

# **AUSTRALIAN AID FOR ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2000-2012**

## **Independent Evaluation**

March 2013

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The analysis and conclusions in this report are those of the evaluation team and do not necessarily reflect the views of either the Government of Papua New Guinea or of the Australian Government. Errors of fact and judgement in the report are, as ever, the responsibility of the authors.

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## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

ACC	Australian Civilian Corps
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
EMB	Electoral Management Body
ESP	Electoral Support Program
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGEC	PNG Electoral Commission

## Executive Summary

### Background

1. This evaluation report considers the effectiveness of Australian electoral assistance in Papua New Guinea from 2000 to 2012. The purpose of the exercise is twofold:
  - review the achievements of Australian aid and assess their significance;
  - consider the implications for electoral assistance that Australia might provide to PNG in the future.
2. Australia is by far the largest donor to Papua New Guinea, and has been virtually the only donor providing electoral assistance: some \$70 million (in nominal terms) over the review period. Around 60% of this has been provided through established AusAID programs: primarily the Electoral Support Program (ESP), which has been operating since 2000, and a much smaller Twinning Program, established in 2005 between the PNG Electoral Commission and the Australian Electoral Commission. Nearly half of Australian assistance during the entire period was provided in 2012 to support the execution of the 2012 national election and included personnel and logistics support from the Australian Civilian Corps, Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police.
3. Identifying clear objectives of Australian aid during the period has been difficult: where stated, they have tended to be general e.g. “supporting the reform and strengthening of PNG electoral systems”. Nevertheless, two broad (and potentially mutually reinforcing) aims are evident:
  - Longer-term, capacity building of PNG stakeholders to deliver free and fair elections in line with constitutional and legal requirements
  - Shorter-term, operational assistance for the implementation of specific election events.

Over the period, the amount of Australian assistance devoted to the latter objective has been increasing.

4. Since 2005, Australian electoral assistance has been scoped, in principle, to work with a range of stakeholders. In practice, it has focused primarily on support for the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC), and in the main on support for PNGEC’s HQ in Port Moresby. Engagement with provincial staff has received less attention, in part because outside of elections PNGEC employs very few staff in the provinces. But it is important to note that PNG national elections are delivered in the provinces and districts, by more than 30,000 temporary workers, staff from provincial administrations, security agencies, PNGEC provincial election managers and local civil society.

### National Elections in PNG

5. A national election is widely recognised as the biggest single activity conducted by any nation in peacetime and is always a challenging logistical exercise. Conditions in PNG add further, significant complexity to this task, particularly in relation to logistics and security: problems of physical access and extreme linguistic and ethnic diversity, combined with a high degree of provincial autonomy and strong incentives and pressures on politicians and officials to gain office and pursue the interests of their own clan or language group (‘wantok’) make elections ‘high stakes’ events.
6. Analysis of the three national elections that have taken place since 2000 reveals a number of positive developments, some of which have been sustained, others of which have slipped backwards. Coordination across the Government of PNG and with PNGEC has improved markedly from a very low base in 2000. In particular, better coordination among agencies involved in election security has been an important factor underpinning improvements since the 2002 election. Similarly, there has been greater involvement of civil society in elections after 2002 as well. Improvements in the electoral roll however that contributed significantly to the successes in 2007 have not been sustained.
7. PNGEC capacity to implement elections has also increased over the period, with an expanded establishment and generalised presence in each province. However, its ability to influence positively the conduct of elections is heavily conditional on underlying institutional incentives and political governance issues, which have not changed significantly for the better over the period. Indeed, for many observers, some

of the manifestations of these factors – election-related bribery, corruption, ‘assisted’ voting<sup>1</sup> or outright voter disenfranchisement, and violence (or the threat of) – are in fact worsening. Women’s representation in the political process does not appear to have progressed much, at least at a national level.

8. These developments have taken place against a background of rising costs for national elections. The 2012 election was, by international standards, extremely expensive, at over US\$60 per voter. Moreover, national elections appear to be getting more expensive: the cost of the 2012 election looks to have more than doubled in real terms compared to 2002 national election. Australian aid has supported improvements in the management of PNGEC’s election finances, with some success, but broader questions of affordability and value for money have not been a focus.

#### Contribution of Australian assistance

9. To assess the achievements of Australian assistance, we have examined five main areas of support:

- Reform of the legal framework for the electoral system;
- Development of the electoral roll;
- Short-term operational assistance for implementation of major elections;
- Activities to promote greater voter awareness; and
- Capacity building in the PNG Electoral Commission.

10. Regarding the **legal framework**, there have been important reforms affecting electoral processes over the period, though in the main these have not been a focus of Australian aid. The exception to this was the assistance provided in the lead up to the 2007 national election for regulatory reform under the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections (OLNLLGE) and for a further review of election laws in 2010. The latter provided some useful recommendations, though these are yet to be enacted.

11. The relatively limited attention to legal reforms reflects in part the focus of support on organisational capacity development within PNGEC, even though the legal environment has a significant impact on the capacity of the broader electoral process<sup>2</sup>. It also reflects the absence of political will in PNG to introduce reforms; in the absence of clear entry points, Australian aid has not tackled the issues.

12. Over the period, Australian aid has provided significant support to PNGEC to improve the integrity of the **electoral roll**. This appears to have been a key factor in the improvement achieved in advance of the 2007 national election, which in turn contributed positively to the conduct of that election. But ground was lost post-2007; to such an extent that by 2012 and in spite of continued support, it is doubtful that the PNG electoral roll fulfils adequately any of the main functions normally expected of a roll.

13. The reasons for this are varied. Primarily, problems with the roll relate to the strong incentives that exist for candidates to manipulate the numbers of voters in different areas, coupled with the low levels of enforcement of laws proscribing these criminal behaviours. But the approach to roll maintenance adopted post-2007 also proved flawed. And part of the responsibility rests with PNGEC itself: the Commission has the strongest possible deterrent – defer or fail an election. We acknowledge this is a difficult decision but, with the exception of 2002, the Commission has not used this sanction, even in clear cases of abuse.

14. **Short-term, operational support from Australia for election implementation** has been an important feature of the electoral assistance provided during the review period. In total, around half of all Australian assistance has been for this purpose. This made important contributions to election delivery in the 2007 and 2012 national elections, supporting the planning, procurement, coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment needed for an election to take place. But the scope for short-term operational support to contribute to material improvements in election outcomes is heavily conditioned by other factors, notably political governance issues, security arrangements and provincial level capacity. Consequently, in the more favourable circumstances of the 2007 national election, Australian operational assistance was able to play its part in securing the improvements observed. Whereas, in the highly contested environment of 2012, it was in

<sup>1</sup> While assisted voting may be legitimate in certain circumstances, this is not the case when it is practised on a large scale and includes determining the choices.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the unusually high number of candidates in national elections – which has been increasing since independence, and reached a total of 3,435 for the 111 electorates in 2012 - complicates all aspects of electoral organisation, adding to costs as well the challenge facing voters, without adding substantively to the choices available.

the main effective in preventing a problematic election worsening further; it helped reduce the risk of violence and disruption and, in the view of some commentators, the risk of a major election failure.

15. We also note that short-term assistance for election implementation has increased significantly over the period. It more than doubled in real terms in 2007 compared with 2002, while the support provided for the 2012 election established a new benchmark in short-term assistance. Some of this assistance genuinely augmented PNGEC capacity – clear examples include procurement, logistics and IT assistance in 2012 and the development of the community awareness program in 2007. However, significant amounts substituted for capacity that PNGEC nominally has, but for different reasons, could not mobilise effectively when needed. Furthermore, short-term operational assistance has not been explicitly designed into longer-term capacity-building efforts. In our view, this is sub-optimal and increases the moral hazard risk<sup>3</sup> faced by Australian aid.

16. Australian aid has been an important driver of improved **voter awareness activities** around major election events throughout the period. It has funded the development of materials and delivery of voter awareness programs including community-based activities. It has also been instrumental in supporting PNGEC's Information and Community Awareness Branch to develop its own capacity. The approach to supporting voter awareness in general compares favourably with 'good practice' criteria, though there are gaps. The broader ambition to develop a national electoral and citizenship education program has not, however been realised.

17. In terms of effectiveness, voter surveys conducted in advance of the 2012 election suggest that mass media/advertising campaigns did increase voter awareness, but the effects of community-based awareness activities conducted by civil society groups are less clear. Similarly, claims about the positive impact of community-based awareness activities on voter behaviour are unproven; for the evaluation team, such expectations are unrealistic. Given the uncertainty around community awareness benefits, we identify the need for a clearer strategy, based on specific, realistic objectives and a prioritised approach to maximise impact and cost-effectiveness.

18. **Capacity building in PNGEC** has remained a key objective of Australian aid throughout the period under review. The period since 2002 has been characterised by greater external engagement by PNGEC, increased awareness of the importance of external partnerships in delivering elections and growing confidence within PNGEC in managing those relationships. Australian aid appears to have made an important contribution to these developments; most notably to the operation of the Inter-Departmental Election Committee and to PNGEC's engagement with civil society organisations, but also to coordination with the Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) – the lead agency for election security.

19. Coordination with provincial level government has improved in some respects; Australian aid helped to formalise the operation of Provincial Election Steering Committees (PESCs) with this aim in view and supported communication linkages between PNGEC HQ and the provinces. But operations at the provincial level are heavily dependent on the mindset and capacity of Provincial Administrations and on relations with individual Election Managers. Provincial level engagement around elections was an area of weakness identified by the independent evaluation of ESP Phase 2 (2010). Australian aid funded a number of temporary posts to strengthen HQ/provincial linkages in the 2012 election but overall limited progress has been made in influencing the conduct of elections in the provinces.

20. PNGEC's internal capacity has improved over the period – most notably in the expansion of staff complement and permanent provincial presence. Australian aid has helped in these developments and has also aimed to strengthen a number of aspects of PNGEC corporate management including financial systems, planning and reporting, staff recruitment and performance management. In some areas, the improvements appear enduring but the overall conclusion of the evaluation team is that the degree of improvement evident in PNGEC capacity is not commensurate with the effort invested. The challenges hindering PNGEC effectiveness are not primarily related to the complexity of the task required of them or systems, structure or skills/job match, to which much of the support has been directed. Rather, they relate to organisational culture, leadership, strategy, management practices and the incentives (both internal and external) affecting staff motivation; these aspects have received limited attention from Australian aid.

#### Approach of Australian aid

<sup>3</sup> Moral hazard arises because an individual or institution does not take the full consequences and responsibilities of its actions, and therefore has a tendency to act less carefully than it otherwise would, leaving another party to hold some responsibility for the consequences of those actions (Wikipedia).

21. The electoral cycle approach is widely endorsed internationally as a means to align electoral assistance with all stages of the electoral process, (pre-, during, and post-elections). We found weaknesses in the extent of alignment of Australian aid with the cycle: the focus of Australian aid was on longer-term capacity-building throughout, with broadly the same objectives regardless of the stage of the cycle. Levels of Australian aid to support PNGEC development during the years between elections was relatively high (as much as 50% of PNGEC's total budget), while surge support at election times was planned with little lead time, and more akin to 'emergency' assistance. The electoral cycle approach also proposes a more holistic strategy, directing aid as necessary to all actors whose effective participation is essential for a democratic outcome. AusAID works with many of these stakeholders though not explicitly around elections. Our overall sense is that the potential connections and value provided by AusAID's wider program were not exploited in the context of its electoral assistance.

22. Many aspects of the Australian whole-of-government coordination in the run up to the 2012 election appear exemplary. However, we found less evidence of coordination in the years in between elections. Linkages between the Electoral Support Program and the Twinning Program<sup>4</sup> were relatively weak, even though both programs were funded by AusAID and working with PNGEC. The level of coordination between the two can be characterised as avoiding overlap or duplication, rather than an active pooling of knowledge and joint strategising, as might have been expected. We found similarly low levels of joint working between AusAID and DFAT in between elections. International experience highlights the inter-relationship between diplomatic/political, financial and technical support in the provision of electoral assistance across the electoral cycle. We see real merit in closer working between DFAT, AusAID and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) in this area.

23. Australian aid has, however, assisted PNGEC to integrate cross-cutting issues into its own policies and practices and supported PNGEC to undertake a range of activities promoting equality, inclusiveness and HIV risk management practices around elections. In a number of respects, these developments place PNGEC at the forefront on these issues among electoral management bodies in developing democracies. Nevertheless, evidence of the impact of initiatives to promote equity, inclusiveness and HIV risk management around elections is limited. Australian aid did support Women's Candidates Training in the run up to the 2012 election but women's political representation in PNG remains a major issue.

