)

While SPA is beyond the scope of this sub-evaluation question, the evaluation team decided to include SPA both because regional air connectivity was a key outcome of the program (IO 2.5) and it is important to the overall assessment of effectiveness in Key Evaluation Question 2.

There is **adequate** evidence from program data, triangulated against passenger surveys, that SPA continued to make a positive contribution to post-COVID connectivity goals by supporting two routes: the Palau Paradise (Brisbane – Palau direct) and the Australia-North Pacific Connector (connecting Australia with Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Nauru). SPA provided loss-offset support for 155 flights, 50,889 passenger movements and 444 tonnes of cargo between

to Timor Leste is taken from DFAT reporting. The evaluation team were not able to independently verify this as it was difficult to find Timor Leste officials with a knowledge of the COVID response era (see limitations section). DFAT's Pacific Aviation program was only one of several initiatives launched during COVID, including bilateral support from Timor Leste Post. It is not possible to differentiate the Pacific Aviation Program's contribution compared to other investments. Despite this, there is a strong consensus among most stakeholders that DFAT's support for loss offsets during COVID did support crucial connectivity for people and supplies during COVID and did facilitate a more rapid post-COVID recovery for the aviation sector. See David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020

<sup>42</sup> Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga and Samoa

<sup>43</sup> KIIs with Pacific aviation stakeholders, airlines, tourism authorities, research organisations, advisers, DFAT staff and Posts, November to December 2024. Pacific Flights Program data FY20-21 to FY 23-24, September 2024. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>44</sup> David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. KIIs with Pacific aviation stakeholders, airlines, research organisations, advisers, DFAT staff and Posts, November to December 2024

<sup>45</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

Australia and five Pacific Countries at a cost of A\$26.7 million up to October 2024 under IO 2.5.<sup>46</sup> The route enabled links across the Pacific and with Australia that supported tourism, government to government connectivity (including for fisheries and policing), seasonal labour mobility, education, family exchange and travel by health and disaster management experts.

Interviews with passengers travelling on the Australia-North Pacific Connector in December 2024 suggest that the route is achieving its connectivity objectives. Passengers reported that alternative routes had prohibitively high costs and would extend their travel time by up to three days. Without the Australia-North Pacific Connector, most travellers reported that they would have had to pay for several days' worth of layovers in Fiji or Brisbane or travel via Guam which requires a US visa for most Pacific Islanders or migrant workers. Many passengers interviewed said that they would not have been able to travel at all without the Australia-North Pacific Connector.<sup>47</sup>

*"I am part of a medical mission that conducted 97 eye surgeries. We all have busy schedules back in our home countries and could not afford the extra time needed to fly via Hawaii or Guam. Without the Australia-North Pacific Connector this mission would not have gone ahead."* Surgeon from the Solomon Islands, November 2024

## 2.2 What evidence is there of program activities contributing to organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific?

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 7:** SPACP achieved its objective of maintaining PASO core services during COVID. SPA rapidly scaled up a range of activities which aimed to address more ambitious aviation safety outcomes through advisory support, whole of government partnerships and ongoing support to PASO. This has established relationships which could form the basis of future work on aviation safety, however the evidence available points to limited contributions to organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety within the period under review

### SPACP (2020 TO 2022)

SPACP did not aim to contribute to organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety. The Joint M&E Framework and Program Logic outlined a less ambitious approach to aviation safety: "PASO is supported to deliver its core services..." (IO 1.3) so that "Safe, reliable air connectivity is maintained between Pacific island countries and Australia" (EOPO 1).<sup>48</sup>

There is **strong evidence** from program reporting and the SPACP Rapid Review, triangulated against interviews with regional stakeholders, Pacific country partners and DFAT staff and advisers, that the program achieved its outcome. SPACP provided A\$2.9 million in funding to PASO to maintain aviation safety and compliance outputs during COVID. The SPACP Rapid Review found that, as a result of DFAT's grant funding, PASO was able to increase its safety and compliance output considerably in 2021, compared to previous years, providing 900 audit days to the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. It is unclear from the reporting whether increased audit days resulted in organisational or technical advancements (it was not a goal at the time).<sup>49</sup>

### SPA (2022 TO 2024)

There is **strong evidence** from program reporting, triangulated against primary data collection with Pacific

<sup>46</sup> DFAT, Passenger Flight Program data, October 2024. Financial overview\_SPACP\_INN626, Financial overview\_SPA\_INO014

<sup>47</sup> Passenger perception surveys, Australia North Pacific Connector, November 2025

<sup>48</sup> SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, May 2023

<sup>49</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. PASO (2020) COVID-19 PASO Package. 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 Planned and completed audit days, program data provided by DFAT in Feb 2025. PASO quarterly reports, Q1 2023, Q4 2023, Q2 2024. SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, May 2023

country partners, regional partners, donors, DFAT staff and advisers, that SPA contributed to organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific in limited cases.

SPA set a much more ambitious approach to supporting aviation safety than SPACP. IO2.6 committed to “greater engagement with Pacific states’ regulatory and safety systems improves their safety and compliance performance.” EOPO2 aimed to ensure that “Pacific aviation stakeholders plan and implement measures addressing key areas of need in the aviation sector to... improve aviation safety”. SPA sought to deliver on this outcome through two modalities, support for PASO and whole of government partnerships.

**PASO support:** All three of the indicators to measure progress under IO 2.6 in the Joint M&E Framework related to PASO: Instances of improved engagement with PASO by member states; number of audits conducted in the Pacific (PASO, ICAO); and number/proportion of improvements in audit findings. Reporting, triangulated against interviews, suggests that this outcome was not achieved. PASO quarterly reporting suggested that the number of audit days decreased from 633 audit days in 2022 to 564 in 2023 (no data is available for 2024).<sup>50</sup> Neither PASO reporting nor DFAT IMRs provided data on the other indicators. Interviews with Pacific partners and other donors suggested that funding to PASO was an important contribution to long-term Pacific safety but were unable to cite specific examples of organisational or technical advancements in aviation safety in the period under evaluation.<sup>51</sup> DFAT staff and program advisers were pessimistic about the potential for PASO to drive organisational or technical advancements in aviation safety, citing persistently low scores for Pacific states on ICAO’s Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program (USOAP) despite ongoing external support.<sup>52</sup>

SPA also progressed IO 2.6 through **whole of government partnerships** between Pacific island countries and Australian agencies and adviser deployments. This included:

- Bureau of Meteorology: Weather systems upgrades and training for Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Tuvalu, Fiji, Nauru, and Samoa.
- Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA): Work placements, access to online learning system and ad hoc technical support.
- Air Services Australia: Sponsored attendance at the Southwest Pacific Safety Forum on Navigation Aide Management.
- Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB): MOU to provide technical assistance to an accident investigation in the Solomon Islands. Support for Tonga to certify an accident investigator.
- Advisory deployments: 5 of 23 adviser deployments explicitly referenced safety objectives in a database of adviser tasking shared by DFAT.<sup>53</sup>

The evidence indicates these activities resulted in some limited organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific. Program reporting, triangulated against interviews with airlines, whole of government partners, and DFAT staff, highlighted that support to aviation weather systems upgrades and training through the Bureau of Meteorology in Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Tuvalu, Fiji, Nauru, and Samoa were important precursors of future safety activities, creating opportunities for new and safer routes and improved operational efficiency.<sup>54</sup> DFAT’s 2024 IMR reported changes in attitudes to aviation safety, and commitment to compliance with international standards across 12 Pacific partners. However, interviews with Pacific partners did not substantiate the claims of significant changes in behaviour or capacity **(Section 4.3)**.<sup>55</sup>

Stakeholders in Tonga reported benefitting from the partnership with ATSB, including certifying an accident investigator and a work placement with CASA. However, when asked to what extent has the program helped

<sup>50</sup> 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 Planned and completed audit days, program data provided by DFAT in Feb 2025. PASO quarterly reports, Q1 2023, Q4 2023, Q2 2024

<sup>51</sup> KII with Pacific partners, donors, regional organisations, Nov to Dec 2025

<sup>52</sup> KII with DFAT staff and advisers, Nov to Dec 2024, April 2025

<sup>53</sup> As of December 2024,

<sup>54</sup> The Bureau, Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) Progress Report, June 2024. INO014 IMR 2024. KII with DFAT, airlines, Whole of Government partners, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>55</sup> INO014 IMR 2024. Evaluation team review of program documents, KII with DFAT staff, program advisers and Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2024

to build technical and organisational capacity in the Pacific aviation sector, the vast majority of Pacific partners reported that they were still waiting on the program to produce key deliverables and it was too early to claim contribution towards organisational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific.<sup>56</sup>

Notably, a number of stakeholders (including donors, regional and whole of government partners) raised concerns with DFAT's support to aviation safety, questioning whether DFAT was best placed to oversee aviation safety focussed activities such as advisory deployments, compared to agencies who specialise in aviation safety.<sup>57</sup> The evaluation team consider that this is an issue that warrants close consideration and review by DFAT.

### 2.3 What evidence is there of specific activities and/or partnerships influencing coordination, cooperation and collaboration including but not limited to policy dialogue and partnerships?

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 8:** SPACP and SPA built strong bilateral coordination, collaboration and partnerships with Pacific island countries. However, gaps in coordination with DITRDCA, select DFAT Posts, other donors and development finance institutions limited the effectiveness of the program in influencing policy dialogue and partnerships at the regional level

There is **strong evidence** from program documents, cables, press releases and the SPACP Rapid Review, triangulated against primary data collection with Pacific country partners, airlines, whole of government partners, donors and development finance institutions, that despite the strong bilateral relationships built under SPACP and SPA, gaps in coordination hindered the extent to which the activities and partnerships influenced policy dialogue and partnerships, particularly at the regional level.

**Collaboration with Pacific partners:** SPACP collaborated extensively with Pacific airlines to establish the loss-offset model for essential air-routes during COVID and post-COVID recovery. This included extensive engagement with partner countries, select DFAT Posts, airlines and civil aviation authorities to establish and fund the loss-offset program on nine key routes.<sup>58</sup>

Post-COVID, SPA built upon these relationships to expand bilateral collaboration with a broad range of Pacific Island partners. A majority of technical Australian aviation and Pacific bilateral partners interviewed for this evaluation credited SPACP and SPA's flexible and collaborative partnership approach with rapidly expanding collaboration between Australian and Pacific Island technical aviation organisations in the post-COVID period.<sup>59</sup>

**Collaboration with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA):** Australia's Minister of Transport, supported by DITRDCA, represents Australia on key aviation policy fora, including the Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting reporting to the Pacific Islands Forum, PASO and ICAO. It led Australia's involvement in the 2022 regional ministerial agreement to strengthen aviation safety and sustainability<sup>60</sup> and provided a A\$1 million grant to ICAO in 2024 to support its recently established Pacific Liaison Office based in Fiji, building on long-standing Australian policy to work with ICAO to ensure that standards are suitable for the Pacific.<sup>61</sup>

Policy differences have emerged in Australia's approach to Pacific aviation between SPA's programming and the approach taken by DITRDCA. DITRDCA pursues a regional approach to aviation safety and is cautious

<sup>56</sup> KII with Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2025

<sup>57</sup> KII with whole of government partners, donors and regional organisations, Nov to Dec 2025

<sup>58</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022 KIIs with airlines, DFAT Posts and staff, November to December 2024

<sup>59</sup> KIIs with whole of government, Pacific partners and DFAT staff, November to December 2024. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>60</sup> RAAM. Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy, 2022-2032. KII with regional organisations and whole of government partners, November to December 2024

<sup>61</sup> KII with whole of government and regional partners, Nov to December 2024. Asian Aviation, ICAO liaison officer for Pacific small island developing states to be based in Fiji, 5 June 2023, <https://asianaviation.com/icao-liaison-officer-for-pacific-small-island-developing-states-to-be-based-in-fiji/>. ICAO. ICAO Liaison Officer for Pacific Small Island Developing States to be based in Fiji, 1 June 2023, <https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-Liaison-Officer-for-Pacific-Small-Island-Developing-States-to-be-based-in-Fiji.aspx>. GrantConnect, Grant Award View – GA386758, <https://www.grants.gov.au/Ga/Show/9b82d0ee-b2e1-4991-b9ee-d1f639f59f51>

about ongoing bilateral interventions in connectivity for fear of distorting markets, especially in a sector dominated by state owned enterprises.<sup>62</sup> SPA posits that bilateral assistance could complement regional objectives by strengthening the capacity of Pacific partners to engage with regional and international agencies. This difference in approach raised concerns among a majority of regional, whole of government partners and other donors interviewed for this evaluation that SPA's approach may impact regional reform efforts (see **Section 4.2**).<sup>63</sup>

**Collaboration with DFAT Posts:** According to stakeholders and analysis covered by this evaluation, SPACP and SPA have had mixed success in complementing the roles of Australia's Embassies and High Commissions to support policy dialogue and partnerships. Pacific country partners interviewed for this evaluation consistently described the important leadership role and engagement from Posts.<sup>64</sup> Pacific partners report that Australia's Ambassadors and High Commissioners were key factors in the success of SPACP. Some Posts reported that SPACP and SPA were important complements to their work, providing much needed people power and expertise. Two concerns were raised by four DFAT Posts: (a) one situation where SPA raised expectations with stakeholders which the Post was then obliged to step in to fulfil in order to maintain the relationship, diverting funding from other planned priorities, and (b) that having a standalone Pacific aviation program duplicated, rather than complemented, their engagement.<sup>65</sup>

**Collaboration with other aviation donors:** Australia and New Zealand have a long-standing approach to complementarity of roles in supporting Pacific aviation where New Zealand focusses on aviation security and Australia focusses on safety. The US largely supports Compact States<sup>66</sup> while Japan generally supports infrastructure. SPACP and SPA continued to operate in alignment with this approach. Other donors interviewed for this evaluation spoke positively about DFAT's support during COVID, noting that no other Australian agency could have mobilised the funding to support emergency connectivity.<sup>67</sup> DFAT coordinated its COVID support effectively with New Zealand. New Zealand primarily focussed its support on Polynesia<sup>68</sup> while the bulk of Australia's loss-offset funding supported PNG, Timor Leste, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tuvalu (though both programs supported connectivity to Fiji, Samoa, Tonga). However, a majority of aviation donors and regional partners interviewed for this report raised concerns regarding whether SPA's bilateral approach was sufficiently coordinated to support the broader regional reform agenda in the post COVID era. They also raised concerns about ensuring SPA did not provide advice outside its area of qualification, particularly as regards to safety.<sup>69</sup>

**Collaboration with development financing organisations:** Aviation is a key sector for development financing organisations in the Pacific, accounting for a significant share of investment for the Asian

<sup>62</sup> PRIF. Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study. Oct 2020. Jaap Bouwer, Vik Krishnan, Steve Saxon, and Caroline Tufft. Taking stock of the pandemic's impact on global aviation. McKinsey. 31 March 2022, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel-logistics-and-infrastructure/our-insights/taking-stock-of-the-pandemics-impact-on-global-aviation>

<sup>63</sup> KIIs with DFAT, Posts, advisers, regional organisations, development banks and whole of government partners, November to December 2024

<sup>64</sup> KII with Pacific partners, November to December 2024

<sup>65</sup> KIIs with DFAT Posts, November to December 2024. Evaluation team review of Aviation Country Fact Sheets, Aviation Country Plans, Program Fact Sheets, Comms and Cables, Dr David Carpenter. Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022, DFAT IMR INN626, 2021-22 and INO014 2022-23 and 2023-24, DFAT, P4A IDD Annex 6 – Policy Dialogue Matrix, February 2023, DFAT, SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, May 2023

<sup>66</sup> The Compacts of Free Association govern the relationships between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and Republic of Palau. The Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, and the Northern Mariana Islands were districts of the former U.S.-administered United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, established after World War II, and later became sovereign countries in "free association" with the United States. The Compacts grant the United States the prerogative to operate military bases in the RMI, FSM, and Palau (known collectively as the Freely Associated States, or FAS) and make decisions related to their external security, and they entitle the FAS to U.S. security guarantees and economic assistance. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/IF12194.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> New Zealand supported connectivity between New Zealand and a number of Pacific countries, primarily in Polynesia. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. KIIs with DFAT, advisers, donors and Pacific Aviation partners, October to November 2024

<sup>68</sup> New Zealand's support was provided under through the Maintaining International Air Connectivity Program and its predecessor the International Air Freight Capacity scheme. The program supported loss offset flights to key markets globally and included seven Pacific partners (Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, New Caledonia and French Polynesia) through three airlines (Air New Zealand, Air Calin and Air Tahiti Nui). David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report.

<sup>69</sup> KIIs with donors and regional aviation partners, November to December 2024

Development Bank, World Bank and Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP). There is a large variance in the lending capacity of Pacific partners, with some of the larger partners well positioned to secure commercial lending, while the majority of smaller Pacific partners are reliant on non-commercial lending.<sup>70</sup> From 2024 onwards, SPA began to build connections with development financing organisations. SPA and regional partners saw potential for SPA to help leverage additional financing from development banks and strengthen investment planning. However, development financing organisations also shared the concern voiced by regional organisations and donors that, unless the program was closely integrated with regional developments, sustainable outcomes will be difficult to achieve.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.4 What opportunities for enhanced gender equality and disability inclusion in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about the promotion of gender equality and disability in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?

**Rating:** Reasonable

**Finding 9:** SPA increased its focus on gender equality and disability after the SPACP Rapid Review which found gaps in SPACP's response to gender and disability. SPA introduced gender advisory support to the program, supported partners in strengthening approaches to GEDSI and PSEAH and began planning for future work on disability inclusion equipment upgrades in airports. However, Pacific partners were less clear on gender equality measures supported by the program and the planned disability inclusion measures did not progress during SPA. The program took appropriate opportunities to address climate change.

There is **strong evidence** from program documents and reporting, triangulated against primary data collection with DFAT staff, advisers and Pacific country partners that, while the program introduced measures to enhance gender equality and disability inclusion in the Pacific aviation sector, further work is needed to ensure meaningful gender equality and disability inclusion approaches in the future P4A program. Climate change is discussed in **Section 2.5**.

SPA sharply increased its focus on gender equality and disability inclusion from 2022 onwards. These efforts responded to the findings of the SPACP Rapid Review<sup>72</sup> which, while it did not assess GEDSI outcomes, found no reference to GEDSI in the program's available logics and an absence of GEDSI specific data.

SPA integrated GEDSI indicators into the program monitoring and evaluation framework in 2023 and developed an interim GEDSI strategy in 2024. SPA allocated A\$830,000 to GEDSI initiatives in 2023, supporting a publicity campaign to promote women in aviation, including engagement with women and organisations of people with disability, and providing a gender adviser to PASO.

