

Evaluation of Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) Phase 4: Management response

Summary of management response

DFAT welcomes the independent evaluation of PACMAS Phase 4.

Performance was assessed against realistic progress rather than end of investment outcomes, reflecting the implementation of the 3-year (plus 6-month extension) investment was not completed when the evaluation was undertaken. Implementation is commensurate to these constraints.

The evaluation noted challenges, particularly in relation to uneven delivery across countries (some countries were identified as priorities for Phase 4) and GEDSI outcomes (gender equality was a targeted intermediate outcome while disability equity was not embedded in the program structure). DFAT acknowledges improvements in GEDSI could be made. A department-wide intersectionality evaluation, which will be published in October 2026, will inform the development of any GEDSI strategies in Phase 5.

The independent evaluation and recommendations contained within and expanded upon below will be a valuable tool for the development of PACMAS Phase 5.

Individual management response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
Recommendation 1 Retain PACMAS as a flagship regional media investment and progress to a Phase Five. Phase Five should: - run for a minimum of five years, - include increased and appropriately scaled resourcing, and - maintain continuity of implementing arrangements to preserve institutional knowledge and partnerships, consolidate gains, and sustain system reform momentum.	Agree	A longer program cycle for the next phase of the investment is required to consolidate gains made and continue sustainable, locally led change. ABC ID suggests a 5+5 timeframe would allow for incremental leadership and delivery shifts to Pacific partners while ensuring program quality.	It is intended that PACMAS Phase 5 will be structured as a longer timeframe to allow for greater progress to be made throughout the life of the investment with periodic reviews. Details to be determined through an approach to market process and subject to delegate approvals.	Phase 5
Recommendation 2 Phase Five should retain PACMAS's geographic reach and systems reform approach. Investment should be more deliberately consolidated and aligned to enable	Agree	Continuing to support a broad range of Pacific Island countries through regional and targeted activities maximises program reach. Different operating contexts in priority countries and smaller countries pose different challenges and opportunities	Continue to support and engage with a broad range of Pacific countries through regional and bilateral programs. Consolidate and include bilateral funding arrangements in a single grant arrangement for Phase 5 (where possible).	Phase 5

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coherent, multi-stream engagement in priority countries and a tailored strategy for small states. Future design should strengthen upfront coordination across PACMAS funding streams, including bilateral investments drawn under the head contract where feasible. It should also enhance coherence with other Australian media sector investments in the region.		for program implementation, which require tailored approaches. Strategic bilateral investment is required to deliver strong engagement in some priority countries and managing these investments outside of the head contract causes additional administrative work. However, it will not be possible for all bilateral investments to fit neatly within the head contract for PACMAS Phase 5 due to different funding timeframes (for example, Solomon Islands – Australia Media Sector Partnership (SIAMSP) lapses June 2028).		
Recommendation 3 Phase Five should refine and focus the Theory of Change, supported by a streamlined MEL framework. The design should differentiate between country contexts and calibrate ambitions (including regarding audience engagement and business viability) to	Agree	The Theory of Change and MEL framework developed and embedded during Phase 4 has been progressively refined throughout implementation. Systems reform across diverse country contexts is complex and calls for tailored approaches.	Refine the Theory of Change and MEL framework to ensure it is structured, focused and realistic across country contexts.	Phase 5