24. In terms of monitoring and evaluation and broader analysis and learning, Australian aid supported a range of activities. The processes employed were useful in informing the Program about areas of progress, problematic areas and opportunities. But as a means to assess the effectiveness of activities supported by Australian aid, they had a number of limitations. Similarly, Australian aid has promoted analysis and learning within PNGEC but the approach should have been more methodical and tailored to the variation and differences in PNG.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

25. The evaluation findings indicate that Australian assistance has made some important contributions to electoral processes in PNG but overall results have been mixed. We do not underestimate the challenge of electoral assistance in the PNG context, but a number of broader conclusions can be drawn from our review regarding the effectiveness of Australian assistance:

- Australian assistance to electoral processes in PNG has been important over the period reviewed. As the major donor, Australia has provided a level of continuing assistance to the process through AusAID and the AEC, and has provided funding and personnel to PNG directly to support the holding of key elections.
- Nevertheless, the focus on building the organisational capacity of PNGEC, without sufficient attention to strengthening the broader institutional environment for elections, has not been an effective strategy. We say this not simply because the institutional environment, especially in the provinces, is more significant in determining the conduct and integrity of electoral processes; but because effectiveness of organisational capacity-building in PNGEC is also heavily conditioned by it.
- AusAID lacks a broader influencing strategy that articulates a long-term strategic and shared vision for the democratic and electoral processes in PNG, and the steps needed to get there. This is an inter-agency issue for Australia as well as a bilateral one with the PNG Government. Developing this

<sup>4</sup> Operated between the PNGEC and Australian Electoral Commission



will require clearer objectives for Australian assistance and more effective review mechanisms than have been established to date.

- The short-term operational assistance available from Australia to support implementation of elections in PNG needs to be better integrated with longer-term capacity building efforts across the electoral cycle. While the former has successfully supported PNGEC deliver key election tasks, it has been provided more as ‘emergency’ assistance. In order to maximise its value and minimise the potential risks, more forward planning is required.
- Finally, the approach to organisational capacity-building itself needs careful attention if it is to be cost-effective. It is important that the type and form of assistance is well matched to the conditions, needs and characteristics of the partner organisation.

26. To inform AusAID’s thinking about Australian aid for electoral assistance in the future, we elaborate a number of recommendations in Section 6 of the report. We summarise these below:

*For AusAID’s approach to electoral assistance:*

1. **Australia’s strategy for electoral assistance should be informed by deeper and broader analysis of the opportunities and constraints to supporting electoral processes in PNG.** Such an analysis is not a one-time exercise. We see significant merit in closer working between AusAID, DFAT and AEC across the electoral cycle, to conduct such analyses and in joint strategising around approaches to engaging PNG stakeholders.
2. **Future electoral assistance would benefit from a more holistic approach.** Future assistance should not be limited predominantly to the Electoral Commission, as has been the case. Assuming the engagement is underpinned by a clear (joint) strategy, however, we do not feel that a broader engagement is at odds with the desire for a targeted approach. A more holistic approach also requires better integration of AusAID’s electoral assistance strategy with its broader Governance Program. AusAID should also continue to foster greater coordination across donors to spread the risks for Australia associated with providing electoral assistance.
3. **Any future electoral assistance should explicitly address the issue of ‘surge’ assistance for national elections and actively manage the moral hazard associated with such support.** Dialogue about the nature of any short-term, operational assistance should start well in advance of an election to allow a planned approach and greater integration of assistance across the electoral cycle. Australia can use both aid and diplomatic channels to communicate and discuss with PNG stakeholders in good time.

*For AusAID’s approach to any future assistance to PNGEC:*

4. **The nature of any future Australian assistance to PNGEC should be premised on more of a partnership model and part of the broader strategy for electoral assistance.** The experience of Australian aid in PNG tells us that acceptance and ownership by local stakeholders are crucial factors in effective capacity development. We see merit in locating any future engagement with PNGEC within the wider engagement strategy proposed and adopting a more partnership-based approach
5. **Any future Australian assistance to PNGEC should focus mainly on strengthening election delivery capacity.** The approach to capacity development in PNGEC has been based on too general a model of organisational development and separate from the type of ‘surge’ support provided at election time. We would recommend that future assistance is more tailored to the specific needs of election delivery, with a shift away from corporate HQ activities, and a focus on the end-to-end process of election delivery and associated attention to front-line issues in the provinces. Options in terms of how to provide this assistance, including the role of the Australian Electoral Commission, should be considered carefully.
6. **PNGEC’s proposed diagnostic review of capacity provides AusAID with an opportunity to discuss options for capacity development.** The evaluation identified the lack of detailed diagnosis of capacity constraints in PNGEC as a significant short-coming in assistance. We identify a number of issues that AusAID should consider if it is to support the proposed review.

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose and scope of the evaluation

1.1 This evaluation report considers the effectiveness of Australian aid to electoral processes in Papua New Guinea. The evaluation covers the period from 2000 to 2012 and focuses on Australia aid to the PNG Electoral Commission – simply because that is where the vast majority of support has been provided over the period. The purpose of the exercise is twofold:

- review the achievements of Australian aid and assess their significance;
- consider the implications for any electoral assistance that Australia might provide to PNG in the future.

1.2 The evaluation is also expected to contribute to a review AusAID is currently undertaking of its Democratic Governance Program in PNG, of which electoral assistance is a part. The detailed terms of reference for this evaluation, along with the initial evaluation plan developed in response, are reproduced at **Annex A**.

## Approach and methodology

1.3 The evaluation was conducted by a two person team:

- Simon Henderson (team leader and evaluation specialist)
- Horacio Boneo (elections specialist)

assisted at various points in the process by:

- Margaret Vagi (Director, Information and Community Awareness Branch, PNG Electoral Commission) – during the fieldtrip to Highlands region;
- Michael Clancy (elections specialist with PNG experience) – design and initial interviews;
- Robert Pugsley (Australian Electoral Commission) – election review workshop in Mt Hagan and fieldtrip to East New Britain;
- Kevin Kitson (Australian Electoral Commission) – discussions in Port Moresby.

1.4 The evaluation was conducted from mid-September to mid-December 2012. A three-and-a-half week field visit was made to PNG in October. Like many contemporary development programs that address issues of governance, accountability, state-building and the like, evaluating electoral assistance in PNG is difficult given the complex nature of what it is trying to do. This fact, the degree of geographical, cultural, economic diversity across PNG and the relatively short timeframe for the study and small team, necessarily limited the level of rigour feasible in the evaluation methodology. In particular, a detailed value for money assessment was not possible.

1.5 In the time available, we consulted widely with stakeholders, conducting interviews with staff from AusAID, PNG Electoral Commission, AusAID-funded Electoral Support Program, Australian Electoral Commission Twinning Program, Australian Civilian Corps, other AusAID-funded programs in PNG, representatives from GoPNG, other donors and civil society groups. **Annex B** lists those we met. As far as possible, we attempted to ensure balance in the mix of views obtained (e.g. by speaking to informed stakeholders who were not directly involved with Australian electoral assistance); we also tried to manage the risk of response bias<sup>5</sup>, by explaining the purpose and phrasing our questions carefully, asking corroborating, follow-up questions and comparing responses on the same issue across a number of stakeholders.

1.6 We visited the Highlands region (Western Highlands, Chimbu and Eastern Highlands) and East New Britain – purposively selected by AusAID as indicative of the differing conditions operating in PNG, as well as providing the opportunity to discuss with key provincial stakeholders. We also observed the PNG Electoral Commission's 2012 election review workshops for the Southern region and Highlands region. Where

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<sup>5</sup> Given the general reluctance in PNG culture to openly criticise

appropriate, we used good practice standards based on international experience<sup>6</sup> in electoral assistance programs as a tool to review the approach taken by Australian aid.

1.7 Our approach was both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’. We reviewed and analysed in depth a range of independent assessments and observer reports of major election events in PNG since 1997, to construct a ‘baseline’ at the start of the evaluation period (2000), to trace changes (positive and negative) over the period and to identify the most likely factors explaining the observed changes. At the same time, we asked relevant stakeholders for their views about the changes that have occurred (commonly since 2007, given problems of accurate recall) and what they thought were the most important factors explaining this. We then compared the findings, placing greater confidence in conclusions where there was greater congruence between the two sources.

1.8 As far as possible, we also tested the reliability of findings by looking for corroborating ‘intermediate-level’ measures. So, for example, if results suggested that a significant improvement in election security during the period was a critical factor, we looked for evidence of associated changes in security planning and funding that might reasonably be expected to accompany such an improvement and hence substantiate the finding.

1.9 This approach of course cannot conclusively define causal mechanisms (i.e. what caused what and how). We also acknowledge a key weakness associated with this type of “contribution” assessment: i.e. that the likelihood of concluding “there has been *no* contribution”, and the value of concluding “there has been *some* contribution” are both fairly low. There is no simple solution to this problem, but we attempted to manage the risks by

- a) exploring a range of causal factors, independently from any discussion about Australian aid;
- b) examining evidence about the role of Australian aid in the light of those factors – where possible triangulating opinions with documented/data evidence; and
- c) applying the analytical framework of necessity and sufficiency in judging claims for the significance of Australian aid: for example –
  - was it a necessary ground breaking cause? (*necessary and sufficient*),
  - was it a necessary triggering cause? (*necessary but not sufficient*),
  - did it enable something that would have happened anyway? (*not necessary but sufficient*); or
  - did it make no real difference? (*neither*).

## Structure of the report

1.10 The next section summarises Australian aid for electoral assistance from 2000-12, the funding provided, its objectives and the activities supported. Section 3 discusses the experience and of and trends in national elections in PNG over the period and developments in the cost. Section 4 considers the performance of and contribution made by Australian aid and, on the basis of these findings, section 5 offers some tentative recommendations to inform decisions about future support.

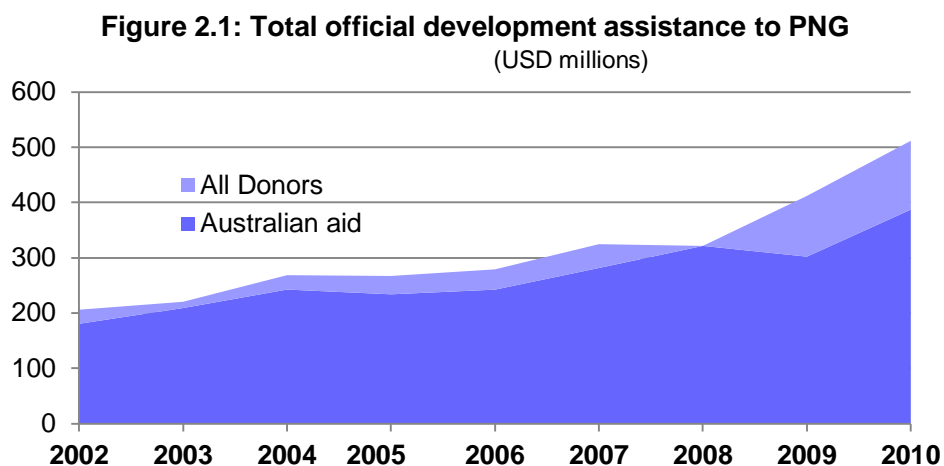
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<sup>6</sup> UN, EC, DFID, IDEA.

## 2. Australian aid for electoral assistance

### Australian funding

2.1 Figure 2.1 summarises total aid to PNG 2002-2010. Over the period, Australia has provided typically more than 80 per cent of all aid.



2.2 Electoral assistance has represented a relatively small share of Australian aid to the governance 'sector' in the round (table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Australian Aid for Governance in PNG**

AUD millions (current prices)

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Governance total	42.5	63.0	53.2	53.0	44.8
Democratic Governance	21	25.7	22	30.5	19
Electoral Support Program	2.9	6.8	4.5	5	5
ESP as % of total Governance	7%	11%	8%	9%	11%

Source: AusAID data

2.3 Over the period, the main vehicle for electoral assistance has been the Electoral Support Program (ESP) – table 2.2. This was initially managed and implemented by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) 2000-2005. In 2005, with the start of Phase 2, a managing contractor ("Cardno") was employed to run the program. AEC involvement continued through a Twinning Program with the PNG Electoral Commission. 2012 saw a dramatic increase in Australian assistance, to provide operational support for the execution of the national election. The majority of this increase was for logistics assistance provided by the Australian Defence Force (ADF)<sup>7</sup>, a team from the Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) to provide 'hands-on' assistance to the PNG Electoral Commission with election delivery, and input from the Australian Federal Police with communication infrastructure and security coordination. In addition, two AusAID-funded programs (Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen – SPSN – and PNG-Australia Law & Justice Partnership - PALJP) provided funds for community-level awareness activities and some training.