SPA has received promising feedback. Several Pacific partners told the evaluation team that they valued the opportunity to engage with women and people with disability through the aviation master planning process. This inclusive consultation approach was a first for many. PASO reported that SPA's deployment of a gender adviser helped them identify gaps in their systems to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, triggering ongoing work to strengthen these systems.<sup>73</sup>

The evaluation team saw clear evidence of hands-on engagement by SPA to recruit women in the aviation sector into the scholarships program launched in 2024, resulting in women making up 6 of 8 scholarship places at Griffith University.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020

<sup>71</sup> KII with DFAT staff, advisers, regional partners, November to December 2024

<sup>72</sup> Carpenter, D. (2022) Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program

<sup>73</sup> DFAT IMR INN626, 2021-22 and INO014 2022-23 and 2023-24. P4A GEDSI Interim Strategy 2024. KIIs with DFAT staff, advisers, Pacific and whole of government partners, October to November 2024

<sup>74</sup> KIIs with scholars, University partners, DFAT staff and DFAT Posts, November to December 2024

In 2024, SPA allocated A\$2.5 million to address infrastructure challenges for people with disabilities and commenced consultations with organisations of people with disability. These activities were in planning stage at the time of writing (March 2025) and it was too early to assess their effectiveness.<sup>75</sup>

The evaluation revealed some disconnect between DFAT and Pacific partners on GEDSI. While SPA staff described GEDSI as ‘central to their operations’ and reported sharp increase in IMR gender and disability ratings from 3 to 5 and 2 to 5 respectively from 2022 to 2024, Pacific country partners were generally not able to speak to specific GEDSI measures introduced by the program. Reflecting a widely held sentiment, when asked about GEDSI, one Pacific aviation expert noted the following, highlighting the need for sensitisation on the relevance and value of GEDSI considerations in future:

*“Our main focus is the safety and security of our people and to have an airline that is operational to serve them.”* Pacific aviation stakeholder, December 2024

The evaluation found no evidence, either in the review of program documents or the consultations, that SPACP or SPA systematically documented lessons on the promotion of gender equality and disability in the Pacific aviation sector to inform P4A.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.5 What opportunities for addressing climate change in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about addressing climate change in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?

There is **strong evidence** from program reporting, triangulated against interviews with DFAT staff, advisers and whole of government partners, that SPACP and SPA took opportunities to address climate impacts. SPA supported consideration of sustainable materials and water saving design through the airport master planning process and encouraged airlines to join ICAO’s Carbon Offsetting and Reduction scheme. Support to automated weather stations through the Bureau had a flow on benefit for aviation emissions by improving flight paths and reducing fuel loads.<sup>77</sup>

Partners emphasised the importance of being realistic about what can be achieved. It is not possible that Pacific aviation will be carbon neutral in the foreseeable future. Future investments in Pacific aviation need to balance the economic benefits against the long-term climate cost.<sup>78</sup> Going forward, the evaluation team travelling on the Australia-North Pacific Connector observed the potential for quick wins to be had in supporting reduced waste from aviation, such as removing excessive packaging or supporting reverse logistics.<sup>79</sup> This would support Pacific partner priorities for reducing plastic waste.<sup>80</sup>

The evaluation found no evidence, either in the review of program documents or the consultations, that SPACP or SPA were systematically collecting lessons on climate change in the Pacific aviation sector to inform P4A.<sup>81</sup>

## 2.6 What factors have contributed to program effectiveness and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in P4A delivery)?

A range of key enablers and challenges were identified by the evaluation team, as follows:

### Contributing factors:

- The ability of SPACP to move quickly and flexibly, combined with leadership from Posts, was a key

<sup>75</sup> DFAT IMR INO014 2023-24. P4A GEDSI Interim Strategy 2024. KILs with DFAT staff and Pacific partners, October to November 2024

<sup>76</sup> Evaluation team review of key documents. KIL with DFAT and program advisers, November to December 2024

<sup>77</sup> DFAT IMR INO014 2023-24. P4A GEDSI Interim Strategy 2024. The Bureau, Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) Progress Report, June 2024. KILs with DFAT staff, advisers and whole of government partners, November to December 2024

<sup>78</sup> KILs with Pacific aviation partners, November to December 2024

<sup>79</sup> Reverse logistics is when an organisation takes responsibility for shipping out plastics or waste from a country with limited capacity to recycle waste to another country that can reuse or recycle it. See for example the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)’s Moana Taka Partnership, October 2020, chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglcfindmkaj/https://www.sprep.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/moana-taka-partnership.pdf

<sup>80</sup> Observations of the evaluation team travelling on the AusNPC from Brisbane to Majuro return from 20 to 24 November 2024. PIF, 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, 2022

<sup>81</sup> Evaluation team review of program documents and interviews with DFAT staff and advisers, November to December 2025

success factor in its ability to mitigate the impacts of COVID.

- New Zealand's primarily Polynesian focussed loss-offset program, which complemented Australia's support, donor budget support to Pacific governments, lending to airports and airlines, funding to PASO and substantive though reduced domestic aviation contributed to a stronger than expected post COVID recovery.<sup>82</sup>
- Investment in GEDSI from 2022 introduced partners to inclusive planning approaches.

#### Challenges:

- Short timeframes, the ambitious scope, short term funding (both for DFAT and partners) and an absence of documented, agreed country priorities made it difficult to determine if activities were able to contribute to collaboratively identified priorities or lasting change.
- The perception of regional stakeholders, PIC partners and Australian whole of government partners that the program could duplicate the broader regional reform agenda and risked providing advice outside its area of expertise challenged efforts to gain buy in from partners.
- Competing priorities and limited capacity reduced Pacific partners' ownership of gender initiatives.

## EFFICIENCY

### KEQ3: Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes?

**Rating:** Reasonable

Finding 10: The investment made efficient use of time and resources during COVID. Less suitable modalities and weak governance, risk management and MEL systems reduced efficiency for the post COVID period of the investment

There was **adequate evidence** from program reporting, financial data, PFP flight data and the SPACP Rapid Review, triangulated against primary data collection with Pacific country partners, regional partners, donors, whole of government partners, DFAT staff and advisers, that the investment made appropriate use of time and resources and delivered value for money for SPACP (EOPO 1), but to a lesser extent for SPA (EOPO 2). As a result, the evaluation team assigned an overall rating of reasonable for the investment.

SPACP efficiently allocated budgets towards program outcomes during the COVID crisis, applying a direct delivery, bilateral approach (**Section 3.1**). Programming focused on safety (PASO in **Table 4**), technical advisory support (PRES) and the loss-offset model (PFP). SPACP expensed 95.4% of the A\$24.9 million allocated to it in 2020-21 and 2021-22 (**Table 4**).

SPA continued to efficiently allocate budgets to ensure a high rate of expenditure. SPA expensed over 99% of the almost A\$19 million allocated to it in 2022-23 and the A\$25.6 million allocated to it in 2023-24, despite allocated funding almost doubling from A\$24.9 million in FY 2021-22 to A\$44.4 million in 2023-24 (**Table 4**). DFAT's partnership with BOM, which absorbed program underspends totalling over A\$9 million across 2022-23 and 2023-24, and the versatility and adaptability of DFAT officials who worked under significant constraints to develop new approaches in a complex and technically challenging field were key factors in efficient budget management (**Section 3.4**).<sup>83</sup>

**Table 4: Funding expensed by partner (SPACP and SPA)<sup>84</sup>**

Partner	TOTAL SPACP (\$A)	Share SPACP	TOTAL SPA (\$A)	Share SPA
PASO	\$2,940,000	11.8%	\$1,716,000	3.9%
PRES	\$1,526,642	6.1%	\$2,799,214	6.3%
BOM	\$2,019,746	8.1%	\$7,604,850	17.1%

<sup>82</sup> L&B, PRIF, March 2022

<sup>83</sup> KII with DFAT staff, advisers and whole of government partners, November and December 2025

<sup>84</sup> Note: Scholarships and other expenditure includes funding for scholarships under INO274, INO306 and INO357 in addition to other spending the evaluation team was not able to confidently assign to an implementing partner

Partner	TOTAL SPACP (\$A)	Share SPACP	TOTAL SPA (\$A)	Share SPA
CASA	\$-	0.0%	\$266,042	0.6%
AsA	\$-	0.0%	\$170,973	0.4%
ATSB	\$-	0.0%	\$-	0.0%
DFAT direct	\$75,000	0.3%	\$-	0.0%
PFP	\$16,832,957	67.5%	\$26,650,702	60.0%
Scholarships and other expenditure	\$1,550,641	6.2%	\$5,239,605	11.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$24,944,986</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$44,447,386</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Financial overview\_SPACP\_INN626, Financial overview\_SPA\_INO014. Funding allocated to partners by the evaluation team but verified by DFAT.

Delivery modalities were efficient for achieving EOPO 1, but less efficient for EOPO 2. SPACP's hands-on, direct delivery approach and reliance on trusted partners allowed it to efficiently respond during the COVID crisis. Delivering the same passenger movements through charter flights would have cost the Australian taxpayer 15 times more than the program's loss offset model.<sup>85</sup> However, the program missed the opportunity to revise its delivery approach post-COVID to better align with the more crowded and highly technical aviation safety and sustainability space (**Section 3.1**).

There was **adequate evidence** that governance and management arrangements were less than adequate (**Section 3.2**) and **strong evidence** that MEL systems were weak (**Section 3.3**).

### 3.1 To what extent was the implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes?

**Rating: Good**

Finding 11: SPACP had an effective implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes efficiently

**Rating: Weak**

Finding 12: DFAT continued to implement SPA directly, with an approach and modalities that largely retained the bilateral focus and existing partners. It needed instead a more coordinated, demand driven approach to more effectively respond to regional priorities and deliver SPA outcomes

## SPACP (2020 TO 2022)

There was **adequate evidence** from program data, the SPACP Rapid Review and financial reporting that the implementation approach and suite of modalities under SPACP was well suited to delivering program outcomes. Given staff turnover since COVID, the evaluation team were not able to fully triangulate this finding with a large number of stakeholders external to the program (see **limitations**). However, interviews with the three Pacific country partners, donors and DFAT Post stakeholders who had direct knowledge of the COVID response confirmed the positive results outlined in the documents.

SPACP leveraged DFAT's value add in crisis settings to deliver timely support in crisis. Donors, Pacific country partners, airlines, regional partners and whole of government partners interviewed for this evaluation overwhelmingly expressed admiration for DFAT's capacity in crisis response, noting that DFAT's ability to quickly mobilise significant funding at scale and rapidly align with Pacific countries' priorities and needs on the ground via its network of embassies gave it a unique advantage in responding to aviation crises.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> DFAT, Passenger Flight Program data, October 2024. See further details in footnote 110

<sup>86</sup> KIIs with donors, Pacific civil aviation authorities, research organisations and whole of government partners, November to December 2024

*“No other agency but DFAT has the ability to rapidly mobilise funding and people at scale and quickly connect with Pacific priorities via its network of embassies on the ground.”*

Whole of government partner, December 2024

The evaluation team’s review of program data found that the loss-offset model applied during COVID-19 was highly cost-effective, generating significant savings that DFAT was able to reallocate to other priorities. Supporting the same volume of passenger movements through charter flights rather than loss-offset would have cost 15 times more.<sup>87</sup>

Documents and interviews highlighted that SPACP’s flexible and hands on approach was a key success factor, allowing the program to rapidly adjust to changes in the operating context. This included establishing a COVID testing facility in PNG that enabled passengers to travel between PNG and Australia, supporting economic recovery, for example, by maintaining transport for fly in fly out mining sector workers. The program also provided the opportunity for Pacific airlines to maintain flying currency (within exemption frameworks as approved by ICAO due to the pandemic).<sup>88</sup>

This aligns with the findings of the SPACP Rapid Review, which noted that, while DFAT’s direct delivery approach required DFAT staff to spend a large amount of time and effort administering logistics, it provided benefits of immediate implementation (rather than spending several months procuring a contractor), and built in-house expertise which helped to position DFAT to launch more strategic work focussed on aviation sustainability under SPA.<sup>89</sup>

One important gap in SPACP’s approach and suite of modalities was any resourcing or dedicated approach to GEDSI or MEL. The Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program found that the problems associated with having a weak program logic and M&E system meant that the “results of SPACP have not been able to be demonstrated with any confidence.”<sup>90</sup> See **Section 3.3** for a further discussion of the MEL system.

## SPA (2022 TO 2024)

There is **strong evidence** from DFAT and partner program reporting and program data, triangulated against primary data collection with Pacific country, regional, whole of government and donor partners, that the implementation approach and suite of modalities were not well suited to delivering outcomes in the post-COVID era.

The SPACP Rapid Review identified that, building on the social and political capital built from the effective humanitarian focussed approach under SPACP, the SPA program had an opportunity to lean into other more complicated aviation-related areas. The SPACP Rapid Review noted this required:

- further leveraging of whole of government actors, and
- building greater aviation coherence across the Australian aid program, ensuring aviation interventions funded through bilateral, regional, and multilateral channels work towards high level outcomes that clearly address PIC priorities.<sup>91</sup>

While the budget allocation to activities broadly aligned with IOs and efforts were made to shift the implementation approach under SPA (see below), the majority of budget allocations continued towards

<sup>87</sup> Cost per passenger (Charter) for 2021-22 was A\$7,638, 15 times higher than the cost per passenger for overall loss offset program under the Pacific Flights Program, \$506 per passenger. For 2022-23 the gap was even larger, at A\$23,464 per charter passenger, 61 times greater than the A\$381 per passenger paid under the broader PFP program. DFAT, Passenger Flight Program data, October 2024. It is important to note that some charter flights flew without passengers, presumably to deliver critical cargo, and charters may have been scheduled to serve particularly challenging routes, so the comparison is not perfect. However, it does serve to illustrate the overall finding that, in the opinion of the evaluation team, the loss offset model delivered considerable efficiency gains and savings compared to other funding models that could realistically be deployed in the midst of a large-scale emergency such as COVID

<sup>88</sup> DFAT, Annual Investment Monitoring Report (INN626), 2022. DFAT, Annual Investment Monitoring Report (INO014), 2023. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KILs with Pacific Airlines, DFAT staff and Posts, November to December 2024

<sup>89</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>90</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>91</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

existing partners and programming. The SPA program did not introduce the extent of changes required to align with the delivery approach envisioned in the SPACP Rapid Review that would equip it to deliver the increased coordination and collaboration for EOPO2, for example establishing new partnerships and delivery modalities with actors who were engaged in, and able to influence, the regional aviation reform agenda (see also **Section 1.2**). The majority of regional partners and donors/infrastructure financing facilities, in addition to some whole of government partners and program advisers, interviewed for this evaluation said that SPA's delivery modalities were unsuitable for the increased investment in coordination and collaboration needed to deliver on support for a stronger regional enabling environment under EOPO2.<sup>92</sup> The basis for this conclusion is explored in the following discussion.

SPA largely continued the direct implementation approach it applied under SPACP. DFAT staffing increased under SPA, expanding to nine FTE based in Canberra, up from 2 under SPACP.<sup>93</sup> The SPACP and SPA team also oversaw the design of its successor program, P4A, in 2023 which intended to add a managing contractor and two deployed DFAT staff to a P4A hub in Nadi, reducing staffing levels in Canberra to six FTE.<sup>94</sup> The Pacific Flights Program (IO 2.5) and advisory support through PRES were directly managed by DFAT. These programs accounted for 60% and 6.3% of SPA's A\$44.4 million expenditure, respectively (**Table 4**). The majority of whole of government, Pacific Island country, donors and regional partners interviewed for this evaluation said that the approach was too direct, and not sufficiently coordinated across whole of government or responsive to regional priorities (see **Section 2.3**).

The use of bilateral technical advisers through PRES was the main focus of expanded programming under SPA (**Table 4**), growing rapidly from 584 adviser days in 2022-23, 1,138 in 2023-24 and over 900 days in the first five months of 2024-25.<sup>95</sup> While Pacific partners commended the strong individual commitment and collaborative approach of advisers, they noted it was too early to assess if advisory support would result in sustainable changes. Pacific partners also questioned how priorities were set and partners selected under SPA and expressed a preference to focus instead on partnerships with Australian aviation agencies or investments in infrastructure and equipment.<sup>96</sup> Several Pacific and regional partners, select DFAT Posts, other donors and whole of government partners raised concerns that advisers were at times engaging in areas that were outside of their qualifications, raising potential risks. A review of adviser tasking notes by the evaluation team aviation expert found that advisers were at times tasked to support activities that they would not have had the qualifications to deliver in Australia.<sup>97</sup>

Efforts were made to work differently. SPA introduced important adaptations to its approach which aimed to refocus support on strengthening the regional enabling environment. SPA continued investment in PASO (A\$1.7 million, or 3.9% of the investment) to strengthen aviation safety and established partnerships between Pacific and Australian technical aviation bodies such as the Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau), the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) and Airservices Australia. However, with the exception of the Bureau of Meteorology (see below), the whole of government partnerships received only 1% of SPA expenditure. DFAT noted there were limits on the part of whole of partner governments to scale up support quickly.<sup>98</sup>

SPA invested A\$7.6 million in the Bureau of Meteorology to support equipment, training and scoping visits to strengthen aviation weather observation in eight countries: Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Nauru, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu. Several Pacific aviation airlines and whole of government staff reported that these were important baseline activities for future work on safety and connectivity, opening opportunities for new and more fuel efficient aircraft routes.<sup>99</sup> However, none of the Pacific government partners interviewed for this evaluation named these activities as a core priority.<sup>100</sup> While aviation weather observation contributes

<sup>92</sup> KIIs with DFAT staff, program advisers, Infrastructure Financing Facilities, donors, regional experts, whole of government partners, November to December 2024

<sup>93</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KII with DFAT staff, November 20 December 2024

<sup>94</sup> P4A Investment Design Document, February 2023

<sup>95</sup> DFAT program data, Complete list of Aviation Tasking Notes SO1 and ASO15

<sup>96</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, DFAT Posts, advisers and donors, November to December 2024

<sup>97</sup> KIIs with Pacific and regional partners, whole of government partners. DFAT, Complete list of Aviation Tasking Notes SO1 and ASO015, provided November 2024

<sup>98</sup> Evaluation team analysis of progress reports submitted by CASA, the Bureau, ATSB, ASA and PASO, December 2024

<sup>99</sup> The Bureau, Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) Progress Report, June 2024. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KII with DFAT and Whole of Government partners, November 20 December 2024

<sup>100</sup> KII with Pacific country partners, November to December 2025

to aviation safety, the evaluation team considers that it is difficult to reconcile such a heavy investment in the Bureau of Meteorology's activities (17.1% of SPA funding, or 43% if PFP is excluded) with the program outcomes.

### 3.2 To what extent did the governance and management arrangements support implementation efficiency?

Rating: Weak

Finding 13: SPA's MEL system, risk management and governance arrangements did not sufficiently inform program decision making, outcomes and learning.