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reflect Pacific market realities.				
Recommendation 4 Clarify and strengthen engagement in secondary and small Pacific states through an explicit strategy that can be tailored to each context and supported with appropriate resourcing.	Agree	Countries across the Pacific have varied operating challenges and environments. Delivery of activities in secondary and smaller countries is at an earlier stage.	Develop a small states strategy.	Phase 5
Recommendation 5 Deepen localisation while strengthening Pacific regional leadership, delivery partnerships, and regional connections. Phase Five should increase Pacific staffing and leadership responsibilities, strengthen Pacific-based partnerships outside of the media sector, and continue to invest in stronger Pacific-to-Pacific regional exchanges and connections.	Partially agree	Localisation and locally led approaches are a key focus of PACMAS and have been a credit to the success of the program thus far. Relationships should continue to be deepened. However, governance and leadership vary across different contexts in the Pacific and the capacity of Pacific media to lead development delivery may still be limited.	Continue to develop leadership streams, support media associations and strengthen Pacific connections with a view to enhancing Pacific leadership capabilities by incrementally shifting responsibility to Pacific partners. Opportunities to build on collaboration with Pacific regional, and local, leadership architecture (such as the Pacific Island News Association, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and local media associations/media councils) will be sought to maximise Pacific-to-Pacific regional exchanges and connections.	Phase 5

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Recommendation 6 Increase communications, MEL and GEDSI staffing resourcing to ensure consistency and clarity in stakeholder communications, further development of outcomes-focused MEL, and greater gains in GEDSI objectives	Agree	More resourcing for communications, MEL and GEDSI will allow greater gains to be made in these areas. While the investment saw strong progress towards GEDSI (particularly gender equality) commensurate to the scale of investment, stronger investment will allow for greater returns.	Sustain and develop relationships with GEDSI stakeholders. Consider additional roles for GEDSI in Phase 5.	
Recommendation 7 Further strengthen and resource a Pacific-led, intersectional GEDSI strategy for Phase Five. The strategy should build on existing gender equality gains, be grounded in consultation and co-design, supported by Pacific-based advisory capacity, adopt a twin-track approach, and pay particular attention to disability equity and inclusion.	Agree	Involving Pacific partners in development of a GEDSI strategy will ensure that ambitions are grounded in local needs and expectations and are realistic, achievable, and appropriately contextualised for the Pacific operating environment. Engaging partners on GEDSI from the outset of the investment (particularly regarding disability equity) will ensure objectives are realistically aligned to the Pacific context.	Develop a GEDSI strategy informed by DFAT's intersectionality evaluation. Continue to build on Women in Media initiatives. Deepen engagement with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities. Encourage targeted GEDSI content for content fund proposals. Exchange knowledge and learning around diversity and inclusion in media with PACMAS participants.	Phase 5
Recommendation 8	Partially agree	Media associations across the Pacific have varying levels of governance and	Continue media strengthening activities.	Ongoing

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Continue institutional support to media associations as central systems enablers of sector resilience, professional standards, advocacy and sustainability.		leadership capacity. Relying solely on media associations to support media literacy, freedom and development could be risky. A more diverse approach which also includes national broadcasters, civil society organisations and tertiary education institutions could be better placed to engage communities, be more inclusive and drive innovation, particularly through youth engagement.	Ensure media associations have appropriate strategic plans in place to guide their governance and operations. Explore opportunities to broaden engagement with other groups to diversify media engagement in society.	
Recommendation 9 Continue and strategically scale integrated digital transition and institutional sustainability support, recognising digital uplift as an ongoing priority and pairing it (in select outlets) with investment in strengthened business capability.	Agree	Continued institutional support is required to support digital transition. Effective digital transition is essential as internet use and reliance on digital media increases.	Continue digital transition projects. Develop a streamlined approach for progression towards digital transition which guides next steps for media outlets depending on their current digital capabilities.	Phase 5
Recommendation 10 Strengthen workforce capability, leadership and wellbeing through an integrated professional development model,	Agree	Strengthened workforce capability and wellbeing will enhance staff retention and ensure skilled trainers and professionals continue with PACMAS. Talent development initiatives can be	Continue development of leadership stream into Phase 5. Explore further mentoring and professional development opportunities, particularly Pacific-to-Pacific initiatives.	Phase 5

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building on Phase Four's innovative, valued program of training, applied mentoring including through digital projects and the Content Fund, exchanges and emerging leadership initiatives.		scaled from the individual to the institutional level.		