2.4 Australian assistance has been provided in a variety of forms over the period:

- equipment and materials: including supply of IT and office equipment for PNGEC HQ, and production of materials and resources for election training and voter awareness operations;

<sup>7</sup> The proportion of ADF expenditure that can be categorised 'oda eligible' (and therefore counted as 'aid') was not confirmed at the time of writing.

- operating costs: for media/advertising campaigns and community awareness programs; for domestic election observation teams for major elections; and for logistics support, including aircraft to assist implementation of the 2012 national elections;
- technical assistance: for training, workshops, study tours, research/reviews and technical advisory support; the latter includes provision of additional personnel (both international and national) on a temporary basis to support the execution of election-related operations.

2.5 Notwithstanding the significant injection of operational support in 2012, technical assistance has been a significant form of aid over the period, with the provision of personnel (long and short term) a key channel: Australian aid has funded the equivalent of about 120 person years of personnel support in total, covering long and short term positions, local and international.

**Table 2.2 Australian aid for electoral assistance in PNG**

AUD 000s

	Lead	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	TOTAL	
ESP Pre- & Phase 1	AEC	5,394 <sup>1</sup>														5,394
Interim phase	AEC				2,823 <sup>1</sup>											2,823
ESP Phases 2 & 3	Cardno						776	3,926	6,961	3,223	3,699	4,187	3,966	5,022	31,760	
Twinning Program	AEC						792 <sup>1</sup>				303 <sup>1</sup>		338	1,433		
SPSN CSO funding	Cardno													2,248	2,248	
PALJP security training	PALJP													910	910	
Advisory support	ACC													2,800	2,800	
Security co-ord & comms	AFP													2,500	2,500	
Logistics	ADF													20,000 <sup>2</sup>	20,000 <sup>2</sup>	
<b>TOTAL<sup>3</sup></b>		<b>899</b>	<b>1,798</b>	<b>1,798</b>	<b>1,605</b>	<b>1,412</b>	<b>1,482</b>	<b>4,124</b>	<b>7,159</b>	<b>3,421</b>	<b>3,897</b>	<b>4,339</b>	<b>4,118</b>	<b>33,818</b>	<b>69,868</b>	

Source: AusAID data

Notes: 1- Annual expenditure data unavailable for Phase 1, interim and Twinning program; annual distribution estimated.

2- Cost of ADF logistics support is an informed estimate by the evaluation team; detailed costings were not available.

3- In addition, AusAID funded the PNG Media Program which included some support for elections, and provided around \$3m per year in core funding to the Centre for Democratic Institutions for activities across a number of countries including PNG.

## Objectives and activities

2.6 In determining the objectives of Australian assistance since 2000, we faced two main difficulties: we could not locate a definitive set of objectives for the period 2000-05; and for the period post-2005, stated objectives were very general, activity-focused or unclear (see table 2.3 for an illustration).

**Table 2.3 Objectives for selected elements of Australian aid for electoral assistance in PNG**

Australian support	Objectives
ESP Phase 1 (2000-03)	Unable to locate. However, secondary references suggest the primary purpose was: To improve the capacity of PNGEC to plan and run elections.
ESP Phase 2 (2005-10)	Purpose: To support reform and improvement of the electoral system in Papua New Guinea; Component 1: To support reform and development of electoral policy and improvements to the electoral system; Component 2: To improve the capacity of the PNGEC to plan, prepare and conduct elections in PNG; Component 3: To improve awareness and understanding of voters and the community of the PNG electoral system; Component 4: To improve the organisational capacity of the PNGEC to plan and run elections
Twinning (2005-12)	To develop the capacity of the PNGEC, to deliver effective electoral administration.
ESP Phase 3	Goal: To contribute to strengthened PNG electoral systems. Component 1: To strengthen electoral governance Component 2: To strengthen PNGEC capacity to manage elections Component 3: To increase the PNG electoral system and civics awareness Component 4: To improve research, analysis, program management and coordination
ACC support (2012)	To provide functional assistance to support PNGEC in their preparations and conduct of the 2012 parliamentary election

2.7 Furthermore, we did not find an accompanying logical framework (or equivalent) that might have served to define more clearly what Australian assistance was seeking specifically to achieve. As such, the objectives of the different elements of Australian assistance have only limited value as a basis for judging effectiveness.

2.8 In looking at the assistance provided over the period, however, two recurring themes are evident:

- Longer-term, capacity building of PNG stakeholders to deliver free and fair elections – this has been the main aim over the period and, as discussed below, has focused primarily on PNGEC capacity; and
- Shorter-term, operational assistance for the implementation of specific election events; notably for the national elections in 2002, 2007 and 2012, but also important elections in Bougainville, supplementary elections and by-elections held during the period.

2.9 The distinction between these two objectives is not clear cut, but reasonable: temporary assistance to address bottlenecks in election implementation cannot in general be expected to be a key driver of capacity development. But the objectives are of course mutually reinforcing, in principle at least. Provision of the latter can provide a platform to achieve the former, while success of the former should enable a reduction in the latter. As table 2.2 shows, however, this has not proved the case. In practice, the PNG political context in which Australian aid has operated has also shifted over the period (see section 3.1), affecting the demand for short-term implementation assistance.

2.10 In terms of the focus of Australian assistance over the period, it can be broadly characterised as:

- Predominantly focused on PNGEC. The design of Phase 2 of the Electoral Support Program envisaged Australian aid working with a broad range of stakeholders<sup>8</sup>. To some a degree this happened, particularly with election planning and community awareness activities. But in practice, PNGEC has remained the focus and, in the main, the channel through which Australian aid has been delivered to other stakeholders for electoral assistance.
- Predominantly focused on PNGEC HQ in Port Moresby. Engagement with provincial staff has received less attention, and where it has occurred, it has tended to be through top-down initiatives from HQ. This is in part explained by the fact that outside of elections very few staff are employed by PNGEC at the provincial level. Nevertheless, national elections in PNG are delivered in the provinces and districts, by more than 30,000 temporary election workers, staff from provincial administrations, security agencies, PNGEC provincial election managers and local civil society.

2.11 Over the twelve years and around \$70m, Australian aid has supported a wide range of activities. A number of key strands are evident, however, and form the basis for our assessment of the achievements of Australian assistance and their significance. They are introduced briefly here, and then addressed in more detail in Section 4 (and annexes C-F), where we discuss the performance of Australian aid.

- **Legal reform affecting the electoral process:** Although in expenditure terms, a relatively small area, it is nonetheless important in shaping the (formal) legal context in which Australian aid has operated. Over the period, Australian aid funded a number of reviews of election laws and supported PNGEC to secure legislative reforms to the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections (OLNLLGE), design the necessary regulations and forms and undertake training about the new provisions;
- **Electoral roll:** The political incentives to manipulate the 'official' size of the electorate have significantly damaged the quality of the electoral roll in PNG. This in turn has had a major impact on the 'fairness' of elections in PNG. Australian aid has funded a wide range of activities designed to improve the quality of the roll before each major election event since 2000.
- **Election delivery:** As indicated above, considerable amounts of Australian aid has been used to provide short-term, operational assistance to help with the implementation of specific election events in PNG. For the purposes of this review, we focus on the national elections in 2002, 2007 and 2012.

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<sup>8</sup> This expectation was based on the findings of reviews of both the 2002 election and ESP Phase 1.

- **Voter awareness:** One of the key developments in PNG elections over the period has been the expansion in both scale and content of voter awareness programs, funded primarily with Australian aid. Initially driven by ESP to address inter alia the roll-out of the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system in 2007, voter awareness activities have also attempted to reach remote communities, and deliver more voter and civic education information, with a view to improving behaviours at election time.
- **Longer-term capacity building in PNGEC:** As already mentioned, the development of PNGEC's capacity to plan, prepare and conduct elections has been a stated objective for Australian aid. While recognised as a long-term process, efforts, and a significant proportion of the total Australian aid provided for electoral assistance has been devoted to this objective since 2000.

### 3. Elections in Papua New Guinea 2000-2012

3.1 This chapter discusses the conduct and cost of national elections in PNG. A large number of factors have influenced these events over the period, of which Australian aid has been a relatively minor player. For this reason, the findings presented in this chapter cannot be read as a measure of the effectiveness of Australian aid for electoral assistance. Nevertheless, the findings do explain the context within which we interpret the relevance and significance of the contribution made by Australian aid.

#### Conduct of national elections in PNG 2002-2012

3.2 A national election is widely recognised as the biggest single activity conducted by any nation in peacetime and is always a challenging logistical exercise. Conditions in PNG add further, significant complexity to this task, particularly in relation to logistics and security: problems of physical access and extreme linguistic and ethnic diversity, combined with a high degree of provincial autonomy and strong incentives and pressures on politicians and officials to gain office and pursue the interests of their own clan or language group ('wantok') make elections 'high stakes' events.

3.3 This section summarises our findings about the developments in national elections over the period. We first discuss the 'baseline' conditions and then the experience of subsequent national elections. **Annex C** provides more detailed information.

##### 2000 Baseline

3.4 By 2000, PNG already had extensive experience in elections. Since independence, national elections had been held every five years since 1977. Furthermore, elections experience extends back to the early 1950s, when Papua New Guineans were given the right to elect a small number of representatives to their colonial government. Based on the assessments from a number of reports available from the time, we can construct the following baseline for 2000:

- Capacity of PNGEC: PNGEC was characterised as having limited capacity, in spite of the fact that many of the staff in 2000 had over ten years' experience in elections. Key constraints were staff shortages, with no permanent decentralised presence in each province, inadequate staff development and weak capacity in key professional areas such as IT, logistics, financial management, compounded by poor communications in the field and in Port Moresby. The organisation suffered from funding shortages and was unable to exercise control over temporary staff engaged at election time. Staff morale was considered precarious.
- Conduct of the elections: Concerns were voiced at that time about both the accuracy of the electoral and the fair conduct of elections. The process for roll maintenance was criticised for missing data, missing enrolment forms, duplication, no cross-checking with census data to verify levels of enrolment, no voter identification by Returning Officers and poor local knowledge within PNGEC to ensure electors were placed in the correct local government/ open electorate boundaries. Threats of violence, an apparent lack of secrecy in the ballot, and a large number of 'ghosts' on the roll were also identified as issues during elections. The problems were concentrated but by no means limited to the Highlands.
- Governance: Understanding about democracy and good governance was considered weak; political allegiances were based largely on local and personal ties of men, rather than ideology and party (only 700 of the 2,300 candidates in 1997 were endorsed by a political party). The majority of MPs had very localised and small support bases within their electorates. Voting in solidarity with the clan, either willingly or through intimidation, was considered more important than democratic principles of freedom of choice and secret ballots. The party system was weak, marked by shifting loyalties. Politics in PNG was characterised by unstable coalition governments drawing support from a wide range of parties and independent MPs.
- Provincial Administrative Capacity: In 2000, administrative capacity in provinces was considered weak, in part because of the effect of the 1995 reforms to provincial government, which *inter alia* passed the appointment of senior provincial officials (some of whom became election returning officers) to the control of MPs – especially provincial governors. In all provinces, the public service



was re-established and newly created positions filled with new provincial-level executives. There was a substantial loss of experienced personnel, corporate, administrative memory and local knowledge of society.

- **Role of women:** Women had a limited role within PNGEC at the time. There were two women in senior positions and a woman was the Election Manager in New Ireland Province. Of the fourteen most junior positions (below Grade 10), thirteen were women. Between 1982 and 1992 no woman was elected to parliament. In 2000, there were two women out of 109 MPs.

### 2002 National Election

3.5 The elections of 2002 were called the “worst” elections ever in PNG. While conditions generally were not much different from those described above, a few key developments contributed to the deterioration observed. The full impact of the 1995 reforms granting parliamentarians power in provinces and control over public expenditure was felt in 2002. In this setting, it was also apparent that some candidates in the Highlands were prepared to use extreme violence to seek power. Problems with the electoral roll worsened; while numbers on the rolls had grown dramatically in the months before the issuing of writs in 1997, the situation in 2002 was much worse: in some Highlands areas, roll numbers suggested that everyone was registered at least twice, including infants.

3.6 These problems were compounded by unseasonably bad weather, making roads impassable, and significant problems with security. The latter was characterised as inadequate and poorly deployed, in part because of the arrangements chosen for polling, but also reflecting the general lack of preparedness for the violence experienced in some areas.

3.7 While there were problems with election logistics, in the main these appear to have been relatively minor factors compared with the increased levels of violence, often directed at election materials, and the massive impact of fraudulent manoeuvres in some provinces. More significant appears to be PNGEC’s poor working relations with other parts of GoPNG. On the grounds that such cooperation might compromise PNGEC’s independence, the Electoral Commissioner is reported to have refused to discuss plans for the election with the highest levels of government, and only attended one or two meetings of the National Security Advisory Committee.