There is **adequate evidence** from the evaluation team's review of the program's risk register and program documents, triangulated against interviews with DFAT staff and program advisers, that governance and management arrangements insufficiently supported implementation efficiency.

There were no investment design documents completed for SPACP or SPA. Neither SPACP nor SPA had formal governance arrangements. This became a more pronounced gap under SPA where the program needed to navigate complex regional architecture (**Section 2.3** and **4.1**). SPA held monthly internal meetings to review program risk. However, the evaluation team considers that these were not suitable to address the coordination or policy challenges needed to achieve the more ambitious EOPO2 for SPA, or to incorporate the perspectives of regional and Pacific partners in the choice of implementation modality or partner.<sup>101</sup>

The evaluation team conducted a review of DFAT's risk registers for SPACP and SPA. The evaluation team considers that neither the SPACP or the SPA risk management systems were sufficient to address the unique level of reputational and operational risks for engaging in the aviation sector, particularly for activities related to aviation safety (IO 2.6). The program operated under two risk registers: one developed for SPACP and a broader framework introduced in November 2023 during the development of the P4A program which DFAT applied to SPA. The expanded register addressed regional safety, sustainability, DFAT safeguarding policies (covering Child Protection, Environmental and Social, and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment), and political-coordination risks tied to aviation sustainability.

Designed for development contexts, DFAT's risk template prioritises categories like stakeholder engagement and programming but lacks aviation safety elements—such as aviation hazard analysis and risk mitigation—standard in frameworks like CASA's Safety Management System (SMS). While tailored controls could address this, the tool's emphasis on development priorities (e.g., value for money) over safety-critical imperatives limits its suitability for DFAT's extensive aviation-related activities in SPACP and SPA. The evaluation team found that neither register applied by SPA and SPACP effectively identified or mitigated aviation safety risks arising from DFAT's wide-ranging engagement—such as underwriting existing routes, providing policy advice, and supporting operational upgrades—which extended beyond its development expertise into safety-critical aviation domains.<sup>102</sup>

Program risks were formally retained by implementing partners, and airlines funded by loss offset were all covered by CASA Air Operator Certificates. However, the evaluation team assess that, given systemic weaknesses among some partners, including limited resources and inconsistent safety oversight,<sup>103</sup> conducting targeted aviation safety assessments would have helped to ensure that DFAT's funding and support was not associated with unsafe operations and reduced DFAT's exposure to reputational damage, if safety failures emerged.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> KII with DFAT staff, Pacific partners, regional partners, whole of government partners, Nov to Dec 2024. DFAT, SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, May 2023

<sup>102</sup> KII with regional aviation partners, whole of government partners, donors, November to December 2024

<sup>103</sup> ICAO, Pacific Small Island Developing States Aviation Needs Analysis (PSIDS Study), September 2019

<sup>104</sup> Minute Attachment, Risks and Safeguards Assessment as of 16 September 2024; Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with DFAT staff, November to December 2024. The DFAT risk assessment template, while robust for general development investments with its nine primary categories (stakeholder, contextual, resources, infrastructure, political, programming, legal, environmental, social), is not fit for purpose for aviation-related tasks. Its broad, generic framework lacks the specificity needed to address aviation safety risks critical to achieving safe and sustainable outcomes. For example, when supporting a Pacific airline's fleet expansion (75 days, Policy Advice), the template might categorise risks under "programming" (e.g., "departmental capacity") or "infrastructure" (e.g., "critical infrastructure"), but its secondary options are too vague to identify operational hazards like a shortage of qualified engineers. By contrast, CASA's Safety Management System (SMS), as referenced earlier (pp. 5-8, 11-17), systematically identifies and mitigates such technical risks, ensuring

### 3.3 To what extent did the MEL system generate credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability? What aspects would you retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan?

There is **strong evidence** from the joint MEL Plan, SPACP Rapid Review and program reporting, triangulated against interviews with Pacific country partners, DFAT and whole of government partners, that the MEL system did not generate credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability.

The SPACP Rapid Review noted that “as is typical of short-term humanitarian focused programs, SPACP was established quickly and without extensive design or monitoring and evaluation... there was a general lack of understanding of M&E requirements for a program such as this and limited guidance on what to do.”<sup>105</sup> The SPACP team developed a Pacific Flights Program Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in January 2021 with indicators, baselines and sources of information.<sup>106</sup> The SPACP team kept a spreadsheet of loss-offset flights which collected key data on countries, flights, invoices claimed/paid, passengers and cargo, a practice continued by the SPA program. This report was useful for tracking key metrics such as which Pacific partners had benefitted from loss-offset flights and efficiency metrics like cost per flight, passenger and kilo of cargo. However, beyond this data, the evaluation team found no evidence of efforts to systematically collect data on most of the listed indicators in the 2021 M&E Framework. This was particularly the case for more qualitative indicators, including tracking whether the Pacific Flights program supported the PIF Humanitarian Pathway or whether the program contributed to stronger confidence in the ability to manage COVID-19 risk at borders, reflected by reduced border closures.<sup>107</sup>

Similar to SPACP, SPA collected good data on outputs, but the MEL system was not sufficient to provide evidence of whether program activities were likely to result in the intended EOPO and IOs. The program developed a joint M&E Framework for SPACP and SPA in May 2023. However, there were no progress reports against the baselines. SPA continued to collect data on subsidised flights and kept a spreadsheet tracking adviser deployments. Whole of government partners and PASO provided six-monthly reporting, but only one partner (the Bureau of Meteorology) linked reported activities to program IOs in a sample of partner reports provided by DFAT.

DFAT completed annual Investment Monitoring Reports. These reports largely documented activities delivered, such as advisory support or governance courses, and gave satisfactory ratings but with limited analysis of progress towards achieving the IOs, such as identification of needs, improved regulations, policies and strategies (IO2.4) or stronger safety and compliance performance (IO 2.6).<sup>108</sup> The MEL system did not test whether the assumptions that activities would result in the desired outcomes occurred. Interviews with Pacific aviation authorities and regulators involved in the program challenged assumptions in program reporting that SPA activities resulted in changes to safety regulations, policies or practice (See **Section 2.2, 4.1 and 4.3**).

#### What aspects would you retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan?

advisers deliver practical, safety-focused recommendations. The DFAT template’s development-oriented focus—prioritising outcomes like value for money or stakeholder engagement—undermines its capacity to meet aviation’s zero-tolerance safety standards, rendering it inadequate for the program’s objectives. This shortfall is amplified by uncertainties surrounding the safety systems of recipient organisations. Pacific aviation entities often face constraints such as limited resources, outdated infrastructure, or inconsistent regulatory oversight—factors DFAT cannot assume are sufficient to support its interventions. For instance, providing operational support to a Pacific airline’s Operations Control Centre (15 days in Vanuatu) without evaluating dispatcher training or communication systems could strain an already fragile setup, risking flight disruptions or new safety incidents. Relying on recipients to conduct their own risk assessments is impractical given these unknowns. With potentially inadequate capacity to identify and mitigate aviation hazards, recipients leave DFAT vulnerable to downstream failures that could undermine program success and expose it to reputational harm.

<sup>105</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>106</sup> DFAT, the Pacific Flights Program - Monitoring and Evaluation Framework - January 2021

<sup>107</sup> DFAT, the Pacific Flights Program - Monitoring and Evaluation Framework - January 2021. DFAT, PFP Flight Report, provided to the Evaluation Team in November 2024

<sup>108</sup> Evaluation team review of program IMRs, triangulated against KII with Pacific partners, regional actors, whole of government partners, DFAT Posts, November to December 2024

The P4A MEL Plan should retain the current strengths in tracking support to flights (IO 2.5) and tracking adviser deployments. To inform the P4A MEL Plan, the program needs to:

- Develop indicators and targets to measure how activities contribute to program outcomes, based on country specific priorities set out in the Country Engagement Strategies planned for P4A.
- Engage capacity strengthening expertise to measure how and whether activities result in changes to behaviours, policies, planning or decision making.
- Develop a program theory of change and key indicators to link how activities at the country level contribute to a stronger regional enabling environment (EOPO 2). See the discussion of trade-offs between bilateral and regional support in **Section 4.2**.
- Set targets for program partners and ensure they report consistently against the program's MEL Framework. Include measures to track contribution to outcomes, in addition to activities.

### 3.4 What factors contributed to program efficiency and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in delivery of P4A program activities)?

#### Contributing factors:

- The program's direct delivery approach, loss-offset model and flexible partnerships with Australian aviation agencies (especially the Bureau) contributed to efficient budget allocation, rapid activity execution and savings (**See 3.1**).
- Creativity, versatility and adaptability of DFAT officials who worked under significant constraints to develop new approaches in a complex and technically challenging field.
- The PRES mechanism allowed the program to quickly recruit and deploy advisers.

#### Challenges:

- The transition into the more crowded and technical aviation safety regional enabling environment post-COVID challenged program management and delivery structures. There is some confusion in roles, responsibilities and value-add across DFAT Canberra, DFAT Nadi Office and the Managing Contractor which would benefit from a substantive review.
- Reliance on trusted advisers contributed to path dependency, increased risk exposure and missed opportunities to adapt delivery modalities (**Section 3.1**).
- The MEL and governance systems were not sufficiently developed to support decision making (**Section 3.2 and 3.3**).

## SUSTAINABILITY

### KEQ4: To what extent has SPACP and SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector?

**Rating:** Reasonable

Finding 14: SPACP and SPA reasonably contributed to sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector. Gaps in engagement with regional actors, local ownership and planning for exit of key investments pose risks to sustainability

The evaluation defines sustainability as the extent to which any benefits in outcome areas are likely to last beyond the SPACP and SPA investment.<sup>109</sup> This includes the extent to which local actors feel ownership over the initiative and are likely to build on it after the investment concludes.

There is **strong evidence** from program data and reporting, triangulated against primary data collection with Pacific aviation partners, regional actors, donors and whole of government partners, that the benefits of the investment will endure in some EOPO areas, but not others. As a result, the evaluation team have made the overall judgement of a reasonable contribution to sustainability.

SPACP's support for aviation connectivity during COVID (**EOPO 1**) (A\$16.8 million to 5 airlines connecting 9 countries), contributed to the sustainable recovery of the aviation sector in the Pacific. External reporting from PRIF found DFAT's funding was crucial in helping airlines maintain staff and equipment and stay current with regulations.<sup>110</sup> This was confirmed by almost all stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation. Support to PASO helped maintain regulatory oversight at a time when member contributions had reduced sharply due to COVID.<sup>111</sup> SPACP's financial loss offsets during COVID proved sustainable. The evaluation team's review of PFP flight and financial data showed that, as commercial aviation recovered post-COVID, DFAT's financial support reduced, falling to zero by the end 2022-23.<sup>112</sup>

However, **there is strong evidence** from program reporting and stakeholder interviews to conclude that SPA's support (EOPO 2) had not contributed to sustainable improvements and would be unlikely to last without ongoing investment. IMRs described activities that aimed to contribute to change, but no evidence that sustainable improvements had actually been achieved or were likely to be achieved without ongoing support (**Section 3.3**).<sup>113</sup> Pacific government partners valued SPA's advisory support, but the majority of those interviewed told the evaluation team that it had not yet resulted in sustainable improvements (**Section 4.3**) and that they would not be in a position to take ownership over the initiative without ongoing support (**Section 4.3**).<sup>114</sup> A majority of regional stakeholders, donors and whole of government partners interviewed for this evaluation raised potential threats to the sustainability of SPA, including potential trade-offs between the program's bilateral approach and regional reform (**Section 4.1**) and sustainability risks to loss offsets funded under SPA (**Section 4.4**).

<sup>109</sup> DFAT, Final Investment Monitoring Report (FIMR) - Ratings Matrix

<sup>110</sup> David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>111</sup> David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KII with regional partners, Pacific country partners, DFAT staff and advisers, November to December 2024

<sup>112</sup> DFAT, Passenger Flight Program data, October 2024

<sup>113</sup> KII with Pacific partners, November to December 2024

<sup>114</sup> KII with Pacific partners, November to December 2024

#### 4.1 How has SPACP and SPA contributed to building a stronger regional enabling environment (i.e., improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making) for the Pacific aviation sector, particularly through locally led development solutions and enhancing local ownership of key outcomes?

There is **strong evidence** from the program mid-term review and reporting, triangulated against primary data collection with Pacific aviation authorities, regulators, DFAT staff and whole of Government partners that the program introduced activities designed to improve regulation, policy, planning and decision making but that these have not yet sustainably contributed to a stronger regional enabling environment. SPACP was focussed on shorter term humanitarian and economic objectives. It did not explicitly address the regional enabling environment but helped to set some of the partnerships and approaches which DFAT would later employ under SPA (see **Section 2.3**). The SPACP Rapid Review found that a new approach was needed to deliver SPA, and that there was “opportunity to build greater aviation coherence across the Australian aid program, ensuring aviation interventions funded through bilateral, regional, and multilateral channels work towards high level outcomes.”<sup>115</sup> SPA introduced an explicit focus on engaging with Pacific aviation stakeholders to “plan and implement measures addressing key areas of need in the aviation sector to support a stronger regional enabling environment” (EOPO 2). However, the evaluation team’s review of IMRs and program reporting described only nascent or early progress towards improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making and the majority of Pacific government partners interviewed for this evaluation said that they were still waiting on key deliverables, like aviation master plans, before they could judge whether the program had contributed to improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making.<sup>116</sup>

There is **adequate evidence** from program reporting and interviews with DFAT staff and advisers that the investment made **some use of locally led development solutions**. Examples include financial support to four Pacific airlines through the cost offset model (Qantas also received funding), funding for aviation engineering scholarships at Fiji National University University and governance training for airline and airport boards in Kiribati.<sup>117</sup> However, analysis of program financial data found that the bulk of assistance outside of the cost offset model was delivered through Australian or international advisers or whole of government partners rather than local actors (**Finding 12**).

There is **strong evidence** from primary data collection with regional actors, donors and whole of government partners that the bilateral approach employed by SPA (see **Section 3.1**) risked undermining the sustainability of reforms at the regional level if they are not carefully coordinated with regional and multilateral channels. A majority of donors, regional experts and whole of government partners interviewed for this evaluation believe that a sustainable Pacific aviation sector requires airline consolidations, strategic alliances and formation of revenue and cost partnerships (see for example PRIF’s Airline Options for Pacific Aviation Sustainability, July 2023).<sup>118</sup> They describe a potential trade-off between SPA providing support to airlines to maintain services on essential routes with the long term goal of sustainability. These stakeholders also raised the risk that bilateral technical support through advisers, unless carefully and strategically coordinated, risked elevating the priorities of individual countries above those required to strengthen regional architecture and the commitment towards “increased collaboration focused on tackling common challenges, taking up opportunities and sharing resources” set out in the Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy 2022-2032.<sup>119</sup> While donors, regional experts and whole of government partners who raised these risks acknowledged that bilateral engagement could complement regional reform efforts, they called on SPA to improve its coordination with regional and multilateral reform efforts to avoid duplicating or undermining each other’s efforts.

Local ownership is discussed in **section 4.3** below.

<sup>115</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>116</sup> KII with Pacific Government partners, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>117</sup> DFAT program data. Progress reports submitted by CASA, the Bureau of Meteorology, ATSB, ASA and PASO shared with the evaluation team in December 2024. Complete list of Aviation Tasking Notes SO1 and ASO15. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KIIs with Pacific partners, DFAT Posts, advisers, whole of government partners and donors, November to December 2024

<sup>118</sup> KIIs with donors, regional experts, whole of government partners, Nov to Dec 2024. PRIF, Airline Options for Pacific Aviation Sustainability, July 2023

<sup>119</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, donors, regional experts, whole of government partners, Nov to Dec 2024. Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting, Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy 2022-2032

## 4.2 Did SPA/SPACP enable Pacific aviation stakeholders to leverage additional support from other bilateral and/or multilateral donors?

There is no evidence that SPA or SPACP enabled aviation stakeholders to leverage additional support from other bilateral and/or multilateral donors. The joint performance assessment framework for SPACP and SPA did not include an explicit objective to support Pacific aviation stakeholders to achieve this objective and the SPACP Rapid Review did not assess this criteria.<sup>120</sup>

However, DFAT staff and advisors interviewed for this evaluation described how support for the development of civil aviation master plans in two countries, Kiribati and Fiji, had the potential to support Pacific partners in leveraging additional borrowing from infrastructure financing organisations. They also articulated that stronger planning could support Pacific partners in making evidence informed decisions on investments and priorities. However, at the time of writing (March 2025), the program had not yet leveraged additional support. The civil aviation master plans were still under development, neither had been completed.<sup>121</sup> Infrastructure financing organisations interviewed for the evaluation reported that master planning work conducted by Australia saved them time, they would otherwise have had to commission their own master plans, but were unlikely to result in leveraging additional support as financing decisions were made at well in advance through bilateral discussions with Pacific governments and financing institutions.<sup>122</sup>

## 4.3 What evidence is there of satisfaction and/or ownership of results and/or behaviour change observed among Pacific aviation stakeholders?

There is **adequate evidence** from interviews with Pacific country partners that they were satisfied and felt ownership in **some EOPO areas** of investment. The majority of Pacific partners interviewed valued the opportunity to work with DFAT on aviation reform, citing gaps in their own capacity, systems and financing for aviation and the crucial role that aviation plays in Pacific economies.<sup>123</sup> Pacific partners particularly valued the opportunity for exchange with Australian aviation organisations and support for aviation skills through scholarships.<sup>124</sup> While Pacific partners were generally positive about activities, they reported it was too early to judge whether these initiatives would contribute to behaviour change.<sup>125</sup> Few Pacific partners interviewed for this evaluation reported that they would have the resources or capacities to continue the work started under SPA without ongoing support.<sup>126</sup>

A majority of regional actors and donors, as well as some whole of government partners and DFAT staff, interviewed for this evaluation reported that they believed the Australia-North Pacific Connector and the Palau Paradise Express would not be commercially viable without DFAT support, despite the fact that this was a key indicator of success for EOPO 2 under the Joint M&E Framework.<sup>127</sup> These stakeholders raised the risk that Pacific governments could be put under pressure to fund a de facto community service obligation if Australian funding ends and the private sector is not able to sustain the routes.

