



19 December 2017

Mr Robert Christie  
Acting First Assistant Secretary  
Pacific Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
R G Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
BARTON ACT 0221

Dear Mr Christie

Thank you for your letter dated 4 December 2017 attaching the final version of the mid-term evaluation report of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project (PWPP) and inviting the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) to develop a Management Response. This letter constitutes DHR's response.

DHR acknowledges the evaluation report's assessment that the design, monitoring and evaluation framework for the project could have been better developed. I also stand by the other comments in our response to the draft of the evaluation report, and I consider that the evaluation does not fully reflect the contribution that DHR has made to the project.

DHR has decades of experience in capacity building work with parliaments in the Pacific and elsewhere, and has an acknowledged reputation for effective leadership in that work, as well as in innovative and professional development of parliamentary staff in their support for parliamentary institutions and members' parliamentary work. DHR is regularly called upon by Pacific parliaments, NGOs and the Australian Government for its assistance and expertise in these areas, not only in the Pacific but more widely among developing parliaments. In partnering with other parliaments to achieve institutional strengthening, DHR has not seen its role as, nor does it have expertise, in achieving broader structural and cultural change across the Pacific and it did not set out with that objective for the PWPP. Accordingly, the strategies employed as part of the project to build the capacity of women parliamentarians cannot be appropriately judged from this perspective.

DHR supports the evaluation's recommendation for the establishment of a group of stakeholders to guide work in support of Pacific women and to coordinate and align efforts in the Pacific. Such a stakeholder group has been lacking to date as it could have provided that higher level guidance to the project and so its formation now would be beneficial. As a long-standing contributor to and partner in parliamentary capacity building in the Pacific and with well-established professional connections to parliamentary colleagues across the Pacific, I believe DHR would have much to contribute to such a group and would welcome being involved.

Although the annual PWPP Forum has been the subject of some criticism in the evaluation, as the flagship activity of the PWPP the evaluation also notes the high value placed on it by participants. It has achieved the establishment of a network that is highly regarded by Pacific participants. Careful

thought needs to be given to the best approach to the networking function and DHR would be happy to be involved in any discussions.

DHR also notes that the *Outrigger – Navigating Gender Equality Through Pacific Parliaments* learning program has been well received and is gaining momentum. This program was developed by specialist education, research and procedural staff of the Australian Parliament in close consultation with Pacific parliaments, with the intention of Pacific parliaments owning it and taking it forward. The continuing implementation of the *Outrigger* program is evidence of this ownership developing. We also note the evaluation's acknowledgement of favourable results from the PWPP research scholarships, which involved Pacific parliamentary staff undertaking placements in the Australian Parliament's Library and being mentored by library staff.

DHR has particular capabilities in partnering with parliaments to support the professional development of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, has well-developed relationships with parliaments in the Pacific region, and more broadly, and is well-placed to facilitate contributions to capacity building efforts by current and former Australian Parliamentarians. We would welcome discussions with DFAT on DHR's future involvement in supporting the capacity building of Pacific parliaments in line with our areas of expertise, including in relation to any revamping of the PWPP. This could involve a role in being one of the stakeholders providing guidance to the project. It also could include involvement in specific PWPP activities. DHR would see particular benefit in maintaining its role in supporting the roll-out of the *Outrigger* program across Pacific parliaments. DHR would also consider assuming a coordinating role for parliamentary library research scholarships for a limited period of time.

Once again, thank you for the invitation for DHR to make a Management Response to the mid-term evaluation report of the PWPP. We look forward to further discussions with DFAT about DHR's possible future involvement in support of women's political participation in the Pacific.

Yours sincerely



David Elder  
Clerk of the House