### 2007 National Election

3.8 Compared with 2002, the 2007 election was generally an orderly affair. This was in spite of the, what turned out to be successful, introduction of a new Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system. One key difference was the level of commitment among many stakeholders to avoid a repeat of the experiences in 2002. An important development was the improvement in security planning and deployment. A heavy security presence – comprising 11,700 Police, Papua New Guinea Defence Force and Correctional Service personnel – was deployed before, during and after polling. In most electorates local auxiliary police also accompanied polling officials. The new approach to deployment in the Highlands ensured a significant and effective security presence and maintenance of order in all Highland elections. Coordination between the Police and PNGDF appeared improved. Holding elections first in the volatile Southern Highlands province, under tight security, also proved to be a good decision, setting something of a precedent for elsewhere.

3.9 A new roll had also been recently constructed, with assistance from Australian aid, significantly reducing the ratio between enrolment and the Voting Age Population. Problems remained, as the observer reports attest, but in general the improvements in the roll appear to have contributed to a reduction in the extent of electoral abuses compared to 2002. And – although there are dissenting voices – the introduction of LPV after 2002 is also assigned some significance in reducing tensions compared with the previous “first past the post” system, with winners receiving, in most cases, less than 20 per cent of the vote.

3.10 While in 2002 there was emphasis in traditional advertising through mass media, for the 2007 elections a national voter awareness program was conducted, with the assistance of civil society groups and with funding and technical support through ESP. Voter awareness focused on ensuring understanding of the new LPV system, though included broader messages relating to the value of voting, appropriate voter behaviour, importance of secret ballots and so on.

3.11 That said, it is not clear that there was any significant improvement in underlying election behaviours. According to observers, assisted voting was so widespread in many Highlands polling places that voter secrecy was seriously compromised. Similarly, notwithstanding the positive effect of security, there were still a number of clashes between rival candidates and a number of election-related deaths (estimated at around 40-

50). Problems were also experienced with election logistics, in particular late delivery of materials and delays in the payment of election officials' entitlements affecting staff deployment.

3.12 But nevertheless, both domestic and international observers judged the 2007 to be better managed, less corrupt, and more peaceful than 2002. Moreover, the positive developments were attributed in part to the groundwork laid by the PNGEC (and Australian aid) in election preparations, voter awareness, and improved coordination with GoPNG.

### 2012 National Election

3.13 The lead up to the 2012 national election was characterised by a high degree of political uncertainty and tension. In August 2011, while Prime Minister Somare was on extended absence recuperating from a series of heart operations in Singapore, the National Parliament declared the post of prime minister vacant, and elected former finance minister Peter O'Neill as the new Prime Minister and Belden Namah as Deputy PM. Upon his return, Sir Michael Somare challenged those decisions and in December 2011 the Supreme Court upheld the challenge. However, Parliament continued to back O'Neill strongly and passed retrospective legislation aimed at legitimising his appointment as Prime Minister. Therefore, for a while Papua New Guinea had two claimant prime ministers, each with his own cabinet. Sir Michael Somare attempted to appoint a different Police Commissioner, although Police Commissioner Kulunga remained the only legitimate Commissioner throughout the period. By early 2012, the public service had lined up behind O'Neill, and the international community seemed to have accepted the O'Neill coalition as 'The government'. Remarkably, perhaps, given Papua New Guinea's reputation, these events played out with a minimum of public disorder.

3.14 With a national election scheduled for June 2012, Deputy Prime Minister Namah began calling for a postponement of the election and for the Electoral Commissioner to be sacked, arguing that the PNGEC was not prepared to hold elections on time and the Commissioner and Census had failed. A 'special meeting' of parliament voted to postpone the election, even though parliament was not empowered to do this. In May, a second Supreme Court ruling was rejected by O'Neill.

3.15 During this period, serious concerns existed that any postponement of the national election might be indefinite and thus a *de facto* suspension of constitutional democracy. A number of Papua New Guineans staged peaceful protests in support of their right to vote, with some commentators arguing that these protests were an influential factor in the Government's decision to abandon the postponement. Elections began on 23 June, as constitutionally prescribed; the Electoral Commissioner did, however, delay the issue of the writs by three weeks to provide "more time ... to properly prepare and finalise the electoral rolls for individual wards within the country"<sup>9</sup>.

3.16 The decision to delay the issue of writs had the associated effect of shortening the preparation period available to PNGEC – severely restricting the time available for PNGEC to distribute materials and train and deploy temporary workers. This was particularly significant, given how far behind schedule PNGEC preparations were at that point.

3.17 In explaining the poor levels of preparation, inadequate and untimely funding from Treasury seems to have played a part, though this was not new and PNGEC was better funded for the 2012 election than previous ones. More significant, it seems, were the all-consuming efforts to update the electoral roll, which continued to divert significant resources away from election planning until very late, and the organisational paralysis experienced in PNGEC, induced by the repeated calls from PNG MPs for Commissioner Trawen to be stood down and elections postponed and the political instability in wider PNG society at this time.

3.18 From the start of the year, concerns about preparedness were increasingly voiced and culminated in the provision of a 23-person strong Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) team in March 2012 as part of a major deployment that included significant logistics support from the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces<sup>10</sup>, and from the Australian Federal Police for communications infrastructure. In response to the extraordinary gap between existing enrolment processing capacity and the projected volume of enrolment transactions required under the roll update exercise, Australia also provided funding for around 88 additional PCs to be installed, as well as the deployment of an AEC roll integrity specialist to assist the PNGEC.

3.19 Against the backdrop of intense political uncertainty and competition, the 2012 national election offered no improvement on 2007 and in some respects represented a deterioration. Accuracy of the roll

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<sup>9</sup> Public comments by Commissioner Trawen on 10 April 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Including some 250 military personnel, 13 helicopters and two fixed wing aircraft from the ADF.

worsened. In terms of election management, the Commonwealth Group observed that *...there was an unfortunate level of disorganisation and inconsistency... This was particularly notable in the significant delays which plagued the commencement of voting and counting in every location, varying from a few hours to a few days*<sup>11</sup>. Some areas were affected by adverse weather but in many cases delays were attributed to late distribution of polling materials and deployment of personnel, tardy payment of allowances to officials and security forces, and failures in logistics planning. Training of election officials also appears to have worsened to some extent compared with 2007. A significant voter awareness program was run by PNGEC through both the mass media and civil society groups, contracted to deliver community awareness activities. However, delays in the mobilisation of civil society groups also appear to have occurred – in some cases extending community awareness activities into the campaign period.

3.20 On the positive side, there was evidence of some improvements at the provincial level: eight of the 21 observer teams commended the performance of key election personnel in their respective electorates, compared with only 2 of the 18 observer teams in 2007. But most of the references to other aspects of the conduct of the election in domestic observers reports suggested that matters were somewhat worse than 2007.

3.21 Overall, security arrangements proved adequate in 2012 – noteworthy given the heightened tension, expectations of increased violence and the politicisation of the security that occurred beforehand. Nevertheless, there were several serious incidents of election-related violence during both the polling and counting periods, some of which resulted in loss of life and destruction of property. Furthermore, previous concerns were again raised about some members of the security forces in certain areas reportedly acting in support of or in collusion with particular candidates.

3.22 In addition, some observers also point to a worrying development: problems relating to voter behaviour that were previously exclusive to the Highlands have begun to spread slowly to other regions<sup>12</sup>. Overall, our evaluation concurs broadly with the opinion of the Domestic Observer Team: *The 2012 Elections did not improve on the 2007 elections. The vast majority of observers across the country felt the 2012 elections were worse than the 2007 elections both in terms of security as well as fraud and malpractice.*<sup>13</sup>

#### Key findings

3.23 The experiences of national elections over the period suggest some significant improvements took place between the 2002 and 2007 national elections. Some of these gains have been maintained, but in other important respects there has been a deterioration post-2007. Considering the baseline constructed for 2000, we have the following observations:

- Capacity of the PNGEC: Some significant improvements have been achieved: an expansion in staff complement and a generalized provincial presence suggests that PNGEC is more fit-for-purpose than in 2000. Improvements in coordination with wider GoPNG and with civil society through the development of the Information and Community Awareness Branch have also been a feature over the period. Given adequate and timely funding, a supportive external environment and leeway for postponements and adjustment in the electoral schedule, PNGEC should have the capacity to organise future elections with limited or no external support. However, existing capacity is relatively fragile and effectiveness remains conditional on deeper institutional factors: influence at provincial level is still relatively small, and PNGEC has struggled with roll maintenance and updates in the face of concerted external efforts to manipulate the process. PNGEC required some “surge” support in 2007 in relatively favourable conditions, and significantly more assistance in 2012, when faced with a much more challenging environment.
- Conduct of the elections: Improvement observed in 2007, but the trajectory has not been sustained in 2012. After the 2002 debacle, improved performance and coordination of security forces appears to have had a significant impact on levels of violence in subsequent elections, if not on the quality of

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<sup>11</sup> Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Papua New Guinea National Elections, June-July 2012, London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012, p. 14

<sup>12</sup> For instance, one of the observers reports points out that “...that in stark contrast to 2007, the *Gazelle Open*, *Ijivitari Open*, *Namatanai Open*, *Yangoru-Sausia Open*, *East Sepik Provincial* and *Madang Open* teams all reported widespread vote buying.”

<sup>13</sup> 2012 Papua New Guinea General Elections - Domestic Observation Report (Draft) - Prepared for Electoral Support Program (ESP 3) with funding from AusAID by Dr Nicole Haley and Dr Kerry Zubrinich, 12 October 2012, p.8

the voter behaviour during polling. The problems in the electoral roll have continued and have slightly worsened since 2007. Many of the problems related to violence, lack of secrecy, cross-checking, etc. are still present and while these tend to be seen as problems of the Highlands region, some observers have noted a spread to other regions.

- **Governance:** Political allegiances and the power basis of MPs have not changed substantially. Tensions and conflict associated with elections and the access to resources they provide have continued, if not heightened, over the period.
- **Provincial Administrative Capacity:** There has been some improvement: as noted above, PNGEC has now Election Managers and (for 2012 at least) Assistant Election Managers in each province. The development of Provincial Election Steering Committees (PESCs) has improved coordination and delivery capabilities in most provinces, but dependence on politicized provincial administrations for the conduct of the elections continues.
- **Role of women:** Progress has been witnessed addressing gender balance within PNGEC, with most of the new (though at present temporary) Assistant Election Managers being women. No significant change in the role of women in the Parliament as only three women were elected in 2012. The attempt to create provincial seats in Parliament reserved for women has been blocked.

## Cost of national elections

3.24 By global standards, national elections in PNG are extremely expensive. For the 2012 national elections only, GoPNG expenditure through its main agencies was over K400 million (Table 3.1), which equates to around US \$54 per voter (based on an estimated electorate of 3.85 million).

**Table 3.1: Estimated GoPNG expenditure for 2012 National Election**

	(1) Appropriation	(2) Supplementary	K million Estimated expenditure
PNG EC	205.0 <sup>1</sup>	10.0	240.6 <sup>2</sup>
Police	105.1	5.0	125.1 <sup>3</sup>
Defence	35.8	-	35.8 <sup>4</sup>
Correctional Services	4.4	2.0	6.4 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>350.3</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>407.9</b>
		US\$ million	206.5 <sup>5</sup>

Source: PNG Treasury data; RPNGC data; PNGEC Finance Branch data

- Notes: 1 – includes K25m provided for electoral roll update for 2012 election  
 2 Estimated PNGEC expenditure based on (1) and (2), with addition of K34.6m outstanding claims from provinces, less some K9m used to settle outstanding claims from 2007 national elections;  
 3 Estimated Police expenditure includes K15m outstanding claims on security expenditure;  
 4 Estimates of actual expenditure for other agencies unknown  
 5 Average exchange rate US\$1 = K1.9754

3.25 In addition to GoPNG expenditure, Australian aid to assist delivery of the 2012 election was also significant (table 3.2). Even if we ignore the cost of capacity building in PNGEC undertaken by ESP and the Twinning program prior to the 2012 national elections, the addition of Australian aid raises the cost of the 2012 national elections to about US \$63 per voter.