<sup>120</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. DFAT, SPACP and SPA Joint M&E Framework, May 2023

<sup>121</sup> KIIs with DFAT staff, advisers and Pacific partners, November to December 2024

<sup>122</sup> KII with infrastructure financing organisations, DFAT staff and Pacific partners, Nov to Dec 2024

<sup>123</sup> David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and (PRIF), October 2020, Post COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy – A Scoping Study Consultants' Final Report. David Miles and Mathieu De Marchi, L&B Worldwide and PRIF, March 2022, Updating of the Post-COVID-19 Pacific Short-term Aviation Strategy: Consultant's Report, October 2020. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KIIs with Pacific partners, DFAT staff and Posts, donors and whole of government partners, November to December 2024

<sup>124</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022. KIIs with Pacific partners, DFAT staff and Posts, donors and whole of government partners, November to December 2024

<sup>125</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, regional partners, whole of government partners and donors, November to December 2024

<sup>126</sup> KIIs with Pacific partners, November to December 2024

<sup>127</sup> The first indicator for EOPO 2 is: "PFP Routes are self-sustaining. There is a decreasing trend in the costs claimed under PFP Work Orders (evidence of commercial viability) + airline stakeholders see routes as commercially sustainable with decreasing reliance on PFP support." Joint M&E Framework for the Sustainable Pacific Aviation Connectivity Program 2020-2022 (SPACP) and Sustainable Pacific Aviation Program (2022-23)

#### 4.4 How can DFAT maximise the sustainability of benefits for the sector through the P4A program or other initiatives?

Partners interviewed for this evaluation identified opportunities to leverage existing networks and approaches to increase the sustainability and relevance of the P4A program:

- Pacific partners requested a greater degree of engagement in setting program priorities and modalities and a shift in emphasis towards skill development, support to meet ICAO safety standards and leveraging finance for aviation infrastructure and equipment (see **Section 1.1**).
- Re-balance investments towards regional priorities, working through regional partners. The majority of donors, regional stakeholders and whole of government partners interviewed for this evaluation recommend stronger engagement through regional partners (see **Section 4.1**).
- Further define intermediate outcomes to establish a strategic set of measurable priorities to work towards, agreed by Pacific partners, Australian aviation agencies and DFAT.
- Agree and plan for an exit strategy from the Australia-North Pacific Connector and the Palau Paradise Express with Pacific partners, see **Text Box 2** below.
- Draw on good practice approaches to whole of government coordination from existing programs such as the IPEF Fund for Technical Assistance and Economic Cooperation, the Indonesia Transport Safety Assistance Program and Transport Sector Support Program. P4A is unique (regional, aviation specific) and will need its own approaches but can draw on existing good practice.<sup>128</sup>

#### Text Box 2: P4A and a sustainable exit strategy from air connectivity investments

To maximise the sustainability benefits to the sector, it will be important that P4A determines its medium term approach and / or exit strategy from the Australia-North Pacific Connector and the Palau Paradise Express. P4A plans on reducing the offset for Australia-North Pacific Connector and the Palau Paradise Express, year on year, with the share of funding allocated to the loss-offset activity reducing from 50% in 2023 to roughly 10% (or even lower) by the end of P4A in 2028.<sup>129</sup> The evaluation found DFAT staff had varying expectations once DFAT funding reduced or ended. Some believed the route would eventually become fully commercially viable while others thought that the route would always require some level of community service obligation and that the program's support aimed to get this cost down to a manageable level. A specific, shared objective for the route post-P4A, determined through joint planning with Pacific partners with any exit or handover activities determined and implemented early will assist in managing DFAT's transition out of this support.

<sup>128</sup> KILs with whole of government, regional, Pacific, partners, DFAT staff, Posts and advisers, November to December 2024

<sup>129</sup> DFAT, P4A Investment Design Document, February 2023

# LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## KEQ 5 Lessons from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding.

The evaluation team has identified five key lessons and associated recommendations for DFAT arising from the findings of the evaluation. It is expected that all recommendations can be addressed by rebalancing investments and activities within the existing program budget envelope.

### LESSON 1

DFAT's hands on delivery, ability to rapidly mobilise funding during a crisis and identify Pacific priorities via its network of Posts was a key success factor for the SPACP program during the COVID response, reflecting findings from the SPACP Rapid Review,<sup>130</sup> and Findings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 11 of this evaluation.

**Recommendation 1:** Maintain DFAT capacity to respond to aviation crises, backed by specific funding, capacities and MEL indicators to determine the success of short-term emergency interventions (Findings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11) (Strategic, medium priority).

### LESSON 2

Efforts made to reorient the program towards regional priorities under SPA could be further strengthened to achieve EOPO 2. Direct delivery via PRES increased over the period, while delivering on regional priorities requires a greater shift in focus towards working through regional architecture. This reflects Findings 4, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 14.

**Recommendation 2:** DFAT's Pacific aviation team should strengthen the regional delivery approach, ownership by local stakeholders and program sustainability by aligning program priorities and delivery modalities more closely with Pacific priorities. This will mean rebalancing investments away from direct delivery towards building coalitions and implementing primarily through partners 4, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 14) (Strategic, high priority).

- a. Increase engagement with Australian government agencies with Pacific aviation responsibilities to agree a whole of government approach that informs how Australia engages in aviation markets and strengthen coherence with Australia's broader policy engagement on the Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting, the ICAO council and PASO (Findings 8, 12 and 14).<sup>131</sup>
- b. Agree more measurable, strategic objectives with Pacific and aviation stakeholders that align with the regional architecture in future program logics (Findings 2, 4, 10, 13 and 14).
- c. Consult Australian and Pacific partners to incorporate expert perspectives in the selection of appropriate partners, aiming to reduce the reliance on technical advisers (Findings 4, 6, 12 and 14).
- d. Establish coordination and governance systems that identify and consider Pacific priorities in decision making, and promote transparency of decision-making (Findings 4, 12 and 14).
- e. Consider establishing a Strategic Advisory Group with representatives of relevant agencies to support coordination, prioritisation, ownership and governance. Recommended membership: DITRDCA, ICAO, PASO, PRIF, a representative of a Pacific Island Country and a development bank (Findings 8 and 14).

<sup>130</sup> Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>131</sup> DFAT, P4A Investment Design Document, DFAT, February 2023. KILs with DFAT staff, whole of Government partners,

- f. Prioritise sustainability/handover planning for the next phase of air connectivity routes financially supported by DFAT, to allow stakeholders and travellers to plan in advance, maximise the potential for sustainability and minimise future disruptions (Findings 4 and 14).
- g. When considering future financial support to air connectivity in the Pacific, consult with DITRDCA and contract an expert route analysis to inform the decision, including likely liability, time to handover and any remaining community service obligations (Findings 8 and 13).
- h. Review roles and responsibilities across DFAT Canberra, DFAT Nadi Office and the Managing Contractor for clarity and value add (**Section 3.4**) (Findings 8, 10, 12).

## LESSON 3

Support for aviation safety is critical and high risk and should be led by expert agencies in aviation safety, rather than individuals, with an appropriate governance mechanism. This reflects Findings 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13.

**Recommendation 3:** review investments in aviation safety and strengthen the approach to risk management (Finding 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13) (Operational, high priority).

- a. Re-balance support for aviation safety investments to align more closely with regional aviation safety architecture, in particular to agencies that lead aviation safety e.g. PASO, CASA, rather than individual advisers through PRES (Findings 6, 12 and 14).
- b. Seek an expert internal review or audit of the program's approach to risk management to identify opportunities to ensure alignment with DFAT standards, with a focus on aviation safety. If agreed by the internal expert, engage an aviation industry expert to develop a tailored activity level risk management framework that combines industry standard risk tools with capacity assessment approaches. Apply this risk framework at activity level (Findings 12).
- c. Ensure the governance system (Recommendation 2d) provides appropriate technical skill and oversight of aviation safety risks (Finding 12).
- d. Review advisory rosters and strengthen project controls to fully assess the risk of providing advisory support, especially related to aviation safety or market reform (Findings 6, 7 and 12).

## LESSON 4

Implementing DFAT's GEDSI priorities can be challenging in the Pacific aviation context and requires dedicated attention. This reflects Finding 9.

**Recommendation 4:** Finalise the interim GEDSI strategy that underpins program implementation and is agreed with stakeholders (see Recommendation 2) (Finding 9). Given DFAT's increased attention to climate change, consider also agreeing an approach to reducing Pacific aviation's contribution to climate change with stakeholders. (Strategic, medium priority).

## LESSON 5

A light-touch and late governance and MEL system did not offer the strength of evidence and oversight that may have supported the full achievement of EOPO 2 (Findings 6, 7, 9, 12, 13 and 14).

**Recommendation 5:** Strengthen governance and MEL systems to ensure evidence and learning informs program decision-making and achievement of EOPOs, in line with DFAT standards (Findings 6, 7, 9, 12 and 13) (Operational, medium priority).

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1: EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program and the Sustainable Pacific Aviation Program – Joint Evaluation

#### Background

DFAT support for Pacific aviation was in response to the Pacific and Timor-Leste's rapid border closures at the onset of COVID-19, assuring critical air links for COVID-19 preparedness and response, and humanitarian responses. Two initial investments on 'Essential Services and Humanitarian Corridor' (ESHC) (Phase 1 and 2) enabled the aviation connectivity needed to transport and supply humanitarian aid and essential goods, services and experts, and repatriate Pacific, Timor-Leste and Australian nationals across the region.

The **Pacific Airlines Reimbursement Scheme** (PARS), an initiative in both phases of the ESHC investments, will be included in this evaluation. PARS was an initiative that commenced in May 2020 with an expenditure of over A\$2.8 million to incentivise Pacific airlines to continue flying commercial routes between Australia and the Pacific by reimbursing them for airport fees and landing charges required to continue flights between the Pacific country and Australia. Airlines that were not eligible for the Pacific Flights Program were supported through the PARS. The other initiatives under ESHC, which will not form a part of the evaluation, included logistics for transporting COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment, support for the World Food Programme, and support with self-isolation and/or quarantining costs.

In September 2020, the **Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program** (SPACP) was established as the next iteration of Australia's aviation support. Activities supported under SPACP sought to address the broader sustainability of the aviation sector including through building human capital, safety capabilities, and infrastructure. SPACP was implemented until June 2022, with an investment expenditure of A\$26.3 million. Key initiatives from SPACP included the Pacific Flights Program (PFP) and the Pacific Aviation Safety Support Program (PASSP). PFP was established in August 2020 with an expenditure of A\$16 million, to assure airlines' minimum regular and scheduled connectivity by removing the commercial risk for agreed flights in the Pacific and Timor-Leste. PASSP was established in September 2020 with an expenditure of A\$2.9 million, to enable the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) to provide aviation safety inspection services in Pacific Island member countries.

The next program iteration that commenced in May 2022, the **Sustainable Pacific Aviation** (SPA) Program, was an interim investment of A\$44.3 million till June 2024, while the 5-year A\$100 million Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) program design was being designed. SPA continued initiatives from SPACP including the PFP and safety initiatives as delivered by PASO.

SPA was managed and implemented directly by the Pacific Aviation Section (VNS) (Office of the Pacific, DFAT Canberra) in close consultation with DFAT's Pacific Posts. Implementation modalities included use of the Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) Mechanism for technical and advisory support, PASO as an implementation partner, and by leveraging the expertise of whole of government agencies: such as the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), Airservices Australia, and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).

The SPACP and SPA Programs are two separate investments but sit under a joint M&E framework and program logic which was finalised in November 2023. The program logic (**Annex 2**) has two end of program outcomes (EOPO).

EOPO 1 was developed for SPACP and relates to 'safe and reliable air connectivity being maintained between Pacific island countries and Australia to contribute to COVID-19 responses, economic stability and resilience, and the continued viability of the aviation sector'. EOPO 1 is supported by three intermediate

outcomes (IOs) in the areas of human development, economic development and aviation compliance and safety (as per Attachment A).

EOPO 2 was developed for SPA and relates to addressing key areas of need in the Pacific aviation sector to support a stronger enabling environment, improve aviation safety and increase coordination and connectivity between Pacific island countries. EOPO 2 is underpinned by six IOs. IOs 2.1-2.3 reflect SPA's focus on leveraging lessons learned and enhancing gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability through implementing pilot activities aimed at longer-term, sustainable economic development and capacity building. IOs 2.4-2.6 are linked to the three core objectives against which SPA activities are mapped: building a stronger enabling environment for the sector, enhancing coordination and connectivity between Pacific island countries, and improving aviation safety and compliance outcomes in the region.

In January 2024, the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation program was approved, as the next iteration of Australia's support for the Pacific aviation sector. Activities from SPA, now P4A, continue to be implemented by DFAT with a transition to a hybrid delivery model with a Managing Contractor (MC) taking place in Q3 and Q4 2024.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Joint Independent Evaluation is to provide evidence-based assessment of SPACP and SPA:

- i. to inform the final investment monitoring reporting (FIMR) for SPA and SPACP including:
  - a. program relevance in light of the circumstances and sector-level developments
  - b. program effectiveness in relation to the two program EOPOs;
  - c. the efficiency of SPACP/SPA's implementation approach; and
  - d. sustainability of outcomes from individual activities for Pacific aviation stakeholders
  - e. the benefits attained from the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Risk Management systems
- ii. to identify lessons and insights about efforts to strengthen Pacific aviation that can inform P4A programming, including informing the development of a P4A MEF.

The Joint Evaluation will triangulate and update findings from a previous rapid review of SPACP, undertaken in August 2022, to provide an overall assessment over the lifetime of PARS, SPACP and SPA.

## AUDIENCE

The primary users of the Joint Evaluation are personnel involved in the P4A program including DFAT (VNS, P4A DFAT, DFAT Posts), P4A Managing Contractor, P4A Advisers, and whole of government partners. The final report will be shared directly with all program stakeholders and published on the DFAT website. The Evaluation Report will be required to meet DFAT's accessibility guidelines.

## KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Joint Evaluation should respond to the following overarching key evaluation questions (KEQ) with the sub-questions used to guide the collection and analysis of the data. Some of these KEQs are drawn from the Joint MEF, others reflect DFAT's Investment Monitoring Report criteria. Some of the KEQs address IOs for SPACP and SPA for which there may be less data (i.e., available in the SPACP Review and/or for capture under the SPA MEL System). The Evaluation Team may revise the evaluation questions when finalising an Evaluation Plan. Many of the KEQs will require analysis of publicly available Pacific aviation reporting/data.

The evaluation will assess:

### 1. **Relevance: how relevant were PARS, SPACP and SPA to the policy and operational context?**

- 1.1. To what extent were IOs aligned and tailored to Partner government priorities and beneficiary needs?
- 1.2. To what extent and how have the investments displayed adaptability to changes in the operating context?
- 1.3 What factors contributed to program relevance and adaptability? What has been challenging?

**2. Effectiveness: was SPACP/SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes?**

- 2.1. To what extent did SPACP contribute to mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 by maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries and Australia? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 1)
- 2.2. What evidence is there of program activities contributing to organizational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 1.3 and 2.6)
- 2.3. What evidence is there of specific activities and/or partnerships influencing coordination, cooperation and collaboration including but not limited to policy dialogue and partnerships? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 2.5)
- 2.4. What opportunities for enhanced gender equality and disability inclusion in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about the promotion of gender equality and disability inclusion in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?
- 2.5. What opportunities for addressing climate change in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about addressing climate change in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?
- 2.6. What factors have contributed to program effectiveness and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in P4A delivery)?

**3. Efficiency: Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes?**

- 3.1. To what extent was the implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes?
- 3.2. To what extent did the governance and management arrangements support implementation efficiency?
- 3.3. To what extent did the MEL system generate credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability? What aspects would you retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan?
- 3.4. What factors contributed to program efficiency and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in delivery of P4A program activities)?

**4. Sustainability: To what extent has SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector? (Joint MEF KEQ 2)**

- 4.1. How has SPACP and SPA contributed to building a stronger regional enabling environment (i.e., improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making) for the Pacific aviation sector, including through the use of locally led development solutions? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 2.4)
- 4.2. Did SPA/SPACP enable Pacific aviation stakeholders to leverage additional support from other bilateral and/or multilateral donors?
- 4.3. What evidence is there of satisfaction and/or ownership of results and/or behaviour change observed among Pacific aviation stakeholders?
- 4.4. How can DFAT maximise the sustainability of any benefits for the sector, through the P4A program or other initiatives?

The evaluation will provide:

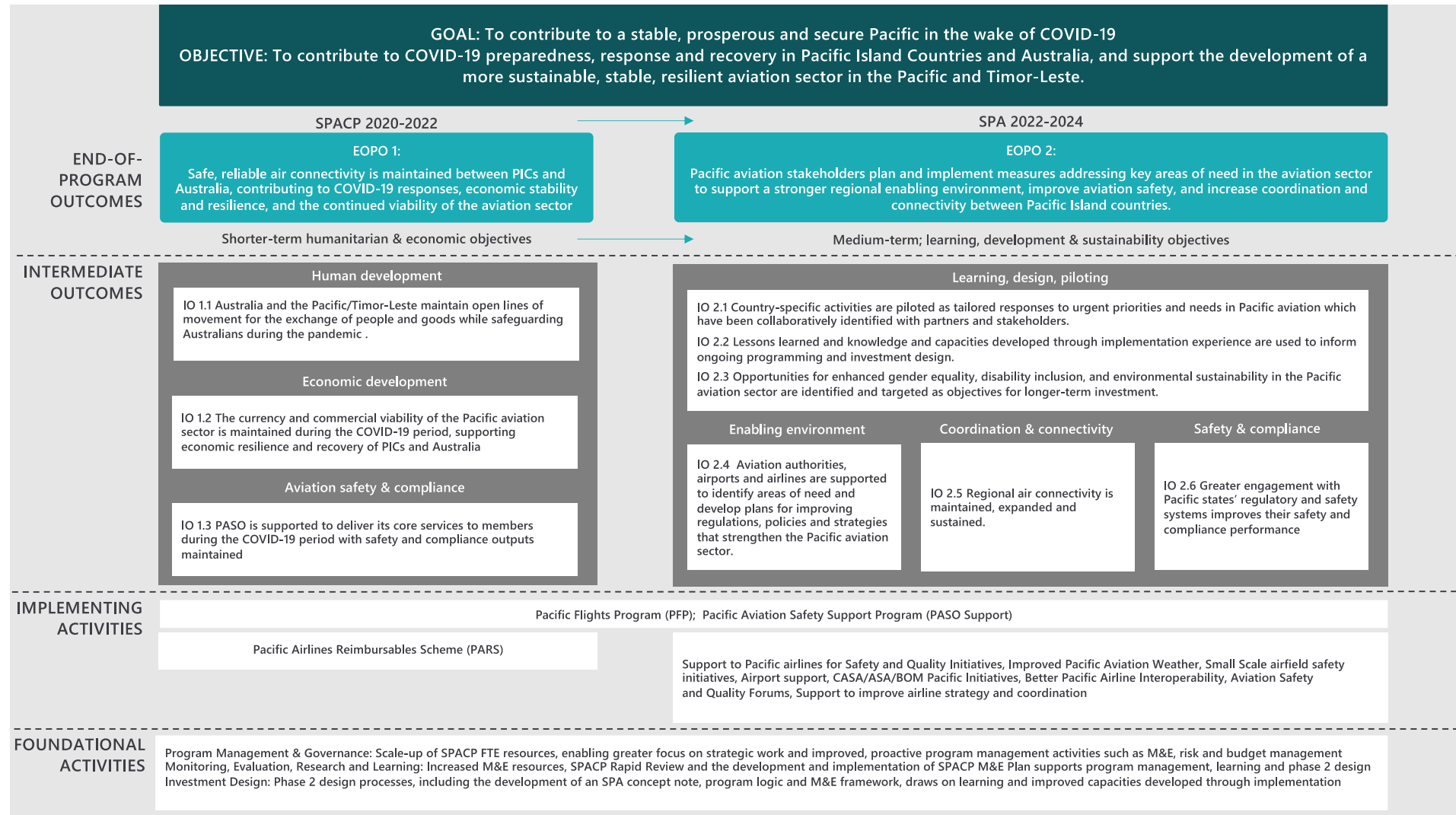
- 5. Lessons** from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as **recommendations** to be considered in approaches to future funding.

## EVALUATION PROCESS

Data and evidence to answer these KEQs should be collected through methods (interviews, site visits, group discussions, case documentation etc.) defined by the Evaluation Team in the Evaluation Plan and selected to fit the time and resources available for the Joint Evaluation. The evaluation will include in-country visits to engage with stakeholders who have supported implementation and beneficiaries. Stakeholders include DFAT (VNS, P4A and Posts); whole of government agencies the Bureau, ATSB, ASA, CASA, regional implementation partner PASO; beneficiaries the program supported, which **may include** operators and government agencies in Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Fiji.

The Evaluation Team is detailed below and will include an Evaluation Team Leader, a VNS Evaluation Manager, a M&E Adviser and an Aviation Adviser. The VNS Evaluation Manager will support coordination of VNS input as it relates to the Evaluation Plan, consultations, workshopping, draft Evaluation Report and other outputs throughout the Evaluation. It is anticipated that the Evaluation Team will engage with a cross section of SPACP/SPA stakeholders including DFAT personnel, Pacific aviation stakeholders, whole of government partners, technical advisors, trainees and the program team. The Evaluation Team will also identify suitable case studies including illustrative (typical cases compared to outlier cases within PARS, SPACP and SPA such as modalities for implementation), and possibly critical instances (exemplifying political concerns impacting aviation).

## ANNEX 2 PROGRAM LOGIC



## ANNEX 3: EVALUATION MATRIX

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The evaluation will particularly focus on Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) related to the effectiveness (KEQ 2), efficiency (KEQ 3) and sustainability (KEQ 4) of current approaches in order to provide lessons on how Australia's could strengthen the delivery of future programs of a similar nature.

### **KEQ 1: How relevant were SPACP and SPA to the policy and operational context? (RELEVANCE)**

#### **Sub-Questions**

- 1.1. To what extent were IOs aligned and tailored to Partner government priorities and beneficiary needs?
- 1.2. To what extent and how have the investments displayed adaptability to changes in the operating context?
- 1.3. What factors contributed to program relevance and adaptability? What has been challenging?

**Data Sources:** DFAT, SPACP, SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide

### **KEQ 2: Was SPACP/SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes? (EFFECTIVENESS)**

#### **Sub-Questions**

- 2.1. To what extent did SPACP contribute to mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 by maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries and Australia? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 1)
- 2.2. What evidence is there of program activities contributing to organizational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 1.3 and 2.6)
- 2.3. What evidence is there of specific activities and/or partnerships influencing coordination, cooperation and collaboration including but not limited to policy dialogue and partnerships? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 2.5)
- 2.4. What opportunities for enhanced gender equality and disability inclusion in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about the promotion of gender equality and disability in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?
- 2.5. What opportunities for addressing climate change in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about addressing climate change in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?
- 2.6. What factors have contributed to program effectiveness and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in P4A delivery)?

**Data Sources:** DFAT, SPACP and SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders, other relevant stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide and Passenger Perception Survey

### **KEQ3: Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes? (EFFICIENCY)**

### Sub-Questions

- 3.1. To what extent was the implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes?
- 3.2. To what extent did the governance and management arrangements support implementation efficiency?
- 3.3. To what extent did the MEL system generate credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability? What aspects would you retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan? What factors contributed to program efficiency and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in delivery of P4A program activities)?

**Data Sources:** DFAT, SPACP and SPA

**Method:** Document review Interviews, Analysis of program data

**Tools:** KII Guide

### KEQ 4: To what extent has SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector? (Joint MEF KEQ 2) (SUSTAINABILITY)

#### Sub-Questions

- 4.1. How has SPACP and SPA contributed to building a stronger regional enabling environment (i.e., improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making) for the Pacific aviation sector, including through the use of locally led development solutions? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 2.4)
- 4.2. Did SPA/SPACP enable Pacific aviation stakeholders to leverage additional support from other bilateral and/or multilateral donors?
- 4.3. What evidence is there of satisfaction and/or ownership of results and/or behaviour change observed among Pacific aviation stakeholders?
- 4.4. How can DFAT maximise the sustainability of any benefits for the sector, through the P4A program or other initiatives?

**Data Sources:** DFAT, SPACP and SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders, other relevant stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide and Passenger Perception Survey

### KEQ5: Lessons from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding (LEARNING)

#### Sub-Questions

- 5.1. What lessons can be drawn from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding?

**Data Sources:** DFAT, SPACP and SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders, other relevant stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide

## ANNEX 4: EVALUATION PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of evaluation

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has commissioned an evaluation of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (SPACP) and the Sustainable Pacific Aviation (SPA) program. These programs are hereafter referred to collectively as the Pacific Aviation Program. The evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Australia's support to the Pacific aviation sector, both during COVID and as part of the post-COVID transition to longer term capacity strengthening. The evaluation will also assess monitoring and risk management systems put in place for the program and identify lessons for the next phase of Australia's engagement under the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) program, which commenced at the beginning of 2024.

The evaluation will also assess Australia's commitment to addressing Pacific economic empowerment, gender and disability inclusive development, locally led development and climate resilience, as described in *Australia's International Development Policy*.<sup>132</sup>

This evaluation plan sets out the detailed approach to the evaluation, including the method, schedule and deliverables, as well as further defining the scope and the key questions the evaluation will examine. It builds on the final Terms of Reference and provides a more detailed guiding document for the evaluation team. This evaluation plan has been developed with reference to DFAT's *Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standards 9 and 10 (2023)*.<sup>133</sup>

### BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Australia's support to the Pacific aviation sector was launched at a time of unprecedented challenge. The effect of COVID-19 on the movement of people and the provision of essential goods and services across the Pacific was significant and abrupt. Between January to May 2020, international passenger travel throughout the Pacific region plummeted from approximately 250,000 passengers to less than 5,000. This had a massive impact on the Pacific aviation sector and on the economies of Pacific island countries.<sup>134</sup>

The program evolved rapidly to address a number of COVID related needs, including:

- **Health outcomes:** The program enabled the delivery of critical health supplies, such as **1 million vaccines to Timor-Leste**, contributing to the successful containment of COVID-19. This access was vital in countries with poor aviation connectivity, where supply chain disruptions would otherwise have severely hindered pandemic response efforts.
- **Economic outcomes:** SPACP facilitated the **mobility of seasonal workers** from Pacific island countries to Australia, ensuring continued remittance flows, which are a significant source of income for countries like Tonga, where they account for up to **40% of GDP**.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the program **helped Pacific airlines survive** the fiscal impact of COVID-19 by disbursing over A\$14.8 million, ensuring they could continue operations and recover as tourism resumed.
- **Aviation Sector Strengthening:** SPACP's provision of support through the Pacific Aviation Safety Organization (PASO) contributed to **increased safety and compliance** in Pacific aviation. The

<sup>132</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2023, *Our Commitment* p.29, DFAT website, 21/05/2024, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/new-international-development-policy>

<sup>133</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2023, *Standards 9 – 10* pp. 67 – 77, DFAT website, 21/05/2024, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/dfat-design-monitoring-evaluation-learning-standards>

<sup>134</sup> Dr David Carpenter. Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022

<sup>135</sup> This figure refers to total remittances received by Tonga, including its large diaspora. Remittances from seasonal workers will make up only a portion of this. This figure is used to illustrate the importance of maintaining channels for remittances during times of crisis, including through robust, affordable and reliable money transfer systems. Air services connectivity is only one aspect of this

program helped ensure that Pacific Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) met **international safety obligations** through funding audits, certifications, and surveillance activities which aim to improve the region's aviation standards.<sup>136</sup>

In January 2024, the Australia-Pacific Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) program was approved, as the next iteration of Australia's support for the Pacific aviation sector.

## Australia's Assistance

The overarching rationale for Australia's support to the Pacific aviation sector evolved from providing a minimum level of predictable, reliable air connectivity to ensure the movement of essential goods services and people during COVID towards a broader approach that seeks to contribute to a stable, prosperous and secure Pacific. This logic sees aviation as a key enabler of connectivity in the Pacific, which in turn has flow on benefits for key economic sectors including tourism, labour mobility, education, trade, and people to people links. The M&E framework and program logic assumes that stronger engagement on aviation safety is a key enabling factor for greater connectivity.

Australia has invested A\$68.3 million towards this goal between October 2020 and June 2024. Funding has been directly implemented by DFAT's Pacific Aviation Section (VNS), through a loss offset model with Pacific airlines, funding to the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), deployment of technical advisers under the Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) mechanism and whole of government partnerships with Australian aviation institutions, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and Airservices Australia. DFAT drew on the expertise of whole of government partners, including the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) and CASA in designing approaches and selecting partners. DFAT also drew on the insights of technical advisers deployed under the PRES mechanism to inform iterative program design. The next phase of engagement, P4A which commenced in January 2024, will transition to a hybrid delivery model with both DFAT staff and a Managing Contractor (MC) sharing implementation responsibility.

**Program outcomes:** The program did not finalise an overarching M&E framework and program logic until November 2023. This logic includes two End of Program Outcomes (EOPOs). EOPO 1 was developed for the COVID response phase of the program (SPACP) and relates to *'safe and reliable air connectivity being maintained between Pacific island countries and Australia to contribute to COVID-19 responses, economic stability and resilience, and the continued viability of the aviation sector'*. EOPO 2 was developed to capture the transition towards longer term capacity building (largely under SPA) and relates to addressing key areas of need in the Pacific aviation sector to *support a stronger enabling environment, improve aviation safety and increase coordination and connectivity between Pacific island countries*. The program logic introduced a gender, disability and climate specific outcome to the program for the first time: *IO 2.3 Opportunities for enhanced gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability in the Pacific aviation sector are identified and targeted as objectives for longer-term investment*.

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

The evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning. The evaluation will provide a clear and independent record of program achievements and challenges, including unintended consequences, both positive and negative, and how effectively the program integrated Australia's broader development objectives related to gender, disability inclusion, locally led development and climate resilience. It will serve as a key source for the Final Investment Monitoring Report for both the SPACP and SPA program. The

<sup>136</sup> Initial desk review conducted by the evaluation team, October to November 2024

evaluation will also capture lessons and provide recommendations to inform the next phase of DFAT's engagement with the Pacific aviation sector through the P4A program.

## EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation will cover the implementation period from October 2020 to June 2024. Investments covered by the evaluation are summarised below:

### Investments in Evaluation Scope

Investment	Partners	Funding Period	Amount AU\$	Comments
Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (SPACP)	Airlines (PFP), PASO, PRES, whole of government (BOM, ATSB, CASA, AsA), the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO)	October 2020 to Dec 2022	\$26.3 m, including \$10 m for PFP	N/A
Sustainable Pacific Aviation (SPA) Program	Airlines (PFP), PASO, PRES, whole of government (BOM, ATSB, CASA, AsA)	June 2022 to June 2024	\$42 m	Bridging program while DFAT designed P4A
<b>TOTAL</b>	N/A	<b>October 2020 to June 2024</b>	<b>\$68.3 m</b>	N/A

The new Pacific aviation program, P4A (A\$100 million over five years), is outside of the scope of this evaluation. The evaluation will not attempt to assess the P4A program (it is too soon to do so). However, the evaluation team will review the P4A MEL framework and other key documents in order to provide recommendations on how lessons from DFAT's Pacific Aviation Program can be used to strengthen the delivery of P4A.

Alinea will ensure that the voices of women, people with disability and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics are considered at all stages of evaluation design, data collection, analysis and reporting. The Evaluation team will disaggregate all data collected by gender and status and consider specific inclusion related findings and recommendations.

Alinea will provide the final evaluation in accessible formats to meet DFAT's accessibility requirements. The final evaluation report will be published by DFAT.

## EVALUATION USE

The principal users of this evaluation will be personnel involved in the P4A program including DFAT (VNS, P4A DFAT, DFAT Posts), the P4A Managing Contractor, P4A Advisers, and whole of government partners. The final report will be shared directly with all program stakeholders, published on the DFAT website and meet accessibility requirements. The evaluation team will develop a summary of findings and present it to Pacific stakeholders, taking their feedback into account before finalising the report.

Findings from the evaluation will directly inform the FIMR for SPACP and SPA and the implementation of the P4A program.

## AREAS OF ENQUIRY

The evaluation will assess:

1. Program relevance in light of the circumstances and sector-level developments

2. Program effectiveness in relation to the two program EOPOs
3. The efficiency of SPACP/SPA's implementation approach
4. Sustainability of outcomes from individual activities for Pacific aviation stakeholders, and
5. The benefits attained from the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Risk Management system.

The evaluation will provide:

6. Lessons from the design, implementation, and management of the Strategy and partner programming as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding.

## METHODS

The evaluation will use a mixed methods approach, combining stakeholder (key informant) interviews, document and literature review and quantitative data analysis, drawing on DFAT program data and publicly available reporting. Interviews and surveys with passengers on the Australia-North Pacific Connector flight, in-person visits and online interviews will ensure the evaluation is able to meet in-person with key stakeholders and gain a better understanding of the context and program outcomes. The evaluation team will interview a sample of stakeholders in other locations through remote interviews.

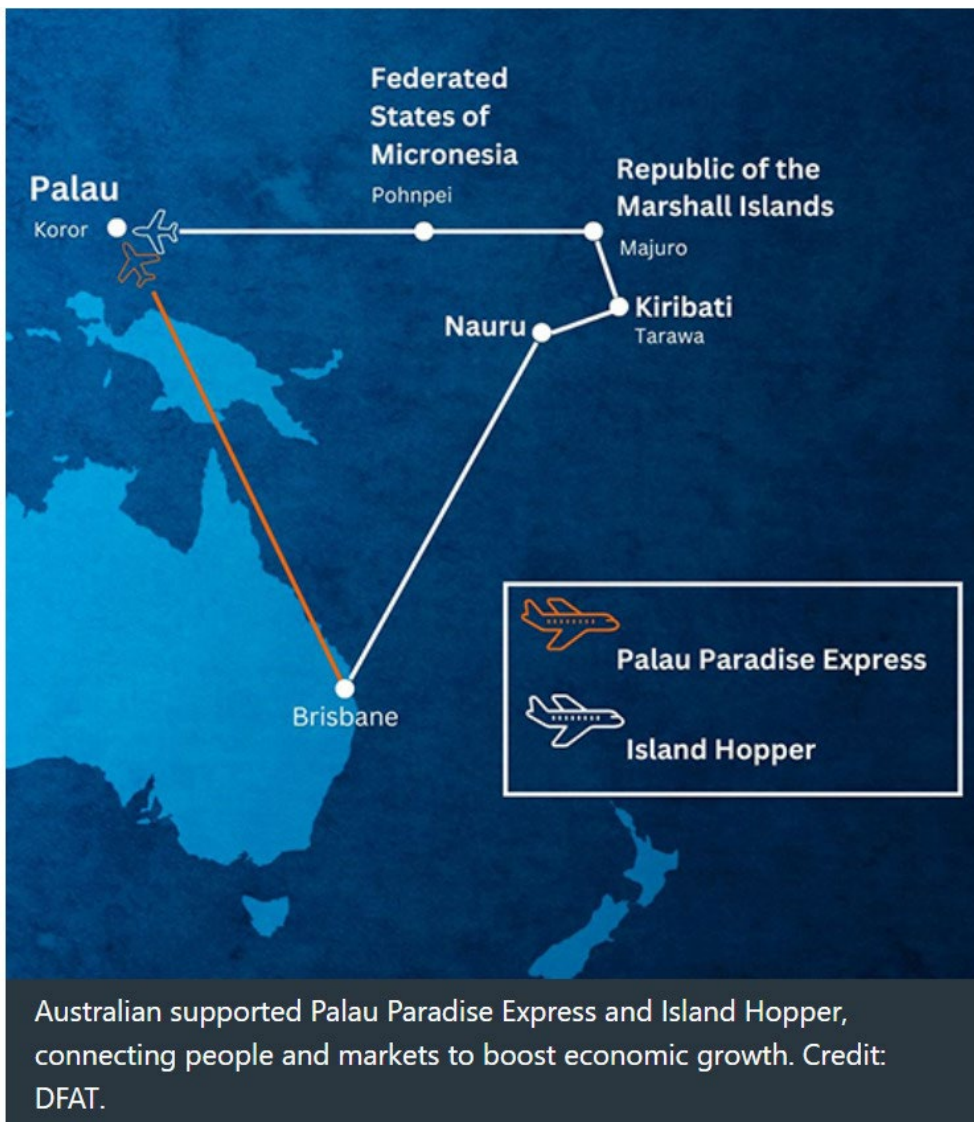
The evaluation plan was developed based on an inception mission to Canberra on 23 October 2024 including interviews with 5 DFAT VNS staff and a review of key project documents. Due to the short timeline for the evaluation, the team was not able to consult stakeholders outside of DFAT on the evaluation plan. To address this gap, the evaluation team will consult key external stakeholders on the planned data collection methodology during the data collection mission and leave flexibility in the schedule to snowball, adding additional stakeholder interviews or new lines of enquiry based on stakeholder feedback.

Overall, the evaluation will aim to interview **114 people (57 women, 57 men)**, including through

- 60 passenger and aircrew interviews (target = 30 women, 30 men) travelling on the Australia-North Pacific Connector between Brisbane, Nauru, Kiribati and the Republic of the Marshall Islands
- 36 interviews with aviation stakeholders, including Pacific Aviation authorities, regulators, airlines, airports, regional and international bodies, DFAT, Australian whole of government partners, deployed experts and donors (target = 54 people, 27 women, 27 men)

To conduct the passenger interviews, the evaluation team will travel on the Nauru Airlines North-Pacific Connector flight (also known as the Island Hopper) between Brisbane and Majuro and return, interviewing passengers on each of the three outward and three return legs of the flight. We will work with DFAT and Nauru Airlines to introduce the evaluation team and purpose and provide passengers with an option to take part in the interview. The evaluation team will circulate in the cabin at safe moments, under the direction of the flight crew, and in the waiting areas prior to boarding, inviting passengers to take part in an interview. The evaluation team will invite a diverse mix of nationalities, women and men and ability status to take part in the interviews. Interviews will be strictly voluntary, and the interviewee will be able to stop the interview at any time.