3.26 Research undertaken by Rafael López Pintor and Jeff Fischer<sup>14</sup> found that the cost of elections varies significantly around the world, with the key variable being the level of experience with multi-party democracy. In countries with well-established electoral systems and developed administrative and communications infrastructure, the cost is typically less than US\$5 per voter – for example, they estimate election and registration costs of \$2 per voter in Sweden and \$4 in Spain in 2004. Costs are significantly higher in countries that are still establishing basic electoral processes and in particular in post-conflict settings: approximately \$11 per voter in Haiti for prospective 2005 elections, \$6.90 in Lesotho and \$7.50 for post-transition elections in

<sup>14</sup> Rafael López-Pintor and Jeff Fischer, Cost of Registration and Elections (CORE) Project, Washington, DC, IFES, Center For Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance, 2005, p.19 ENER

Russia. The estimated cost of the 2004 Afghanistan elections was around \$23 per voter (excluding security operations by international forces). However, the research also found that in general costs fall rapidly as the transition is consolidated: for example, elections in post-war Cambodia in 1993 cost US\$45 per voter, but this fell to \$5 by 1998 and \$2 in 2003.

**Table 3.2: Estimated Australian support for 2012 National Election**

<i>AUD millions</i>	
Electoral Support Program & Twinning (AusAID)	5.3
Australian Civilian Corps (AusAID)	2.8
Strongim Pipol Strongim Nasen Program (AusAID)	2.2
PNG-Australia Law & Justice Partnership (AusAID)	0.9
Australian Federal Police	2.5
Australian Defence Force	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.8</b>
US\$ million	35.0 <sup>2</sup>

Source: AusAID data; evaluation team analysis

Notes: 1 Estimate for ESP and Twinning is for expenditure in 2012 only

2 Average exchange rate AUD = US\$1.0345

3.27 It should be noted that the total cost to GoPNG of running elections in PNG is higher than the figures suggested above, as the total should include relevant GoPNG expenditure across the electoral cycle. For PNGEC only, total expenditure from 2008-12 is estimated at K357 million (or K384m in 2012 prices), which includes support for Local Level Government elections (2008), by-elections during the period and other expenditures incurred by PNGEC (table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Estimated PNGEC expenditure over the electoral cycle 2008-2012**

<i>K millions</i>						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Current prices	75.4	13.5	27.5	24.9	215.6	356.9
Constant 2012 prices	92.7	15.5	33.1	27.2	207.6	384.1

Source: PNGEC Finance Branch data

3.28 In addition, national elections appear to be getting more expensive. Notwithstanding the difficulties faced in obtaining reliable expenditure data for previous elections, table 3.4 provides some comparative estimates from 2002, 2007 and 2012. Allowing for inflation, the figures suggest that PNGEC election costs alone have increased in real terms by 30% each election. The table also highlights the dramatic ramping up of security costs post 2002.

**Table 3.3: Estimated PNGEC expenditure over the electoral cycle 2008-2012**

	<i>K millions</i>			<i>% increase</i>	
	2002	2007	2012	2002 - 2007	2007 - 2012
PNGEC expenditure (current prices)	65.7	126.7	240.6		
PNGEC expenditure (constant 2012 prices)	122.5	159.8	240.6	30%	51%
RPNGC expenditure (current prices)	10.0	61.0	125.1		
RPNGC expenditure (constant 2012 prices)	18.6	76.9	125.1	413%	63%

Source: PNGEC Finance Branch data; Field interviews

3.29 The escalating costs of national elections also appear to be associated in part with poor budgeting and expenditure control. Available information is limited and relates to only PNGEC, though we are not aware of any significantly better practice among other agencies involved. Australian aid has helped to introduce improvements in PNGEC financial management systems but the process is still subject to significant weaknesses. For example, with ESP assistance, PNGEC has introduced a chart of accounts and budget templates, which have by Treasury's admission improved the quality of budget submissions. However, the

underlying costing processes remain problematic: to illustrate, the budget for vehicles for Returning Officers (ROs) based on 15 months hire per RO in one province and on six months hire in another.

3.30 Efforts to control costs in response to the difference between appropriation and the submitted budget for 2012 (some 21% less) also appear to have had limited success. Some planned activities (e.g. electronic counting) were dropped and all provinces were asked to reduce their budgets by 15%. However, some K17 million from the total appropriation was used to pay outstanding claims from the 2007 national elections and 2012 activities to update the electoral roll. The success of efforts to control provincial expenditure through the use of Cash Fund Certificates (CFCs) – introduced with assistance from Australian aid was – only partially successful. 15 provinces still received CFCs above appropriation enabling overspends against budget (table 3.4).

**Table 3.4 Cash Fund Certificate (CFC) control**

*K 000s*

Province	Budget	CFCs issued (to 30-9-12)	Variance %
East New Britain	1,449	2,428	+68%
Manus	400	640	+60%
National Capital District	1,738	2,706	+56%
Southern Highlands	7,423	8,915	+20%
Western	3,017	3,548	+18%
East Sepik	7,942	9,201	+16%
New Ireland	1,119	1,300	+16%
Enga	6,284	7,066	+12%
Madang	6,404	7,120	+11%
Eastern Highlands	10,669	11,270	+6%
Chimbu	7,712	8,187	+6%
West New Britain	1,229	1,332	+8%
Morobe	7,363	7,437	+1%
Gulf	1,789	1,806	+1%
Milne Bay	2,857	2,863	-
	<b>67,395</b>	<b>75,819</b>	<b>+12.5%</b>

Source: PNGEC Finance Branch data

3.31 Overall, claims outstanding at the time of our field visit at both HQ and the provinces totalled K34.6 million – some 18% over appropriated funds.

## 4. Contribution of Australian aid

4.1 As indicated in section 2, it has proved difficult to identify a set of specific objectives to assess the effectiveness of Australian aid. Based on review of project design documents and progress reports, we identified five main areas on which to base our assessment:

- Reform of the legal framework for the electoral system;
- Development of the electoral roll;
- Short-term operational assistance for implementation of major elections;
- Activities to promote greater voter awareness; and
- Capacity building in the PNG Electoral Commission.

As also indicated in section 2, Australian assistance in these five areas has been predominantly through the PNGEC.

### Contribution to reform of the legal framework

#### Australian aid over the period

4.2 At the beginning of the period under analysis, there was an extremely ambitious attempt to change the way Papua New Guinea's political system works. The broad aim of this process was to strengthen political parties, promote more broadly supported candidates and increase political stability. These three goals found their institutional expression in several different pieces of legislation introduced in 2001 and 2002, most notably the Organic<sup>15</sup> Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections (OLNLLGE) and the Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC). These reforms did not involve significant contribution from Australian aid, and were, for the most part, home-grown institutional innovations designed and implemented by Papua New Guineans.

4.3 Shortly after the 2002 election, the Electoral Commissioner established a team within the PNGEC to review the OLNLLGE and the OLIPACC on the basis of the experience of the election and advice provided by a visiting Commonwealth team. Provincial workshops were held in late 2004 with senior Election Managers and other stakeholders, both in government and civil society, to canvass views on the proposals developed by the team. An important report was produced in December 2004: Election Law Review, which included a number of useful recommendations. This was essentially a PNGEC initiative; Australian aid only provided limited funding (\$13,400) to support a visit to Canberra by the PNGEC team.

4.4 At the start of Phase 2 in late 2005, one of the first priorities was to assist PNGEC advance proposed legislative reforms to the OLNLLGE, to assist PNGEC to plan and manage elections more effectively and establish new arrangements for prosecuting those breaching election laws – objectives that had been fulfilled by mid-2006. The support provided consisted of technical assistance – a legal adviser, input from Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) and information seminars for MPs during the reporting period. However, the cost of such support had reached nearly \$440,000 by mid-2007. Consequently, ESP funded an analysis of the options for PNGEC to access legal services at reasonable cost, to which we have had no access.

4.5 The post-2007 election review workshops run by PNGEC with ESP support identified a number of further suggestions for legal reform. In addition to the suggestion to create a Legal Adviser position in PNGEC, Australian aid supported another review of the legal framework for managing elections for PNGEC. The final report<sup>16</sup> was issued in March 2010. Once again, significant resources were invested in the activity. As far as we are aware, the recommendations have not yet been acted upon.

#### Areas not addressed

4.6 There are two significant unresolved issues that have received limited attention over the period. We comment briefly on them here, as they should be included in any consideration of future priorities. We

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<sup>15</sup> Organic laws have the status of constitutional law, and were introduced in Papua New Guinea in order to keep the Constitution focused on basic principles and institutions. Despite this, the PNG Constitution is one of the longest in the world

<sup>16</sup> John Nonggorr, Orovu Sepoe and Boki Raga, Review of the Legal Framework for Managing Elections in PNG, Submitted to the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission on 29 March 2010

believe they have a material effect on the fairness of elections and the ease with which elections are administered and people exercise their vote.

4.7 Electoral boundaries seriously affect the fairness of elections and, particularly, the constitutional right to an equal vote. The average size of an open electorate in 2012 was 53,700 voters with the number of enrolled voters varying from 22,403 (Rabaul Open) to 122,202 (Lagaip-Porgera Open), according to the Commonwealth Report. The variance is -58% and +128% respectively, while the Organic Law has established variance limits of +/- 20% from the average. Boundary changes, of course, require political will within PNG; to date, Parliament has systematically rejected all proposals made by the PNG Boundaries Commission to redress present inequalities, without legislating alternative approaches that might solve the problem. Australian aid recognised the importance of this issue but did not engage on it in the absence of simple entry points, given the lack of political will in PNG.

4.8 Secondly, the number of candidates, which has been constantly increasing since Independence, seriously challenges the proper the organization of the electoral process (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Average number of candidates per electorate in PNGEC national elections**

<i>Election</i>	<i>Electoralates</i>	<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Average</i>
1977	109	879	8
1982	109	1,125	10
1987	109	1,513	14
1992	109	1,655	15
1997	109	2,371	22
2002	109	2,878	26
2007	109	2,759	25
2012	111	3,435	31

*Source: PNGEC data & election observer reports*

Such unusually high numbers of candidates is not justified by democratic theory, and its adverse impact should not be underestimated: it complicates all aspects of electoral organization, from the inscription of candidates, to printing of large candidate posters (made necessary by the number of candidates) and to the counting. At the same time, it does nothing to increase the substantive choice on offer to voters, more likely compounding levels of confusion. Part of the problem is related to the ease of forming a party or standing as an independent candidate. One of the arguments to support the shift to Limited Preferential Voting (introduced for national elections in 2007) was because it would reduce the number of candidates. This has not happened: in 2012, some seats were contested by over 60 candidates.

4.9 The 2010 review funded by Australian aid briefly considered this issue from the perspective of whether a limit might be placed on the number of political parties to be registered. To place a limit will not be realistic and probably unconstitutional: we cannot recall any case in comparative legislation where such limits exist. Usually, the way in which the number of political parties is kept reasonable is by tightening the conditions for registering and retaining status as a party. Some rather limited restrictions do exist in OLIPACC. Parties are required to have at least 500 financial members, which seems not be difficult to achieve, as there were 42 parties at the time of the 2012 elections. There are a few measures that can be adopted that would have an impact on the number of parties. First, it would be possible to significantly increase the required number of financial members. Second, the obligations and responsibilities for submitting accounts and information to the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties could be strictly enforced.

4.10 In the case of independents, the only requirement is a registration fee of K 1,000. Given the number of independent candidates (2,197 in 2012), many of whom get practically no votes, it is evident that the payment is not effective as restriction. Previous suggestions to increase the fee have been rejected as restricting the participation of candidates with limited means. However, there is no reason (other than burden on the PNGEC) not to require prospective independent candidates to demonstrate some minimum level of support. This approach is used elsewhere and it would not exclude potential candidates of limited means, who nevertheless had popular support.



## Contribution to the development of the electoral roll

### Importance of the roll

4.11 The reason to build electoral rolls in advance of elections is simply that, before a person can vote, it is necessary to perform the following controls:

1. Verification of entitlement: To ensure that the person that appears at the polling station is entitled to vote in the election that is being held there;
2. Verification of identity: To ensure that the person that appears at the polling station is the person who s/he purports to be;
3. Verification that the person has not exercised their right to vote more than once.

4.12 The Common Roll is essentially a list of persons whose entitlement to vote has already been verified. If such a list exists, entitlement can be quickly verified at the polling station against the names of voters on the list. Verification of identity is normally simple when voters have adequate means of identification<sup>17</sup>. Verification that multiple voting is controlled requires effective means to prevent double registration. Analysis of database records is normally used but if such controls are not in place, customary practice is to mark the cuticle of one finger with indelible ink.

4.13 Construction of the roll has another important administrative function: it enables adequate logistic planning by the electoral management body (EMB). In the absence of a roll<sup>18</sup>, the EMB can only estimate approximate numbers of voters at each polling station and is forced to send a significant quantity of extra material to cover unexpectedly large turn-outs. This increases the risk of multiple voting.