### Australia North Pacific Connector/Island Hopper



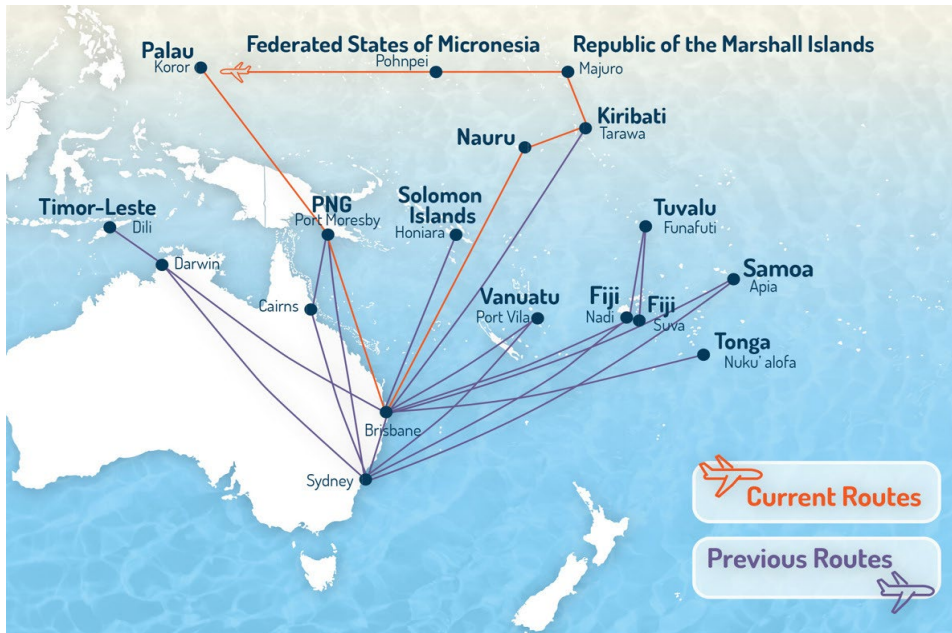
Source: DFAT website, accessed 10 October 2024

Interviews with aviation stakeholders will include a mix of

- In-person interviews in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nadi, Fiji, Brisbane and Canberra, Australia, and
- Remote interviews in Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Kiribati.

The evaluation team will aim to interview stakeholders in 9 of the 13 countries supported by the Pacific Aviation Program. However, we anticipate that some stakeholders will be unwilling or unavailable to interview due to busy schedules and survey fatigue. We have included oversampling to account for this. All stakeholders, including from countries not selected for interviews, will be invited to a stakeholder workshop to review findings and recommendations and their views will be reflected in the final report. A map showing key air routes supported by the program is below.

## Current and previous routes supported by the program (SPACP and SPA) 2020 to October 2024



Source: DFAT program data shared with the evaluation team on 10 October 2024

Findings and recommendations emerging from the evaluation will be evidence based and triangulated. Research will be mixed methods, combining insights from quantitative data provided by DFAT and publicly available aviation data, triangulated with qualitative data collected in interviews. The evaluation team will not include findings that are only backed by one source. In some cases, the evaluation may use evidence from one source to illustrate a broader trend.

## TRIANGULATION, RIGOUR OF EVIDENCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Evidence will be triangulated to maximise rigour. The evaluation team will hold ongoing analysis workshops throughout the evaluation process to map evidence against emerging findings, identify and address bias, test the rigour and strength of findings and the evidence supporting it and identify emerging gaps for further data collection. The evaluation team will use a structured analysis template to ensure a common approach and allow the evaluation team and quality assurers to weigh the strength of evidence. Emerging themes from interviews will be tested in subsequent interviews. Major findings emerging from the document review will have multiple sources and be tested through DFAT and external validation workshops (see below).

The evaluation team leader will be responsible for providing initial findings and recommendations and will seek additional verification or input if required. Where evidence for a particular finding or recommendation is weak, this will be clearly articulated and additional information sourced. Following feedback on the preliminary findings and provision of additional information, the evaluation report will be drafted.

The evaluation will be subject to multiple levels of quality assurance

- Internal Alinea quality assurance by a Senior or Principal Consultant from outside the evaluation process to test and refine the findings, recommendations and evidence
- Aide memoire presentation to present initial findings to DFAT
- DFAT quality assurance by VNS. DFAT will also subject the evaluation to independent quality assurance and/or review by DFAT's Development Evaluation and Assurance Section if required, and
- Stakeholder workshop – the evaluation team will invite all stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation, and all stakeholders outlined in the sampling plan, to a workshop to present preliminary

findings and recommendations. The evaluation team will take on board stakeholder feedback prior to finalising the evaluation.

## DELIVERABLES

The evaluation will generate the following deliverables:

Deliverable	Due date
1. Draft evaluation plan	11 November 2024
2. Final evaluation plan	21 November 2024
3. Aide Memoire and Presentation (subject to change pending travel dates being confirmed)	3 February 2025
4. Draft final report	21 February 2025
5. Final report	7 March 2025

## RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

Key limitations and constraints to delivery of the evaluation include the shift in program focus from emergency response to longer term capacity building, including the fact that the PAF was developed quite late in implementation, the tight time frame for the evaluation and potential interview fatigue among key stakeholders. The evaluation team will address these limitations by using a mix of in person, remote and case study data collection methodologies to quickly collect key data. Key contingencies to address these limitations include

- Flexibility - the evaluation team will remain flexible throughout the evaluation process, allowing room to explore new lines of enquiry
- Snowballing – allowing room to add new stakeholders to the sampling based on recommendations during the data collection process
- Remaining open to exploring unintended outcomes that emerge from the data collection, and
- Oversampling to allow for the fact that not all stakeholders may be willing or available to take part in interviews.

The evaluation team considers that these mitigation measures are sufficient to ensure that the proposed plan can deliver robust and credible findings.

DFAT was unable to include external stakeholder consultations for Vanuatu in the evaluation due to the earthquake response, and sensitivities surrounding the collapse of Air Vanuatu and change in Governments. As a result, this evaluation report will not generate specific lessons and findings that are applicable to the current crises impacting the aviation sector in Vanuatu.

As the aviation sector in the Pacific is small and close knit, there is a higher risk in this evaluation that stakeholders could be identified through their comments. To address this risk, the evaluation team will consult closely with stakeholders before including quotes or evidence in the report that could be traceable back to them.

## ETHICS

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with DFAT's Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance Note (July 2021); Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Standards (September 2023); and Development Evaluation Policy. The evaluation will also refer to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)'s Guidelines for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development (2015).<sup>137</sup> Evaluation stakeholders are low vulnerability, and the research company has a high capacity to conduct research of this nature. The evaluation team does not assess that the proposed approach is likely to violate DFAT's or Alinea's ethical standards. The evaluation team is culturally competent, including a mix of aviation and development expertise and Pacific, Timor Leste and Australian experts, both women and men. The evaluation will ensure informed, voluntary consent and provide all interviewees with a link to Alinea's whistleblower hotline to provide anonymous feedback or complaints on the evaluation.<sup>138</sup> The evaluation team will anonymise all findings, protect all data on Alinea platforms only accessible to the evaluation team and destroy all recordings and transcripts on acceptance of the final evaluation report. The methodology has been carefully designed to ensure the research benefits the users of Australia's support and to manage risks throughout. All evaluation team members have been vetted by PRES in compliance with DFAT's PSEA and child protection standards. Findings will be disseminated to stakeholders and feedback taken into account before finalising the evaluation. The final report will be published in accessible formats.

## PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

The final evaluation report, following approval by DFAT, will be published on DFAT's website. The document will comply with DFAT's accessibility guidelines.<sup>139</sup> The evaluation team will maintain a log of potentially sensitive information collected during the data collection. The team will consult with the providers of that information to understand their risks and preferences before deciding whether to include it in the evaluation report. The evaluation quality assurance process will explicitly consider whether the report contains sensitive information that could cause harm. Where the evaluation team finds information that is key to the evaluation questions, but not suitable for publication, the team may decide in consultation with DFAT to deliver two reports, an internal and a public version.

## EVALUATION TEAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluation will be undertaken by Alinea International and Gunggandji Aerospace. The Alinea Team Leader will oversee, and quality assure all deliverables, including those led by other team members.

DFAT will participate in the evaluation and provide support accessing key documents and stakeholders and will participate in interviews where the evaluation team assess that their presence would not undermine the independence of the process.

<sup>137</sup> Australian Council for International Development, 2015, ACFID Website, 21/05/2024, [https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource\\_document/ethics-guidelines.pdf](https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/ethics-guidelines.pdf)

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.alineainternational.com/whistleblower-hotline/>

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/about-this-website/accessible-documents/creating-documents-meet-accessibility-guidelines>

### Breakdown of evaluation team member responsibilities

Team member	Role
Joel Thorpe, Team Leader, Alinea	Oversee the delivery of a robust, high quality, GEDSI sensitive evaluation in line with the TOR, DFAT Design and Monitoring standard 9 and 10 and global standards. Lead drafting of key documents. Manage and participate in data collection. Ensure that findings and recommendations are triangulated and evidence based
Mark Moloney, Aviation Expert, Gunggandji Aerospace	Advise the team on all technical aviation aspects of the evaluation. Participate in data collection and draft key deliverables as directed by the team leader
Alberto Correia, Monitoring and Evaluation Expert, Alinea	Deliver methodologies and tools to ensure robust and credible data collection. Participate in data collection and draft key deliverables as directed by the team leader
Telusa Tuionetoa, Data Collection and Analysis Expert, Alinea	Support the team in conducting passenger interviews on the Australia-North Pacific Connector. Support data analysis. Advise the team on Pacific cultural and gender issues
DFAT	Provide comments on evaluation drafts, including the quality, rigour and relevance of findings and recommendations. Provide access to key documents. Connect the evaluation team to contact details of key stakeholders. Provide information to the evaluation team as a key informant. Participate in interviews where, in the view of the evaluation team, this would not compromise the independence and confidentiality of the evaluation team. Publish the final evaluation

### STAKEHOLDERS

Category	Key stakeholders
Users of Australian supported air routes	<b>Post COVID:</b> Passengers and air crew on the Australia-North Pacific Connector, Palau Paradise Express. During <b>COVID:</b> Aircrew, ground crew, health responders, seasonal workers in PNG, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati
Airlines	Air Niugini, Nauru Airlines, Solomon Airlines, Qantas, Fiji Airways, Air Vanuatu
Airports	Kiribati (airport master planning). Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Cook Islands and Kiribati
Pacific Aviation Authorities	Aviation, regulatory, tourism and commerce authorities in the 13 countries supported by SPACP and SPA: Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, Nauru
Regional/international bodies	Pacific Aviation Safety Office, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Pacific Office
DFAT	Pacific Aviation Section (VNS), Pacific Branch, Posts in the 13 countries supported by SPACP and SPA: Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, Nauru
Whole of government partners	Air Services Australia, Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), DITRDCA
Australian funded technical experts	Experts deployed to Kiribati, RMI, Vanuatu and Fiji, Adam Smith International (Implementing Contractor for the PRES deployment mechanism), Dr David Carpenter, author of the 2022 rapid review

Category	Key stakeholders
Pacific aviation donors	New Zealand, USA, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, JICA

## SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

### Document Review

Alinea will review key documents including progress reports, budgets, IDD documents, the Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, Applied Political Economy Analysis, Engagement Strategy Process, Policy dialogue matrix, the Impact of Aviation on the Economies of Pacific island countries AIMR annual investment monitoring reports, Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic – Aviation, SPACP strategy, joint program logic and M&E Plan and framework, GEDSI strategy, sustainable aviation factsheets, risk and safeguards reports, and other relevant documents.

The desk review will help to identify, select, and refine the methodology and the interviews, as well as develop data collection tools/guides. A list of documents reviewed will be included in the evaluation report.

### Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews (KIIs) will be conducted with key stakeholders involved in implementing Australia's engagement, including DFAT staff, air services users, air crew, airlines, airports, aviation agencies including regulators, tourism and commerce industry representatives, the Pacific Aviation Safety Office, the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) and Australian whole of government partners including the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and Airservices Australia.

The evaluation will use semi-structured interviews, derived from the evaluation questions. The interviews will be conducted through a mix of online and face-to-face meetings.

Interview guides will be used to loosely guide discussions. The approach of using the same or similar questions with each of these partners will allow the evaluation team to reliably identify consistent themes or perspectives in the responses of different partners.

The KII questions have been coded against the key evaluation questions. This will facilitate subsequent analysis of responses and linkages to the document review. We will pay special attention to the views of women or people with disability and plan data collection to minimise any obstacles that would prevent people from taking part in key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

Prior to the commencement of any interview, the interviewer will outline the purpose of the evaluation, how the information will be used, and steps that will be taken to maintain confidentiality of responses (such as non-attribution of quotes).

### Passengers experience interviews

We will conduct interviews with passengers and aircrew during a return trip on the Nauru Airlines flight / Australia-North Pacific Connector from Brisbane to Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands, stopping at Nauru and Kiribati. This will provide an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of why passengers are using the route and understand their experience and satisfaction with the service.

### Transcription of Notes

Each evaluator will be responsible for taking comprehensive notes in real-time including verbatim quotes during interviews. In addition, interviews will be recorded if consent is acquired. Each evaluator will be responsible for typing up notes and storing them in Alinea's secured SharePoint folder. Interview notes will only be available to people who have a direct role in the evaluation and notes will be destroyed after the publication of the evaluation to ensure confidentiality and data security.

The evaluation team will engage in regular meetings to make sense of initial findings. These sessions will also be important for recording any challenges encountered during the field work and to draw out lessons learned. The evaluators will refer to the DFAT if there is a need to introduce changes to the field evaluation plan (identification procedures, tools and techniques). The evaluation team will hold weekly update meetings with DFAT during the data collection process and report any logistical and programme management challenges.

### **Case study**

The evaluation team will develop specific case studies, combining data from DFAT's program management, publicly available data and interviews to provide a deep dive on key aspects of the program.

### **Data analysis**

Data will be collected and analysed using analytical triangulation approaches through a matrix form to categorise findings and recommendations by evaluation question. The matrix will: (a) ensure that the evaluation team prepares a systematic and thorough response to each evaluation question, (b) verify that preliminary analysis accounts for gender and social dimensions, (c) identify any gaps where additional clarification or analysis may be necessary, and (d) serve as the basis for developing the evaluation report.

The first level of analysis will be conducted by each evaluator at the end of each day during the process of writing and typing up notes in real time. The unstructured data will be coded (i.e. organised) into themes given in the structured reporting format. This involves a microanalysis (reading several times) for appropriate coding of notes. Sufficient flexibility is given to the researcher in altering and expanding the number of themes depending on the emergent findings in each interview.

The second level of analysis will include a 2-3 analysis workshops at the end of field work data collection to systematically identify findings and recommendation from each evaluation question.

Final analysis will include writing up of a finding report and recommendation using qualitative analytical approach such as standardised coding, text interpretation and evaluative judgement. At the final level of analysis and report, Alinea will also employ a number of analysis methods to identify key findings and to draw conclusions and make recommendations on sustaining the positive outcomes of the Pacific aviation program. The type of analyses will depend on the specific data being assessed.

### **GEDSI Analysis**

Consistent with DFAT evaluation policy and recognising that effects of integration and the success of the program might vary across gender, Alinea will ensure that evaluation activities include female study participants. The KII guides will include questions to assess the extent to which women and people with disability have benefited from, and been empowered by, the Pacific Aviation intervention.

The evaluation team will analyse how GEDSI issues have been addressed both in the initial design of the project activities and in implementation. More specifically, the evaluation will assess:

- Activities to capture and compare the results of the Pacific Aviation intervention as it specifically benefited (or did not benefit) women and people with disabilities.
- How the Pacific Aviation intervention has removed constraints to women's participation.

All data collected during the evaluation will be disaggregated by gender and ability status and analysed for its effects on women beneficiaries and people with disability.

### **Validation and recommendation workshops**

Following fieldwork data collection, Alinea will submit an *Aide Memoire* to DFAT. The Aide Memoire will summarise key findings against the KEQs and provide initial recommendations.

Alinea will then facilitate a validation and recommendations workshop together with VNS, followed by a broader presentation to DFAT (VNS, P4A DFAT, DFAT Posts), P4A Managing Contractor, P4A Advisers,

and WoG partners to sense-check the preliminary findings and recommendations. This will also be an opportunity to build consensus and to strengthen the findings of the evaluation which ultimately will inform the content of the final report.

The evaluation team will also develop a summary of findings for Pacific Aviation stakeholders and present the evaluation findings through an online workshop to test and validate findings.

## Report

Following the validation workshop, we will begin drafting the evaluation report in a comprehensive way with an in-depth quality review of performance management and relevant annexes. The report will discuss the findings and recommendations against the key evaluation questions.

## SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION PLAN

The evaluation team sampled stakeholders for in person and remote interviews based on a purposive sampling method. Countries for in person interviews were selected based on the number of different stakeholders available for interview. The evaluation team then selected countries for remote interviews in order to provide a sample of COVID and post-COVID engagement countries. We expect a low response rate due to busy schedules so have oversampled. The overall sampling includes interviews in 9 of the 13 countries supported by the intervention, with a mix of passengers, airlines, airports, aviation authorities, DFAT post, WoG partners, technical experts and regional international aviation bodies.

### Selection of in country visits and remote interviews

Country	Presence of key program stakeholders (airlines, airports, aviation authorities, national, regional or international bodies)	Engagement during COVID	Engagement Post COVID	Planned level of engagement in the evaluation
Federated States of Micronesia	Few	Low	Limited	Invite to debrief
Fiji	Many	Some	High	In person interviews with P4A Nadi team, Ministry, airport, airline, regulator, ICAO Pacific Liaison Office
Kiribati	Some	High	High	Remote interviews – access challenges due to elections
Republic of Marshall Islands	Some	Some	High	In person interviews with Australian Embassy, RMI Aviation Taskforce (aviation agencies plus industry, tourism, commerce, etc)
Nauru	Some	Some	Some	Interview Nauru airlines passengers and aircrew Invite Nauru aviation authorities to debrief

Country	Presence of key program stakeholders (airlines, airports, aviation authorities, national, regional or international bodies)	Engagement during COVID	Engagement Post COVID	Planned level of engagement in the evaluation
Palau	Few	Low	High	Remote interviews
Papua New Guinea	Some	High	None – covered under a separate program	Remote interviews
Solomon Islands	Some	High	Limited	Invite to debrief
Samoa	Some	Some	Limited	Remote interviews
Timor Leste	Some	High	None	Remote interviews to understand COVID support
Tonga	Few	Some	High	Remote interviews
Tuvalu	Few	High	Limited	Invite to debrief
Vanuatu	Few	Some	Limited	Unable to be included due to earthquake response and Air Vanuatu collapse

Sampling also adapted to logistical constraints. For example, the team plans to visit Fiji and conduct remote interviews in Kiribati due to challenges travelling to Kiribati due to the 2024 elections.