### Australian aid

4.14 The political will to manipulate the electoral roll is significant in PNG: the practice of padding the electoral roll with false names in some areas and constraining registration in others for personal gain was in use well before the start of our review period. In the re-enrolment exercise before the 1997 elections, for example, the roll was projected to be 2.2 million but ended up with 3.4 million voters. In addition to over-enrolment, under enrolment, even in urban areas, seems to have been experienced around the country.

4.15 From the start of the period, however, Australian aid has provided significant support to PNGEC's efforts to improve the integrity of the roll. In the run up to the 2002 elections, Phase 1 of the Electoral Support Program (ESP) funded IT procurement and the installation of a computerised Common Roll system, design and distribution of enrolment materials, development of data entry processing systems and manuals, provision of training and technical advice. At the specific request of the PNGEC, however, Australian aid was not directly involved in the fieldwork for the update of the electoral roll.

4.16 In spite of the assistance, the problems with the integrity of the electoral roll worsened significantly in the PNG's 2002 elections. In those elections, the number of people on the roll reached 5.3 million, larger than the population at the time.

4.17 During 2004 the Electoral Commissioner commissioned a detailed analysis of the election law and recommendations for changes. The study was funded and implemented by PNGEC with a small contribution by Australian aid to cover the cost of a trip to Canberra and contained a number of excellent suggestions, including the construction of an entirely new roll in certain areas and an updating in others, simplifying objection procedures, relating the basic rolls to ward level and delegating full legal responsibility to Provincial Electoral Officers for updating the roll. Although the responsibility passed to them, very few of them effectively implemented the new obligation.

4.18 In September 2005, it was decided to compile a completely new roll. This effort received significant technical assistance from Phase 2 of ESP, including design and support for training field staff, strengthening electoral roll data input processes, and assistance in minimising the risks associated with creating new rolls. Significant support was also provided to the PNGEC IT section through an IT expert. The recommendation to

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<sup>17</sup> In some cases, an electoral management body (EMB) might issue a document that can be used for the verification of both entitlement and identity (like Mexico, for example, this document is also used for other purposes). In some cases, the EMB does not issue a document but provides polling officers with information needed to verify identity (e.g. photographs, as in Bangladesh, or signatures, a frequent practice in some USA states).

<sup>18</sup> Elections can be organized without electoral rolls, as it was for instance the case of South Africa in 1994. But this necessarily involves sending large number of ballots and other electoral materials, to cover unexpected turnout of voters. This would be risky in the conditions of PNG where all ballots distributed tend to be used.

use double entry to minimize errors, meant that PNGEC IT had to process 3 million forms twice. This ambitious exercise was completed in time for the election, though preliminary rolls were not available for public exhibition in most districts until January 2007.

4.19 The new 2007 roll contained 3.94 million names, a reduction of 1.4 million compared with 2002. This represented a significant improvement, recognised by all observers at the time. Nevertheless, it remained inflated (by close to 500,000 names) and severe problems were still experienced in some areas with voters unable to find their names on the roll.

4.20 The period between the 2008 and 2012 can be characterised as one of significant Australian support to roll improvement, but at the same time a loss of momentum after the gains achieved in 2007, as a result of stalled implementation efforts. In 2009, a workshop was held with all Provincial Election Managers to develop strategies to support a planned and consistent approach to improving and maintaining the roll. In the same year, Australian aid supported a fact finding mission to Timor-Leste, helped establish an Action Learning Working Group on electoral integrity and accuracy in PNGEC, supported a comprehensive (but unsuccessful) budget submission for inter alia a major roll improvement activity in 2010; recruited an election operations adviser to assist in developing procedures and systems for on-going roll maintenance and advise on the roll improvement program planned for 2010; and supported a National Stakeholder Consultative Forum hosted by PNGEC in Port Moresby to canvass broad opinion on Electoral Roll issues and showcase technology available for electoral roll updating and voter identification.

4.21 According to ESP progress reports, Australian aid had assisted PNGEC develop for the first time a plan for continuous roll maintenance, managed by provincial Election Managers. However, implementation stalled, with no significant work undertaken. The Program concluded that with “two of the four Operations Managers absent, the recruitment for two deputy commissioners being finalised and the recent appointment of an acting Director Operations, there appeared to be no drive or management to ensure this strategy successfully started in the regions. It also appears that many of the election managers have failed in their statutory obligations to perform basic and regular electoral roll work.”<sup>19</sup>

4.22 Improving the accuracy of data held on the electoral roll remained a key priority for 2010. Under the Twinning Program, AEC were asked to supply an officer to undertake a detailed, data matching exercise with Election Managers, with a view to identifying and removing ghost and fake names and double and triple entries. However, on reviewing the progress of the update program and the scale of the problems affecting the roll, AEC concluded that such an exercise would not be cost-effective.

4.23 However, Australian aid, through the Electoral Support Program, continued to assist PNGEC with roll accuracy. It was one of the main topics in a week-long Election Managers (EMs) Workshop held in Lae in February 2010 with Australian assistance. EMs were tasked with establishing a network within their provinces with provincial administrations and civil society groups to improve the data held on the roll in each ward and community. A new review of the Election Law was also commissioned and supported by the Program, involving almost the same team that had undertaken the 2004 study. This produced an excellent set of detailed recommendations for improvement activities, though it noted that the biggest issues relating to the electoral roll could not be dealt with by electoral law reform; but rather had more to do with compliance and enforcement of existing laws.

4.24 Notwithstanding these activities, minimal progress appears to have been made in roll improvement at the provincial level during 2010. This reflected in part the lack of success in securing additional funds from GoPNG for roll improvement work.

4.25 With Australian support, PNGEC developed plans to implement a nation-wide update of the 2007 roll, in principle, as a complement to the maintenance activities (theoretically) being conducted by provincial Election Managers. Australian aid also assisted the Commission submit and ultimately secure significant (if not full) additional funding for this exercise, as well as support for the proper submission of accounts.

4.26 This process nominally began in early 2011, but was suspended in July 2011 because of potential confusion with the national census survey, which was occurring simultaneously (having itself been delayed from 2010). Further delays to the roll improvement project occurred during the year, compounded by the disappearance of PNGEC’s Highlands Operations Manager (presumed killed). In response, Australian aid engaged a Roll Improvement Adviser (Sep – Dec 2011) to assist Election Managers in the Highlands update

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<sup>19</sup> Papua New Guinea - Electoral Support Program Phase 2 - Six Monthly Report, 1 July to 31 December 2009, Cardno Acil Pty Ltd - ABA No. 2.210 Support To The Electoral Roll Working Group, in p. 45 of 88

their rolls. Based in Mt Hagen, the adviser expressed a number of concerns regarding the performance of Election Managers, continued funding delays in disbursements to them as well as financial management by Managers of the funds received to date.

4.27 The August deadline for completion of the preliminary roll was extended to the end of October 2011 but in the event, almost all provinces failed to meet that and the roll update continued into early 2012. A postponement in the issuing of the writs enabled somewhat frantic updates involving Returning and Assistant Returning Officers that lasted until mid-May 2012 (around a month before the start of polling). The addition of a large number of new voters as a result of the exercise also resulted in a heavy workload for PNGEC's IT department. Between March and May 2012 PNGEC, with Australian support, mobilized extra computers and staff working 24 hours a day. However, the decision to stick to the constitutional deadline for elections meant that the display of preliminary rolls at district level and consequent verification and objection processes in several provinces were either reduced in time, or did not occur at all.

4.28 Australian aid also funded an external audit to ensure that processes, procedures and quality control mechanisms were operating and effective in the roll improvement project. The audit, conducted by Deloitte's, continued into 2012. The final report raised a number of significant concerns, though it is hard to see what scope there was to act on these given the timing of the work.

4.29 In quantitative terms, there was a clear deterioration in the ratio of roll to population following the update exercise, in spite of the significant funds invested. The roll included potentially 900,000 excess names – a significant increase on the half-a-million excess estimated for 2007. But even with that considerable increase, observers noted high levels of disenfranchisement in many areas with voters turned away because of problems locating their names on the roll.

#### Key findings

4.30 **In the present situation, the rolls are only of limited use in relation to the original purpose of constructing a roll.** Given the existence of a significant number of multiple inscriptions, the lack of incorporation of some persons and inexact locations, it fulfils the function of verification of entitlement to a limited degree. It is not used to verify identity or to avoid double voting. It is only used as (rough) guidance for the distribution of electoral materials.

4.31 **The overall trend since 2000, in quantitative terms at least, is one of “two steps forward, one step back”.** However, the continuing and in some respects heightened political tensions around national elections in PNG has meant that the issue of quality is under greater scrutiny than ever. After reaching a peak of inadequacy in 2002, the new roll in 2006 resulted in a significant improvement, although it was far from perfect. That improvement process was reversed between 2007 and 2011.

4.32 Australian aid played an instrumental role in the improvements achieved for the 2007 election and arguably prevented an event worse deterioration in quality for the 2012 elections. However, the input provided was significant and benefits achieved questionable. Indeed, much of the deterioration in quality can be regarded as an unwanted by-product of the update exercise, which, although allowing for the incorporation of new citizens and changes of residence, also opened the gates for significant fraud.

4.33 **There are numerous challenges in maintaining the roll in PNG,** such as difficulties in reliably establishing identity and in using standard public display systems for verification of rolls. Incompetence and inadequate supervision of enumerators are also problems, though tractable. In some respects also, the strategy for roll maintenance adopted post-2007 was flawed. With rolls based in wards, each provincial Election Manager is responsible for the maintenance of some 240 rolls, which is an almost impossible task. In other words, PNGEC itself failed in its duty to provide adequate opportunities for enrolment, with most roll maintenance taking place as part of a major update exercise.

4.34 **But the problems associated with the roll also relate significantly to much deeper issues of incentives and enforcement:** as a result of political corruption, enumerators and local government officials commit unlawful acts by enrolling fictitious names, omitting names, or moving names to other wards; candidates or their supporters use bribes or threats to maximize enrolment in their base support areas and minimise enrolment of rival supporters; polling can be taken over by people who decide to ignore the electoral roll, with polling officials either helpless or complicit. Furthermore, while this has fortunately been concentrated in a few constituencies in the past, negative practices appear to be spreading, in what some of the interviewees called the “highlandization” of PNG.

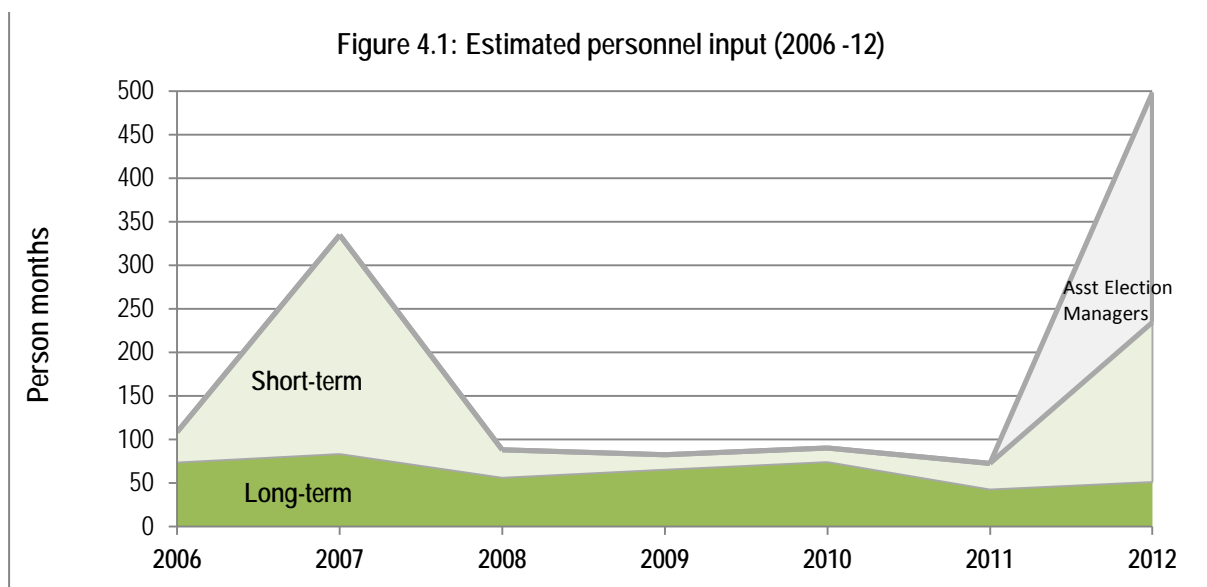
4.35 Although a large part of the blame rests with other stakeholders, part of the responsibility at least rests with PNGEC itself. The Commission has the strongest possible weapon: defer or fail an election, which in turn removes the prize for those who misbehave. But, with the exception of 2002, the Commission has not used this sanction, even in clear cases of abuse.

### Short-term assistance for election implementation

4.36 Short-term, operational support for election implementation has been an important feature of the support provided: notably for the national elections in 2002, 2007 and 2012, but also important elections in Bougainville, supplementary elections and by-elections held during the period. Australia has funded operating costs (e.g. materials production, logistics, voter awareness activities), as well as providing technical assistance, for additional personnel (short-term advisory support as well as temporary, in-line positions) and, implicitly, meeting the cost of 'hands-on' support provided by long-term advisers.

4.37 For the 2002 national election, support was relatively small-scale and narrowly focused on election planning, training and the use of IT in election management. For 2007, support was broader in coverage – including planning, logistics, operations, security coordination, financial management and results communication, as well as community awareness and media campaign, of particular importance given the shift to the new electoral system (LPV). In 2012, the scale of assistance increased markedly. Provision of Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) and Australian Defence Force (ADF) resources was the main factor here but ESP also funded a range of temporary positions to assist PNGEC with the election. **Annex D** provides a summary of the short-term support provided during the period.

4.38 Although precise figures are not available, we estimate around one half of Australian assistance has been for short-term support for election implementation. This estimate is heavily influenced by our 'best guess' for the cost of the ADF logistics input in 2012. We do not have detailed input data for ESP Phase 1 or the subsequent Twinning program but figure 4.1 highlights the spike in personnel support provided during 2007 and 2012 national elections (note: 2012 included the 22 Assistant Election Managers funded by Australian aid, identified separately).



#### Key findings

4.39 **Short-term assistance provided by Australian aid overall does appear to have made a positive difference to election delivery in PNG.** The scale of assistance appears to matter; but it should also be noted that even in 2012, Australian aid was still only a minor (albeit significant) part of the total effort. In practice,

the outcomes achieved by short-term Australian assistance are conditioned far more by the broader environment in which elections are delivered.

- The 2002 election was described as ‘worst ever’. Even though the evaluation (AEC, March 2003) found inadequate coordination and poor preparation by PNGEC were contributory factors, the primary drivers of this outcome lay beyond issues of PNGEC capacity (see section 3). Given this challenging environment and the small-scale and narrow focus of the Australian aid provided, it is not surprising that the assistance failed to leverage better outcomes;
- The environment surrounding the 2007 election was quite different: characterised by much greater commitment on the part of stakeholders (to avoid a repeat of 2002), improvements in the electoral roll (see above) and much better organisation among security agencies. Implementation problems were still encountered: late delivery of election materials and payment of election official’s entitlements, as well as continued weaknesses in expenditure management, but independent reviewers also identified the performance of PNGEC (and ESP) as positive contributory factors. Support for voter awareness almost certainly helped with the smooth roll-out of the new LPV system, and Australian support for financial monitoring and reporting appears to have helped to manage some of the risks associated with inadequate and untimely financing. The impact of the hands-on support provided by advisers as well as the work of the police coordination adviser is also likely to have been positive but harder to determine –because of the relatively small-scale of support (in comparison to the total effort involved in election logistics and security).
- According to most observers, the 2012 election represented a backwards step in many aspects of election quality. But the 2012 election was conducted in a much more contested environment, affecting a number of key agencies including security; Papuan New Guineans were also working with a worse electoral roll compared to 2007; and delays were experienced in the release of election funds by Treasury (though this was not a new experience). But the quality of PNGEC’s own approach to key election preparations also appeared to have declined compared with 2007, while ESP’s ability to address pinch points in good time was more limited (due to design features – see paras 3.7-3.8 – and the transition between phases 2 and 3).
- In this context, value of short-term Australian assistance was in preventing further significant deterioration of the process. Without the procurement and logistics support provided, it would have been impossible to stick to the constitutional timetable, given the stage of election preparedness in PNGEC at the point when the ACC team arrived, while support to monitoring, results management and dissemination processes appears also to have made a material difference to the transparency of the election – important in such an contested environment.
- Under normal circumstances, delaying elections in one or more constituencies for a short period may not be expected to pose significant problems<sup>20</sup>. Even in 2002, with high levels of violence and an unprecedented number of electorates judged to have failed, a new Government was established. But in the environment in PNG in 2012, there was significant concern that delays would exacerbate political tensions and potentially precipitate a constitutional crisis. At the very least, a very poorly managed election process would have carried an increased risk of violence and disruption. Indeed, in the view of an experienced observer, the support provided by the ACC and ADF averted the risk of a major failure.

**4.40 The scale of short-term assistance for election delivery has increased over the period.** It more than doubled in real terms in 2007 compared with 2002; and even excluding ADF expenditure, it increased a further 25% in real terms in 2012. Including ADF assistance, 2012 established a new benchmark in short-term assistance.

- The context surrounding a particular election is key in determining the implications of poor implementation; this risk assessment has been as, if not more, important in driving short-term assistance from Australian aid than assessment of PNGEC capacity per se; increased short-term assistance cannot therefore be interpreted simply as a measure of the decline in relative capacity in PNGEC.

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<sup>20</sup> See Boneo, Horacio, “The Rules of Postponement”, Washington, US Institute of Peace, 2003

- However, experiences in 2002 and 2012 demonstrate the continuing fragility of PNGEC: PNGEC is not itself immune to the political divisions in wider PNG society, and is still affected by critical weaknesses in leadership and broader capacity of the organisation. As such, we feel it is reasonable to question the effectiveness of the long-term capacity-building effort funded by Australian aid.

4.41 **Only some elements of the short-term assistance have genuinely augmented PNGEC capacity** – clear examples of this include logistics, procurement and IT assistance in 2012 and the development of the community awareness program in 2007 also. However, significant amounts of the assistance have in effect substituted for capacity that nominally exists in PNGEC but for different reasons has not been available. Given this, some actions would appear prudent, none of which have been taken to date as part of the assistance:

- a rigorous assessment, well in advance of an election, of whether sufficient workforce capacity (numbers and skills) exists in the right positions so that PNGEC can fulfil its role, given the model of election delivery that is currently in place;
- such an analysis would need to be complemented by detailed review of the reasons why capacity substitution has been necessary every time in critical (and predictable) areas; in our view, there has been too little interest shown by Australian aid in developing this understanding and using it as the starting point for any work on ‘solutions’.

4.42 Such understanding would help identify what direct assistance is genuinely capacity-augmenting (as opposed to substituting). Views might then be formed on whether it is essential, affordable and embeddable within PNG systems. Such discussions might in turn prompt examination of the whole model of election delivery, to see if re-engineering the process could obviate the need for, say, such large-scale logistics support.

4.43 **The intention to provide short-term operational assistance has not been prominent in the design of any of the phases of ESP (or the Twinning program)** – reflecting the stated focus on longer-term capacity-building. As a result, assistance to the 2012 election was determined late and subject to little pre-planning. The experience was more planned in 2007, but the support still had to operate “under the radar” to some extent and required an unanticipated increase in expenditure that year. In both cases, the mobilisation achieved in a short period of time was impressive. But clearly, earlier warning and better planning are preferable.

4.44 There are obvious risks associated with provision of significant short-term, operational assistance without adequate lead time and a structured, planned approach. At the very least, it is likely to be less efficient. A more planned approach might have enabled more of the training and HR support provided by ACC to be delivered through a combination of PNGEC and local consultants. It also increases the risk that potential development benefits are not maximised, where short-term assistance is not explicitly part of the longer-term capacity development effort. It also increases dependency and moral hazard risks faced by Australian aid for future election events.

## Voter awareness

4.45 A number of forms of voter awareness can take place to improve understanding of elections and democracy more broadly<sup>21</sup>:

- **Voter information:** the dissemination of basic, factual information to citizens on how to participate in an election (how, when and where to vote);
- **Voter education:** addresses voters’ motivation and willingness to participate, and includes concepts such as the value of voting; the link between human rights and voting; the role, rights and responsibilities of voters; the secrecy of the ballot and why each vote is important;
- **Civic education:** refers to communication of broader concepts about democracy, including the roles and responsibilities of different sections of society, the structure and function of government and significance of elections; it emphasizes not only citizen awareness but citizen participation in all aspects of democratic society.

<sup>21</sup> EC-UN-IDEA, Effective Electoral Assistance Participant’s Manual, (2007).

Given the complexity of the concepts addressed in civic education (and some aspects of voter education), it is generally agreed that these require continual reinforcement, over time.

4.46 Australian aid has supported voter awareness activities throughout the period. ESP Phase 1 and the subsequent interim phase focused mainly on voter information and elements of voter education in a number of initiatives including community awareness programs for supplementary elections in 2003, and engaging key stakeholders in planning the awareness campaign for the introduction of the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system. Phase 1 also supported the establishment of a specialised community awareness unit within PNGEC.

4.47 Under Phase 2 the amount of support expended and the focus broadened to include aspects of voter and civic education. Beyond the immediate (and pressing) task of informing people about LPV for the 2007 national elections, the Phase 2 design document proposed a longer term, national electoral and citizenship education program to educate communities about the importance of free and fair elections. The ‘project’ was envisaged being run through the work of NGOs and churches, as well as by incorporating material into the school curriculum.

4.48 In practice, what developed was a hybrid approach, whereby:

- ESP developed and managed an extensive media/advertising campaign and face-to-face community awareness program for the 2007 elections involving (for the first time) CSOs, which supported the roll-out of LPV and covered elements of all forms of voter awareness<sup>22</sup>;
- During 2008-2011, Australian aid supported PNGEC’s Information and Community Awareness Branch (ICAB) build its capacity and confidence to manage the program and establish relationships with the CSOs;
- In 2011-12, ICAB managed an expanded community awareness program, as well as the media/advertising campaign support the national elections, with limited ESP adviser support, though Australian aid still provided the major share of implementation costs.

4.49 Around \$9 million (in nominal terms) has been provided under this objective over the period. Just over half of this has been for direct funding of civil society organisations to carry out voter awareness activities at election time.

#### Key findings

4.50 **The approach taken to supporting voter awareness in general compares favourably with ‘good practice’ criteria, though there are gaps.** Table 4.2 summarises our findings against criteria for donor assistance to voter awareness programs, drawn from recent donor practice reviews and guidelines<sup>23</sup>.

**Table 4.2: Criteria for donor assistance to voter awareness**

Criterion	Summary findings
<i>Build capacity of CSOs to conduct voter education programmes</i>	Australian aid has provided expertise, training, materials and funding; however, low capacity among CSOs (e.g. financial management, proposal development) hampered implementation in 2007 and 2012;
<i>Use appropriate forms of communication, language and distribution methods for different target audiences.</i>	A broad range of channels have been used including face-to-face activities, recognising limitations to the reach of radio and TV and printed materials (high illiteracy); but face-to-face activities are not targeted specifically to remote areas. Communication materials and messages delivered in three languages (English, Tok Pisin and Motu). Training manual for CSOs only available in English.
<i>Ensure messages, media and distribution methods are relevant for women and vulnerable and marginalised groups.</i>	Community awareness manual includes messages on gender equity, disability and HIV/AIDS; 2012 TV campaign additionally used sign-language. The 2008 evaluation of face-to-face activities noted that men mostly delivered events and women were proportionately under-represented among attendees. CSO estimates for 2012 suggests the proportion of women attendees improved, though data on gender of trainers was not available.
<i>Select and train CSOs carefully to avoid inconsistent or biased messages</i>	Training and manual developed to ensure consistency and accuracy of messages; funding of CSOs’ own training-of-trainers stopped in 2007 because of concerns about quality but quality of delivery not generally assessed.

<sup>22</sup> The materials covered: Governance (including democracy, the role of Parliament and MPs, power and elections), Gender Equality and Inclusion, HIV/AIDS in PNG, What is LPV, Eligibility to vote/enrolment and Illegal and unacceptable (election-related) behaviour.

<sup>23</sup> EC-UN-IDEA, Effective Electoral Assistance Participant’s Manual, 2007; Wilson and Sharma, Review of UK Electoral Assistance and international best practice experience, 2008; DFID/FCO “How to” note on Electoral Assistance (Dec 2010).

	The program has experienced problems with some CSOs working for candidates (or perceived as such) or representatives subsequently standing as candidates.
<i>Begin voter and civic education programmes well in advance of the election period</i>	This has proved problematic. CSO capacity issues and administrative/logistical problems have affected adversely timeliness and efficiency of awareness activities, with late funding in 2012 meaning in some cases meaning community awareness activities took place alongside candidate campaigning.
<i>Use surveys to gauge initial awareness and monitor campaign impact across different groups.</i>	This criterion has been addressed: rigorous, large-scale survey commissioned before the election to a) assess levels of awareness; b) inform targeting of awareness activities; and c) assess improvements in voter awareness.
<i>Link voter/ civic education programmes with other democracy initiatives</i>	This criterion has not been systematically addressed.
<i>Support CSOs to apply skills gained to strengthen civil society</i>	This criterion has not been systematically addressed.