Based on the sampling, the evaluation team will invite people to attend the following interviews:

### Planned interview schedule

Location	# of interviews	In person/ remote	Date	Team members
Brisbane	<b>3 interviews</b> with Nauru Airlines, Griffith University and scholarship students	In person	20 Nov 2024	Joel, Mark, Telusa, Mike (DFAT)
North-Pacific Connector	<b>60 interviews</b> with passengers (target = 54, 22 women, 32 men) and aircrew (target = 6, 4 women, 2 men)	In person	20 to 21, 23 to 24 Nov 2024	Joel, Mark, Telsua, Mike (DFAT)
Majuro, Republic of Marshal Islands	<b>3 interviews</b> with Australian Embassy, RMI Aviation Taskforce (members cover aviation agencies plus industry, tourism, commerce). Remote interview with aviation advisor	In person	21 to 22 Nov 2024	Joel, Mark, Telsua, Mike (DFAT)
Fiji	<b>6 interviews</b> with P4A Nadi team, Ministry, airport, airline, regulator, ICAO Pacific Liaison Office	In person	25 to 28 Nov 2024	Joel, Mark, Alberto
Canberra	<b>8 interviews</b> with DFAT Pacific Branch, Department of Infrastructure and Transport, Airservices Australia, ATSB, BOM, CASA, PRES deployment mechanism, Dr David Carpenter, rapid review author	In person	2 to 6 Dec 2024	Joel, Mark
Timor Leste	<b>2 interviews</b> with Post and aviation authorities, focussed on COVID response period	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa
Papua New Guinea	<b>2 interviews</b> with Post and aviation authorities, focussed on COVID response period	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa
Samoa	<b>2 interviews</b> with Post and aviation authorities, focussed on COVID response period	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa

Location	# of interviews	In person/remote	Date	Team members
Tonga	<b>2 interviews</b> with Post and aviation authorities focussed on the Pacific Aviation Program's role in continuing seasonal worker mobility during COVID	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa
Kiribati	<b>3 interviews</b> with Post, Ministry, and aviation advisors	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa
Palau	<b>2 interviews</b> with Post and aviation authorities	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa
Vanuatu	<b>Unable to be included due to earthquake and airline collapse</b>	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa
Other donors supporting Pacific aviation	<b>3 interviews</b> with New Zealand, US donors on their support for Pacific aviation <b>and development banks/funds supporting Pacific infrastructure</b>	Remote	2 to 13 Dec 2024	Joel, Alberto, Mark, Telusa

**Total = 115 people interviewed, 48 women, 67 men, 60 passenger and aircrew interviews** (target = 60 people, 26 women, 34 men), **36 interviews** with Pacific Aviation authorities, regulators, airlines, airports, regional and international bodies, DFAT, Australian whole of government partners, deployed experts and donors (target = 54 people, 27 women, 27 men).

Vanuatu was included in the original sampling plan due to its involvement in the COVID response phase of the Pacific Aviation program and the provision of technical advisory support in the post COVID phase of the program. However, DFAT was unable to include external stakeholder consultations for Vanuatu in the evaluation due to the earthquake response, and sensitivities surrounding the collapse of Air Vanuatu and change in Governments.

We expect a high nonresponse rate due to busy schedules and interview fatigue. DFAT will provide an initial invitation to attend an interview. The evaluation team will follow up with two polite reminder emails, then move on if stakeholders do not attend. Where the evaluation team has people in country (Tonga and Timor Leste), we will use our own networks to identify suitable informants for interview. We have oversampled, so expect to be able to get a good enough evidence base to build findings even if we get a high (20%) nonresponse rate. We will track progress in data collection and reach out to DFAT for support if there are key stakeholder groups missing from the data collection.

## CONSTRAINTS, LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

The evaluation team has identified the following risks to the success of the evaluation and developed mitigation measures, as described below:

Risk/limitation	Mitigation
The joint evaluation will not cover all partners, geographic areas, and issues in equal depth, given the limited time frame and resources available.	The team will draw on online and in person data collection to ensure contribution and feedback from all stakeholders and partners. The validation workshop will be circulated widely through aviation networks to provide an opportunity for feedback from any stakeholders who are missed in the initial consultations.
Due to the tight timeframe for the evaluation, the team were not able to consult stakeholders outside of DFAT on the evaluation plan.	The evaluation team will consult key stakeholders during the data collection on the proposed methodology and stakeholder sampling and allow flexibility to snowball to new stakeholders or pursue new lines of enquiry
All reviews carry the risk of partners and respondents feeling as if they are being assessed or evaluated.	The evaluation team will explain the objectives of the evaluation at the start of each consultation and use strength-based techniques for interviewing and facilitating discussions.
Response Bias - the participants may have political or personal motives to provide responses that may be inaccurate (, e.g., attitudes towards the SPACP and SPA team personnel, etc.). For example, they may provide negative information to (or about) the program interventions if they are not satisfied with the SPACP and SPA's intervention and services.	As a mitigation measure, the evaluation team will use a range of probing questions and interactive methods to ascertain accuracy and relevance of information. The evaluation team will only base findings on evidence that is triangulated from multiples sources.
Selection Bias - the bias in selection may lead to the evaluation team only hearing from respondents and key informants that are providing positive feedback to the SPACP and SPA.	The review team will work closely with SPACP and SPA team and DFAT to organise interviews with participants that meet the sample criteria. The evaluation team will use active bias management to be very cognisant of this risk.
Risks to confidentiality of information and identity of participants and respondents as the Pacific aviation sector is small and close knit	The interviews are voluntary, and the evaluation team will explain this and the methodology before initiating any consultation. Respondents will not be named in the report. Permission will be sought for any views attributed in the report. The evaluation team will check with respondents before including direct quotes or sensitive information in the report to ensure they cannot be inadvertently identified.
Evaluation findings may be skewed, because the field visit sites represent areas that are more accessible and performing relatively well.	Selection criteria encompass a balance between areas that are performing well and less well.

Risk/limitation	Mitigation
<p>The joint evaluation attempts to cover too broad a range of KEQs leading to information collected providing little depth and basis for clear recommendations.</p>	<p>The team will prioritise KEQs and potential lines of enquiry, in discussion with DFAT. The evaluation report will clearly describe where findings are based on robust evidence, versus areas where the evaluation team was only able to conduct more light touch validation of existing evidence.</p>
<p>Sampling issues</p>	<p>The evaluation will maintain a tight focus on the evaluation questions and methods of enquiry outlined in this plan. A purposive sampling strategy will be used in order to maximise the value of information gathered against the time and opportunity cost associated with each interview and document. We will also employ a snowballing methodology, asking key informants to nominate others who have important views to share.</p>
<p>Time - the extent of data collection and analysis will be limited by the time available to Alinea Consultants</p>	<p>To maximise inputs and analysis, the document review, remote consultations, field-level consultations, and the field mission (conducted by Alinea) will all be conducted independently by different team member. Internal triangulation discussions will be facilitated by the Team Leader to combine and analyse findings from all sources</p>
<p>The Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) was written quite late (2023), which makes it harder to assess evolution and change in the program</p>	<p>In addition to the Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) set out in the PAF, the evaluation team will also pay attention to other or unintended consequences of DFAT's intervention raised in interviews with stakeholders.</p>
<p>The research violates ethical standards, including respect (full and informed consent), beneficence, merit and integrity and justice</p>	<p>The evaluation team selection, evaluation plan and data collection tools thoroughly integrate ethical considerations. The evaluation team will consider and address ethical challenges during evaluation meetings. All stakeholders will be directed to Alinea's anonymous ethics hotline to raise issues or complaints. Quality assurance will consider adherence to ethical standards</p>

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS: PASSENGER PERCEPTION SURVEY

**Introduction and Consent** Read the privacy statement. Only if interviewee gives consent proceed. Read and advise the interviewee how to make a complaint. Stop the interview or delete data at any time if the interviewee requests.

Good afternoon/morning/evening

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am working for **Alinea International**.

We are an independent team who are evaluating the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) support to improve air connectivity between Pacific countries and Australia. As part of this program, DFAT is funding a cost offset model which encourages airlines to start new routes, including this one you are travelling on today and the Palau Paradise Express between Koror and Brisbane. DFAT also supported many other routes during COVID. DFAT is also supporting Pacific countries to strengthen their aviation safety and regulatory environment in the hope that this will be an enabler for stronger tourism, business and people to people links.

As part of this evaluation, we are hoping to interview passengers like yourself to understand your experience of using the route and provide advice to DFAT on how they can improve the next stage of their support.

The questions include: Demographic information about you (we are not collecting names), your experience with the Pacific aviation services, issues or challenges you faced in the services, and advice to improve the services. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes.

Are you willing to participate?

We are an independent evaluation team working for Alinea International. All information collected in the study will be confidential and anonymous:

- **Confidential** – this means it will be kept private and will not be shared with anyone who is not in the research team. Participant names or other identifiable information will not be included in the report or anything else produced using the information gathered from the study.
- **Anonymous** – this means participants will not be identifiable by name or other characteristic as having participated in the study. No one outside the study team will know who the study participants are and no one will know what information has been provided by participants.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You are not obliged to participate in the study, and you have the right to say no at any time. There will not be any consequences if you decide not to participate in the study.

If you say 'yes' to participate, you do not have to answer all the questions asked if you do not feel comfortable to answer them. You can stop the interview at any time.

Please feel free to ask any further questions about the evaluation, or if you would like to repeat any information that has been shared.

Participants desiring further information or feedback after the evaluation can contact us on the details below.

- **Joel Thorpe** , +61 480 377 687, [Joel.Thorpe@alineainternational.com](mailto:Joel.Thorpe@alineainternational.com)
- **Telusa Tuionetoa**, [telusa.tuionetoa@alineainternational.com](mailto:telusa.tuionetoa@alineainternational.com)

Alinea International is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards. This includes ensuring that the evaluation gains informed consent, protects privacy and confidentiality, is culturally sensitive and respectful towards all groups of people impacted by the Pacific Aviation Program, including women, men, people with disability and people of different religious and cultural backgrounds.

If you have any concerns about study, or the behaviour of the evaluators that visit you, please email Alinea's whistleblower hotline on

- [ethics@alineainternational.com](mailto:ethics@alineainternational.com)

**Interviewer:**  Telusa  Mark  Michael  Joel

**Route:**  Brisbane-Nauru  Nauru-Kiribati  Kiribati-RMI  RMI-Kiribati  Kiribati-Brisbane

**Questions**

**1. Gender:**  Male  Female  Prefer not to say

**Other:** Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Age:**  15-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65 above

**3. Do you identify as a person with disability**  Yes  No  Don't know  Prefer not to say

**Other:** Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Country**  Cook Islands  Federated States of Micronesia  Fiji  Kiribati  Nauru  Niue  Palu  PNG  Republic of Marshall  Solomon Islands  Tonga Islands  Tuvalu  Vanuatu  Timor-Leste  Australia

**Other (please specify):** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. How many times have you flown on this route?**  First time  2-5 times  6-10 times  11-15 times  16-20 times  20 or more

**6. What is the purpose of your travel?**  Business  Education  Tourism  Migrant worker  Conference  Visiting relatives

**Other (please specify):** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Why did you choose this flight/airline compared to other flights? (prompt: more convenient, better price, quality of service, reliable, safe, etc.)**

**8. How important were the following factors in your decision to fly this route (rank from 5: Very important, to 1: Not important at all)**

Factor	5	4	3	2	1
Frequent flyer points	.	.	.	.	.
The reputation of the airline operating the route	.	.	.	.	.
The type of aircraft operating the route	.	.	.	.	.
Price compared to other airlines	.	.	.	.	.
Recommendations from friends or family	.	.	.	.	.
Recommendation from travel agents	.	.	.	.	.
Convenient flight schedules	.	.	.	.	.
The airline's safety record	.	.	.	.	.
Reliability of service	.	.	.	.	.
Quality of service	.	.	.	.	.

**9. Overall, how satisfied are you with this route?**  Completely satisfied  Very satisfied  Moderately satisfied  Slightly satisfied  Not at all satisfied

**10. What aspects could be improved?**

**11. Is this flight accessible and dignified for people with disability?**  Yes  Somewhat  No  Don't know  Prefer not to say

**12. In what way was it accessible/not accessible for people with disability?**

**13. If this flight was not available, how severe would the impact have been on you? (Rank from 5: Very severe to 1: No impact)**  Very severe  Somewhat severe  Neutral bit  A little bit  No impact

**14. What would you have done if the flight was not available?**

**15. What do you think are the main challenges that you and other people face when traveling between Pacific Countries and Australia? (prompt: issue on safety, inconvenience, pricing, quality of service, reliability, etc.)**

**16. What role do you think Australia should play in supporting airline connectivity in the Pacific region?**

**17. Is there anything else you would like to share with - or any recommendation on how to improve Australia's support to the Pacific aviation sector?**

**END OF SURVEY**

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide

#### Respondent Profile Sheet

<b>Number of Interview</b>	(please enter)	Start (time):	
<b>Date of Interview</b>	(please enter)	End (time):	
<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	(please enter)	Recording Number:	
<b>Name of note taker</b>	(please enter)	N/A	
<b>Name of Respondent</b>	(please enter)	Phone:	
<b>Category of Group:</b>	Users of Australian supported air routes (Post COVID & COVID response)		<b>Tick</b>
	Airlines		X
	Airports		X
	Pacific Aviation Authorities		X
	Regional/international bodies		X
	DFAT		X
	Whole of Government Partners		X
	Australian funded technical experts		X
	Pacific aviation donors (New Zealand, USA)		X
Other (Specify):		X	
<b>Interview Location</b>	Aldeia:	Suco:	Administrative Post:
			Municipality:
<b>No. of Participant</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>Female:</b>	<b>Male:</b>
			<b>Person living with disability:</b>
<b>Consent</b>	• YES	• NO	

#### Introduction and background to the evaluation

Good afternoon/morning and thank you for meeting with us today.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am working for **Alinea International**.

We are undertaking a Joint Independent Evaluation of the Australia's support to the Pacific Aviation Sector between July 2020 to June 2024. The program began during COVID to maintain connectivity on key routes through a loss offset model with Pacific Airlines. It has since expanded to cover funding to the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), deployment of technical advisers under the Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) mechanism and whole of government partnerships with Australian aviation institutions, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and Airservices Australia to help Pacific partners strengthen aviation security, regulatory compliance and economic feasibility. The support has been delivered through two programs, the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (SPACP) and the Sustainable Pacific Aviation (SPA) program, worth A\$69 million over four years.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the program achievements and challenges, including unintended consequences, both positive and negative, and how effectively the program integrated Australia's broader development objectives related to gender, disability inclusion, locally led development and climate resilience.

The evaluation will also capture lessons and provide recommendations to inform the next phase of DFAT's engagement with the Pacific aviation sector through the new Pacific aviation program, P4A, which began in early 2024 and is worth A\$100 million over five years.

With your permission, the evaluation team will voice record and take notes on what we discuss today. The recordings and notes will not be shared with anyone else outside the study team. You're not obligated to answer any questions you don't wish to, and you're also welcome to retract an answer, or end your participation in this interview at any time.

We are an independent evaluation team working for Alinea International. All information collected in the study will be confidential and anonymous:

- **Confidential** – this means it will be kept private and will not be shared with anyone who is not in the research team. Participant names or other identifiable information will not be included in the report or anything else produced using the information gathered from the study.
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If you say 'yes' to participate, you do not have to answer all the questions asked if you do not feel comfortable to answer them.

Please feel free to ask any further questions about the evaluation, or if you would like to repeat any information that has been shared.

Participants desiring further information or feedback after the evaluation can contact us on the details below.

- **Joel Thorpe**  
[Redacted]  
[Joel.Thorpe@alineainternational.com](mailto:Joel.Thorpe@alineainternational.com)
- **Telusa Tuionetoa**  
[telusa.tuionetoa@alineainternational.com](mailto:telusa.tuionetoa@alineainternational.com)

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- [ethics@alineainternational.com](mailto:ethics@alineainternational.com)

## KII guide – Group Category: DFAT, SPACP, SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders

### Interview Questions/ Notes

#### Introduction

1. Can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities and your engagement in DFAT's Pacific Aviation Program? How long have you been engaged in the program?

#### **KEQ 1: How relevant were PARS, SPACP and SPA to the policy and operational context? (RELEVANCE)**

2. How well did the Pacific Aviation Program align with the priorities of Pacific partner governments and aviation users in the Pacific, both during COVID and post-COVID? Please provide examples
3. Was DFAT's Pacific Aviation Program flexible and responsive to changes in the operating context? In what ways?

#### **KEQ2: Was SPACP/SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes? (EFFECTIVENESS)**

4. How effective was DFAT's support to the Pacific aviation sector in maintaining safe and reliable air connectivity during COVID? Were there any mistakes or missed opportunities? Please provide examples
5. What are the key constraints in maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific Countries and Australia? How well has DFAT's support address those challenges?
6. To what extent has the program helped to build technical and organisational capacity in the Pacific aviation sector (prompt: safety, economic sustainability, regulatory compliance)? Please provide examples
7. Have you seen evidence that DFAT's support to Pacific aviation has had flow on benefits to other areas like tourism, trade, education, labour mobility, people to people links? How did the program contribute to this?
8. How well did DFAT's Pacific Aviation Program build partnerships with key stakeholders? Were there any partnerships that were missing or did not work well? Did you see any evidence of improved coordination, collaboration or policy dialogue as a result of DFAT's intervention? Please provide examples
9. How effective was the program in delivering on the broader objectives of Australia's development program including promoting gender equality, disability inclusion and mitigating the impacts of climate change? Were there missed opportunities? Please provide examples

#### **KEQ3: Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes? (EFFICIENCY)**

10. How efficient was DFAT's approach to supporting the Pacific aviation sector, including its institutional setup (managed by DFAT Canberra), its loss offset model for airlines and its technical support through advisers, PASO and partnerships with Australian Government aviation agencies?
11. Were there any missed opportunities to improve efficiency?
12. FOR DFAT AND WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT PARTNERS ONLY: How efficient were DFAT's governance and management arrangements? How could they have been more efficient?
13. FOR DFAT ONLY: To what extent has the investment MEL system generated credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability (reporting)
14. FOR DFAT ONLY: What are key aspects of the current MEL system to retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan in the future? What new issues need to be addressed in the future MEL plan? Why?

#### **Other factors (KEQ 1, 2, 3)**

15. What other factors outside of DFAT's support contributed to, or worked against, the success of the program?

#### **KEQ 4: To what extent has SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector? (Joint MEF KEQ 2) (SUSTAINABILITY)**

16. Is there any evidence that DFAT's support has contributed to building a stronger enabling environment for aviation in the Pacific (i.e., improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making, behaviour change among key stakeholders)? How, in what way?
17. Will these changes continue after the end of DFAT support? Why, why not?
18. To what extent, and how, was DFAT able to support locally led solutions and local ownership? What could DFAT have done better to build local ownership and local solutions?

19. Did DFAT's support allow Pacific partners to leverage new support from other donors or institutions? If yes, how?

**KEQ 5: Lessons from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding (LEARNING)**

20. What are the main lessons learned from DFAT's support to the Pacific Aviation sector? Do you have any recommendations on how DFAT could have improved its support?

21. What should DFAT focus on for the next phase of the program?

22. Do you have any additional points that you would like to raise with the evaluation team?

**Feedback on the evaluation plan**

23. During this evaluation we will be interviewing passengers travelling on the Australia-North Pacific Connector, interviewing around 40 stakeholders in 10 countries, Australia, Marshal Islands, Fiji, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Palau and Vanuatu. We will focus our interviews on Pacific Aviation authorities, regulators, airlines, airports, regional and international bodies, DFAT, Australian whole of government partners, deployed experts and donors. Is there anyone else we should speak to as part of this evaluation or any other approaches we should use to assess the success of the program?

Thank you very much for your time! We will be holding an optional online stakeholder workshop in March 2025 to present the initial findings and get feedback before publishing the evaluation. You will receive an invitation early next year.

## ANNEX 5: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

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1. SPACP and SPA Investment Monitoring Reports 2022, 2023, 2024
2. DFAT, SPACP and SPA Joint M&E framework, May 2023
3. AWP Aviation White Paper
4. Australian Humanitarian Policy
5. Humanitarian Logistics Capability Mid Term Review 2022
6. IFTAEC Facts and Questions
7. AAR Taiwan Aviation Workshop
8. Cable COVID Restoring Regular Flights
9. Fact Sheet – Pacific Flights Program 2020
10. Fact Sheet OTP Sustainable Aviation
11. FEOM Briefing Economic Impacts of Covid 19 – Aviation
12. Pacific Flights Program Communication Plan
13. P4A GEDSI Interim Strategy Final
14. PSIDS Study
15. The Pacific Flights Program Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
16. P4A Design: 1-13 Appendix (impact of aviation on pacific economies, MC capability, program logic, engagement strategy).
17. AusNPC Review Oct 2024
18. Dr David Carpenter, Rapid Review of the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program, August 2022
19. Pacific Regional Infrastructure Forum (strategy, sustainability report, PRIF aviation regional hub body final report)
20. RMI aviation 2023 sector analysis report
21. Deloitte RMI report
22. Governance Training Documents (report on pilot of aviation board governance, training completion report, VNS cable).
23. Phase 2 Air Vanuatu rapid assessment
24. Tourism scoping study
25. Air Vanuatu gap analysis
26. Aviation country fact sheet Vanuatu
27. Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy Report
28. Port Moresby Declaration RAMM
29. SPACP Strategy Draft, May 2021
30. Risk Register: Australia – Pacific Partnerships for Aviation Program (P4A) INO274, extracted from AidWorks on 21 February 2025
31. Risk Register: Pacific Flights Program, 16 September 2020
32. Partner reporting: After Action Review of Tonga Civil Aviation Division Placement within CASA Australia, January 2023
33. Partner reporting: CASA Aviation Medicine: DAME Training, 19 January 2023
34. Partner reporting: CASA Leasing Management System, 19 May 2023
35. Partner reporting: Finance Update: BOM, 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024
36. Partner reporting: Monitoring and evaluation: Reporting and schedule: BOM, Partnerships for Aviation (P4A)
37. Partner reporting: Partnerships for Aviation (P4A) Progress Report – June 2024
38. Partner reporting: Air Services Australia, SWPSF19 Report for DFAT  
19th Meeting of the South-West Pacific Safety Forum, 14 to 16 February 2024
39. Partner reporting: PASO Quarterly Reports, Q1 2023, Q4 2023, Q2 2024
40. Program data: PASO planned and completed days 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024
41. Program data: Pacific Flights Program Report, FY20-21, 21-22, 22-23, 23-24
42. Program data: Complete list of Aviation Tasking Notes SO1 and ASO15
43. Program data: Financial overview\_SPACP\_INN626, Financial overview\_SPA\_INO014

## ANNEX 6: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

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1. Airservices Australia
2. Alinea International gender expert
3. Australia Awards scholarship students studying at Griffith University (Masters and bachelor)
4. Australian Transport Safety Bureau
5. Australian Embassy, Dili
6. Australian Embassy, Republic of Palau
7. Australian High Commission, Nukualofa
8. Australian High Commission, Port Moresby
9. Australian High Commission, Suva
10. Australian High Commission, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati
11. Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP)
12. Aviation advisers, Pacific Aviation Program
13. Aviation Taskforce, Republic of Marshall Islands
14. Bureau of Meteorology, Australia
15. Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji
16. Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Australia
17. Civil Aviation Safety Authority, PNG
18. Civil Aviation Directorate, Tonga
19. Dr David Carpenter, Pacific Aviation Rapid Review and P4A Author
20. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
21. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
22. Fiji Aviation Authority
23. Fiji Airports
24. Fiji Airways
25. Fiji Tourism
26. Griffith University School of Aviation
27. Griffith University International Student Services
28. Lulutai Airlines
29. New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
30. Ministry of Information, Communication, and Transport (MICT), Tarawa, Kiribati
31. Nauru Airlines
32. Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) Program
33. Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility
34. Pacific Aviation Safety Organization
35. Provisu
36. Timor-Leste Civil Aviation Authority (AACTL)
37. Tonga Airports Limited
38. Tonga aviation ministry
39. Tonga airport authority
40. World Bank

## ANNEX 7: LOCATION AND TYPE OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

Location and Type of KII	Engagement during COVID	Engagement post-COVID	Number Interviews	Number Informants
<b>Australia</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>
Academic partner	High	High	3	3
Nauru Airlines	High	High	1	3
Aviation Scholarships Students	High	High	1	5
DFAT Canberra	High	High	9	10
DFAT Post	High	High	1	1
Other (Advisors & Program Director)	High	High	2	3
Whole of Government Partner	High	High	5	9
Infrastructure Financing Organisation	High	High	1	1
<b>Fiji</b>	<b>SOME</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
Airlines	Some	High	1	1
Airports	Some	High	2	2
Deployed Adviser	Some	High	2	2
DFAT Post	Some	High	3	3
Pacific Partners Other (Tourism, commerce, weather bureau)	Some	High	1	1
Pacific Aviation Regulator	Some	High	1	1
<b>Kiribati</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
DFAT Post	High	High	2	2
Pacific Aviation Authorities	High	High	1	1
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	<b>SOME</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
DFAT Post	Some	High	1	3
Pacific Partners Other (Tourism, commerce, weather bureau)	Some	High	1	3
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Donor	N/A	N/A	1	1
<b>Palau</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
DFAT Post	Low	High	1	2
<b>Papua New Guinea</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
Civil aviation authority	High	None	1	1
Whole of Government Partner	High	None	1	2
Infrastructure Financing Organisation	High	None	1	2
<b>Timor Leste</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Deployed Adviser	High	None	1	1
Civil Aviation Authority	High	None	1	1
Pacific Aviation Authorities	High	None	1	1
<b>Tonga</b>	<b>SOME</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Airlines	Some	High	1	1
Airports	Some	High	1	1
DFAT Post	Some	High	1	2
Pacific Aviation Authorities	Some	High	1	1
<b>Vanuatu</b>	<b>SOME</b>	<b>SOME</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Regional aviation organisation	Some	High	1	2
<b>Other / Remote</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Pacific Partners (Tourism, Commerce, Weather)	N/A	N/A	1	2
Whole of Government Partner	N/A	N/A	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>74</b>

## ANNEX 8. DATA ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

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### Data collection Tool

### DFAT Pacific Aviation Evaluation July 2020 to June 2024

**Aim:** The purpose of this tool is to systematically keep track of evidence and data collected by the evaluation team. Expert data collection tools will be compiled at the analysis and synthesis stage to provide a complete outlook of the evidence collected and facilitate the analysis of the findings.

**Note on usage:**

This tool is based on a modified analysis checklist developed by [Australia's Transport Safety Bureau presented to the ICAO APAC meeting on 25 March 2020](#).

Please use this tool to sort evidence collected through the document review, data collection interviews and passenger surveys. Refer to [interview notes](#), the [desk review](#), [data analysis](#) and the program [E.Library](#). We can also add further evidence from the interviews collected during the [inception phase](#).

Each team member should add evidence for their assigned evaluation question or sub question.

The evaluation team will then hold sessions to 'red team' the evidence, pointing out potential gaps or biases in the evidence which need to be addressed through further research, follow up interviews or properly described in the report as a limitation or weaknesses.

#### **KEQ 1: How relevant were SPACP and SPA to the policy and operational context? (RELEVANCE)**

##### **Sub-Question**

- 1.1. To what extent were IOs aligned and tailored to Partner government priorities and beneficiary needs?
- 1.2. To what extent and how have the investments displayed adaptability to changes in the operating context?
- 1.3. What factors contributed to program relevance and adaptability? What has been challenging?

**Data Source:** DFAT, SPACP, SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide

**Add as many as needed to answer the KEQs**

**Finding description:** *Full text of the hypothesis*

**Evidence/reason** (eg *Evidence 1*), **Type of evidence** (eg *Interview, data, passenger survey, doc review*), **Strengths/limitations** (*Brief description*), **Rating** (*Strongly supports, supports, no effect, weak, opposes, strongly opposes, unsure*), **Links** (to other sections of the evaluation)

##### **Overall evaluation of finding**

**KEQ 2: Was SPACP/SPA effective in achieving its intended end of program outcomes? (EFFECTIVENESS)**

**Sub-Question**

- 2.1. To what extent did SPACP contribute to mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 by maintaining safe, reliable air connectivity between Pacific island countries and Australia? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 1)
- 2.2. What evidence is there of program activities contributing to organizational and technical advancements in aviation safety in the Pacific? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 1.3 and 2.6)
- 2.3. What evidence is there of specific activities and/or partnerships influencing coordination, cooperation and collaboration including but not limited to policy dialogue and partnerships? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 2.5)
- 2.4. What opportunities for enhanced gender equality and disability inclusion in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about the promotion of gender equality and disability in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?
- 2.5. What opportunities for addressing climate change in the aviation sector were identified and what was done in response? What was learned about addressing climate change in the Pacific aviation sector that may inform P4A?

What factors have contributed to program effectiveness and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in P4A delivery)?

**Data Source:** DFAT, SPACP and SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders, other relevant stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide and Passenger Perception Survey

**Add as many as needed to answer the KEQs**

**Finding description:** *Full text of the hypothesis*

**Evidence/reason** (eg *Evidence 1*), **Type of evidence** (eg *Interview, data, passenger survey, doc review*), **Strengths/limitations** (*Brief description*), **Rating** (*Strongly supports, supports, no effect, weak, opposes, strongly opposes, unsure*), **Links** (to other sections of the evaluation)

**Overall evaluation of finding**

**KEQ3: Did the investment make appropriate and efficient use of Australia's and our partner's time and resources to achieve intended outcomes? (EFFICIENCY)**

**Sub-Question**

- 3.1. To what extent was the implementation approach and suite of modalities well suited to delivering outcomes?
- 3.2. To what extent did the governance and management arrangements support implementation efficiency?
- 3.3. To what extent did the MEL system generate credible information for management decision making, learning and accountability? What aspects would you retain or improve to inform the P4A MEL Plan? What factors contributed to program efficiency and what has been challenging (that may lead to improvements in delivery of P4A program activities)?

**Data Source:** DFAT, SPACP, SPA

**Method:** Document review and Interviews, analysis of program data

**Tools:** KII Guide

**Add as many as needed to answer the KEQs**

**Finding description:** *Full text of the hypothesis*

**Evidence/reason** (eg *Evidence 1*), **Type of evidence** (eg *Interview, data, passenger survey, doc review*), **Strengths/limitations** (*Brief description*), **Rating** (*Strongly supports, supports, no effect, weak, opposes, strongly opposes, unsure*), **Links** (to other sections of the evaluation)

**Overall evaluation of finding**

**KEQ 4: To what extent has SPA contributed to the development of sustainable improvements in the Pacific aviation sector? (Joint MEF KEQ 2) (SUSTAINABILITY)**

**Sub-Question**

- 4.1 How has SPACP and SPA contributed to building a stronger regional enabling environment (i.e., improved regulation, policy, planning and decision making) for the Pacific aviation sector, including through the use of locally led development solutions? (SPACP/SPA MEF KEQ 2.4)
- 4.2 Did SPA/SPACP enable Pacific aviation stakeholders to leverage additional support from other bilateral and/or multilateral donors?
- 4.3 What evidence is there of satisfaction and/or ownership of results and/or behaviour change observed among Pacific aviation stakeholders?
- 4.4 How can DFAT maximise the sustainability of any benefits for the sector, through the P4A program or other initiatives?

**Data Source:** DFAT, SPACP, SPA

**Method:** Document review and Interviews, analysis of program data

**Tools:** KII Guide

**Add as many as needed to answer the KEQs**

**Finding description:** *Full text of the hypothesis*

**Evidence/reason** (eg *Evidence 1*), **Type of evidence** (eg *Interview, data, passenger survey, doc review*), **Strengths/limitations** (*Brief description*), **Rating** (*Strongly supports, supports, no effect, weak, opposes, strongly opposes, unsure*), **Links** (to other sections of the evaluation)

**Overall evaluation of finding**

**KEQ5: Lessons from the development, implementation, and management of the program and partner engagement as recommendations to be considered in approaches to future funding (LEARNING).**

**Sub-Question**

- 5.1. What are the main lessons in terms of achieving progress towards its EOPOs?
- 5.2. What are the main recommendations to inform current and future programming based on these lessons learned?

5.3. What are the main recommendations to inform current and future programming based on these lessons learned?

**Data Source:** DFAT, SPACP and SPA, Pacific Island Government Stakeholders, other relevant stakeholders

**Method:** Document review and Interviews

**Tools:** KII Guide

**Add as many as needed to answer the KEQs**

**Finding description:** *Full text of the hypothesis*

**Evidence/reason** (eg *Evidence 1*), **Type of evidence** (eg *Interview, data, passenger survey, doc review*),

**Strengths/limitations** (*Brief description*), **Rating** (*Strongly supports, supports, no effect, weak, opposes, strongly opposes, unsure*), **Links** (to other sections of the evaluation)

**Overall evaluation of finding**

## ANNEX 9. ALTERNATE TEXT OF GRAPHICS

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### Figure 3: Key program achievements

Infographic titled "Key Program Achievements" from 2020 to 2024 under SPACP and SPA. Six highlighted impacts with icons:

Syringe icon: 1 million vaccines to Timor-Leste.

Airplane icon: \$40 million for 718 flights ensuring Pacific Airlines continued operations and recovered quickly from COVID.

Graduation cap icon: 20 aviation scholarships at Griffith University and Fiji National University.

Cargo plane icon: 3,700 tonnes of freight delivered.

People with luggage icon: 92,079 passenger movements across 13 countries carrying health and emergency workers, strengthening business, government, education, and family ties across the Pacific.

Group discussion icon: 1,253 advisor days to support planning and reform in 7 countries.

Background is dark blue; text is white; icons are white line drawings.

### Infographic ANNEX 2 PROGRAM LOGIC

Program logic diagram for the Sustainable Pacific Air Connectivity Program (SPACP 2020-2022) and SPA 2022-2024.

Goal (top, white on teal): To contribute to a stable, prosperous and secure Pacific in the wake of COVID-19.

Objective: To contribute to COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery in Pacific Island Countries and Australia, and support development of a more sustainable, stable, resilient aviation sector in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

Timeline arrow: SPACP 2020-2022 → SPA 2022-2024

#### End-of-Program Outcomes (EOPO):

EOPO 1 (left, teal): Safe, reliable air connectivity is maintained between PICs and Australia, contributing to COVID-19 response, economic stability and resilience, and the continued viability of the aviation sector.

EOPO 2 (right, teal): Pacific aviation stakeholders plan and implement measures addressing key areas of need in the aviation sector to support a stronger regional enabling environment, improve aviation safety, and increase coordination and connectivity between Pacific Island countries.

#### Intermediate Outcomes (IO, gray boxes):

##### Human development:

IO 1.1: Australia and the Pacific/Timor-Leste maintain open lines of movement for the exchange of people and goods while safeguarding Australians during the pandemic.

IO 1.2: The currency and commercial viability of the Pacific aviation sector is maintained during the COVID-19 period, supporting economic resilience and recovery of PICs and Australia.

IO 1.3: PASO is supported to deliver its core services to members during the COVID-19 period with safety and compliance outputs maintained.

#### **Learning, design, piloting:**

IO 2.1: Country-specific activities are piloted as tailored responses to urgent priorities and needs in Pacific aviation which have been collaboratively identified with partners and stakeholders.

IO 2.2: Lessons learned and pilot activities developed through implementation experience are used to inform ongoing programming and investment design.

IO 2.3: Opportunities for enhanced gender equality, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability in the Pacific aviation sector are identified and targeted as objectives for longer-term investment.

#### **Enabling environment:**

IO 2.4: Aviation authorities, airlines and partners are supported to identify areas of need and develop plans for improving regulations, policies and strategies that strengthen the Pacific aviation sector.

#### **Coordination & connectivity:**

IO 2.5: Regional air connectivity is maintained, expanded and sustained.

#### **Safety & compliance:**

IO 2.6: Greater engagement with Pacific aviation safety and security systems improves their safety and compliance performance.

#### **Implementing Activities (light teal bar):**

Pacific Flights Program (PFP)

Pacific Aviation Safety Support Program (PASO Support)

Pacific Airlines Reimbursables Scheme (PARS)

Support to Pacific airlines for Safety and Quality initiatives, Improved Pacific Aviation Weather, Small Scale airfreight initiatives, Airport support, CASA/ASA/BOM Pacific initiatives, Better Pacific Airline Interoperability, Aviation Safety and Quality Forums, Support to improve airline strategy and coordination.

#### **Foundational Activities (bottom, gray):**

Program Management & Governance; Scale-up of SPACP FTE resources, enabling greater focus on strategic work and improved, proactive program management activities such as M&E, risk and budget management, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning; Increased M&E resources, SPACP Rapid Review and the development and implementation of SPACP M&E Plan supports program management, learning and phase 2 design; Investment design phase 2 of program including the development of an SPA concept note, program logic and M&E framework, draws on learning and improved capacity developed through implementation.