4.51 **Australian aid has had a positive impact on PNGEC capacity in this area.** At the start of the period, PNGEC voter awareness activities focused solely on voter information and messages were delivered primarily through mass media or public servants. No specific community outreach program existed nor was there capacity to implement one. This contrasts with the situation in 2012 where ICAB occupied a central role in managing the delivery of a major national awareness program, using a range of channels, messages and materials, to a large extent developed with Australian aid. Whereas in 2007, coordination at the provincial level was minimal, the innovation of Provincial Awareness Steering Committees introduced by PNGEC for 2012, while far from perfect, functioned well in some provinces.

4.52 Challenges remain. Problems with the supply of materials to and late mobilisation of CSOs involved in community awareness work were problems in both 2007 and 2012. In 2007, these were compounded by last minute amendment of the Organic Law on Elections and changes to ballot paper colours that impacted the appropriateness of the training and messages already delivered and delayed delivery. In 2012, substantive community awareness activities started late, in some cases coinciding with the campaign period.

4.53 A further question relates to the sustainability of the voter awareness activities in PNGEC. While funding for the 2012 media and advertising campaign was met from the PNGEC election budget, Australian aid continued to provide the majority of CSO funding for face-to-face community work.

4.54 **The wider ambition of a national electoral and citizenship education program has not been realised.** There have been related initiatives, such as with the Department of Education to provide resource materials for teachers, the establishment of public resource centre in PNGEC, and a tertiary student work placement program. However, progress with the first two of these has been slow, while the student program is small-scale. The 2008 evaluation of the awareness program noted that while awareness on elections could be supported and coordinated by PNGEC, education about governance systems and civics was beyond its capacity. The report recommended that broader governance and community awareness be taken on by an independent “implementing agency”, but this recommendation was not accepted by PNGEC and was not acted upon.

4.55 ESP helped the PNGEC develop the concept of a network of civil society partners, supporting engagement with civil society groups in advance of the 2012 election. However, in practice, arrangements with civil society groups have been in the main contractual and focused on the delivery of (awareness) services around election events. It is an open question whether ESP should have done more to build civil society capacity; alternative delivery models to a PNGEC-led one do not appear to have been actively explored. Notwithstanding the value of supporting PNGEC to operate as an informed partner and provide leadership where needed, we find some merit in the views expressed in the 2008 evaluation. Further exploration of effective, sustainable models for delivery of voter and civic education is warranted, ideally drawing on other resources in AusAID’s democratic governance program.

4.56 **Mass media/advertising campaigns appear to have increased voter awareness, but the effects of community awareness activities are less clear.** Estimates of the number of voters reached via radio, television, newspapers and posters/ billboards are not available for the campaign in 2007, though a reported 6 million materials or media events were issued to carry messages to the public. For the 2012 election, PNGEC funded and managed the media/advertising campaign, drawing on the materials and resources developed with assistance from Australian aid. As part of the process, PNGEC and Australian aid funded a rigorous survey of voter awareness by Tebbutt Research. The sample size was large, (2,545 people, across the four regions,



broadly representative of national conditions) and the study comprised before-and-after surveys in September 2011 and June 2012 respectively.<sup>24</sup>

4.57 The study estimated that 55% of voters had seen, read, or heard the PNGEC media and advertising campaign (48% of people in rural areas) – suggesting that some 2 million people had been reached. A quarter of respondents cited NBC radio as the main source of their election information, a fifth cited family/friends<sup>25</sup> and the same proportion cited newspapers as their main source.

4.58 Results show that people’s confidence in their understanding increased significantly after the media/advertising campaign across a range of election topics, e.g. enrolment, how to vote, voting as a civic right, what democratic government is). The two topics where the least improvement was recorded were “the LPV System” and “Composition of Parliament”<sup>26</sup>. Increases in voters’ reported confidence in “How to Vote” appear substantiated by the comparative results of before-and-after ballot paper tests, administered during both surveys.

4.59 Confidence levels among those who had heard, seen or read the PNGEC media/advertising campaign also were significantly higher compared with those who had not. For example: on the topic of “Ballot papers/How to vote”, 70% of those who had experienced the campaign were confident, compared with 57% who had not. Similarly, 64% of those exposed to the campaign felt confident about the “LPV system”, compared with 52% of those who had not experienced it. While it is quite possible that those who took notice of the campaign were naturally more interested, more informed voters anyway, overall results do support a plausible case for the awareness effects of the campaign.

4.60 A complementary community awareness out-reach program was also run in 2007 (by ESP) and 2012 (by PNGEC), supported by Australian aid, using civil society groups to deliver face-to-face messages to voters in the provinces. Figures on the reach achieved are presented in table 4.3, which highlights the uncertainty around figures for 2012.

**Table 4.3: Estimated reach of CSO awareness events**

	PNGE/CSO records		Voter Awareness survey
	2007	2012 (Nov)	2012
<b>No. of CSOs contracted</b>	39 <sup>1</sup>	?	n.a.
<b>Estimated reach (people)</b>	778,393	1,617,658	19% attendance (c. 750,000)
<b>Men : Women (note data are incomplete)</b>	250,911 : 191,732 57% : 43%	547,561 : 528,147 51% : 49%	n.a.
<b>Persons with disabilities</b>	-	3,172	n.a.

Note 1 – 45 CSOs originally contracted but 6 discontinued due to poor financial management practices or inappropriate links with politicians

Source: ESP/PNGEC records & Voter Awareness Project report (2012)

4.61 The reach estimated from the Voter Awareness Survey (VAS) is less than half the reach reported by CSOs in 2012. We do not have sufficient detailed information to assess the potential biases in each source and reconcile the figures. The VAS, however, did report that nearly half (46%) of all respondents remembered there being a CSO community awareness event, but less than half of these said they attended (a total of 19% of respondents) and only 2 per cent referred to CSO meetings as their main source of information. In contrast, 23 per cent identified Politicians/ Candidates as a source of information (and 6% as their main source).

4.62 A major, informal evaluation of the CSO program was conducted in 2008, which interviewed over 1000 people, visited 7 provinces and analysed available records. The study reached clear and positive conclusions about the relative effectiveness of face-to-face awareness activities compared to other media, but in our view the evidence on which these conclusions were based is not particularly strong.

4.63 The VAS did find increased confidence among respondents, who had attended CSO awareness events compared with those who had not, but the differences were less marked than in the case of the

<sup>24</sup> The report we have seen, however, does not include the details of sample sites, coverage of remote regions, weightings or error margins around estimates

<sup>25</sup> The source of the information provided by family/friends is unknown.

<sup>26</sup> On a scale of 1 (completely uninformed) to 5 (very well-informed), the average rating for “LPV system” was virtually unchanged (from 3.5 to 3.6); the same is true for “Composition of Parliament” (from 3.1 to 3.2).

media/advertising campaign, and it is not clear if they are statistically significant. For example, 52% of attendees felt confident about “Ballot papers/How to vote” compared with 47% of non-attendees.

4.64 **Impact of voter awareness activities on voter behaviour is unproven.** The media/advertising campaign and CSO community awareness activities in both 2007 and 2012 included messages designed to motivate voters to enrol, vote, adhere to ethical conduct, to counter fraudulent behaviour at polling places, as well as to promote gender equity and inclusion and management of HIV/AIDs risks.

4.65 The view was expressed to the evaluation that voter awareness activities – particularly CSO community awareness events – have been instrumental in improving voter behaviour and reducing violence. The 2008 evaluation presented anecdotal evidence that combined community awareness activities led to the election of three candidates who did not use money politics in Chimbu, the reduction of campaign houses and the commitment of women candidates following a Papua Hahine workshop to share preferences as a way of getting at least one woman in the Highlands into power. The more general conclusion from that evaluation however was that, while CSO members reported changing their own behaviour, one-off visits to communities did not have a significant effect. The fact that much CSO work happened late in the day in 2012 would further reduce the likelihood of a transformative effect.

4.66 It is entirely plausible that face-to-face awareness events may influence and inspire some individuals but there is little evidence available to suggest this has happened on a larger scale. Certainly, international and domestic observer reports do not indicate significant improvement in behaviours. Most psychological and behavioural research would indicate that cultural expectations and peer pressure are far more likely to drive behaviour than an awareness-raising event every five years.

4.67 But this discussion begs the question about what can be realistically expected? For us, attributing reductions in, say, election-related violence to community awareness activities suggests the approach may be premised on some misguided assumptions:

- there is an automatic relationship between voter understanding and improved behaviour;
- the interests, needs and demands of voters are homogeneous;
- elections conducted according to the ‘rules’ offer more desirable outcomes for voters;
- a focus on capacity building around election delivery processes will therefore effect change.

4.68 At best, the effect of face-to-face awareness on behaviour is likely to be small, which argues for better links with a wider program of community empowerment and clearer objectives, distinguishing between short-term voter education needs and longer-term attitudinal change. The uncertain impact also argues for greater consideration of cost-effectiveness. For example, the 2008 evaluation conducted five case studies, which highlighted different delivery models and methods for providing face-to-face awareness activities. At the same time, data from 2007 indicate unit costs of delivering CSO awareness activities varied from K1 to K100 per attendee. However, it seems that little analysis of this sort was undertaken. Finally, it suggests that targeting may improve effectiveness, with for example, face-to-face community awareness for specific audiences less well suited to mass media channels. Certainly in both 2007 and 2012, feedback from CSOs suggests that remote rural areas continue to be underserved by any form of voter awareness initiative.

4.69 These changes would require further refinement and articulation of the PNGEC Communications Strategy.

## **PNGEC capacity development**

4.70 Capacity building within PNGEC has remained a key objective of Australian aid throughout the period under review. Analysis of progress reports and financial records suggests some \$25-\$30 million (nominal) of Australian aid has been spent on capacity building in PNGEC over the period. This is approximate and based on simplifying assumptions<sup>27</sup> but considered a reasonable estimate. Support to build PNGEC capacity has been provided in a variety of ways, including provision of equipment (in particular for IT) and production of

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<sup>27</sup> For example, no part of the ACC or ADF assistance involved capacity building; advisers did not substitute for PNGEC capacity outside of election times.

materials, but in value terms the most significant channel has been technical assistance covering training, workshops, study tours, research/reviews and advisory support, both long- and short-term.

4.71 In reviewing the performance of Australian aid we consider two related aspects of PNGEC's capacity:

- The first is capacity to engage externally – to cooperate with, influence and establish new productive relationships with stakeholders, who themselves influence PNGEC's ability to achieve its objectives;
- The second is internal capacity – to fulfil the functions and responsibilities expected of PNGEC as an electoral management body.

4.72 We note that PNGEC capacity is different from (and narrower) than institutional development of the wider electoral "system"<sup>28</sup> (we discuss Australia's approach to the latter in Section 5).

#### Key findings: external relations

4.73 Electoral processes involve a wide range of stakeholders, the actions of whom have a significant bearing on PNGEC's ability to operate effectively. This might be directly, through, for example, central agencies' decisions about the level of PNGEC appropriations for election events; or indirectly, through candidates' attempts to influence voters, which in turn may impact on PNGEC's ability to ensure voting is free and fair. Poor coordination across relevant organisations was widely recognised as a significant problem in the 2002 national elections. Indeed, the 2003 AusAID review team concluded that:

*"the [then] Commissioner would not discuss plans for the election with the highest levels of government, on the grounds that it might compromise his independence... while the PNGEC has, rightly, placed a high onus on preserving its independence as required by the Constitution, in the process it seems to have become isolated and lacking in accountability to both the government of the day and to the broader community."*<sup>29</sup>

4.74 **The period since 2002 has been characterised by greater external engagement by PNGEC**, increased awareness of the importance of external partnerships in delivering elections and growing confidence within PNGEC in managing those relationships. Independent observers have identified improved coordination between GoPNG agencies as one of the areas of improvement in elections since 2002. In the time available, we have not analysed in detail the various factors that have contributed to this positive shift, but there have been some important factors, beyond Australian support, such as:

- A much greater willingness to engage on the part of many PNG stakeholders, motivated by the strong desire to avoid a repeat of 2002 national elections experience;
- The appointment of the current Electoral Commissioner injected a change in attitude at the top of PNGEC;
- The appointment of the Chair of the Inter-departmental Election Committee – an advocate of greater coordination – to the post of Chief Secretary in GoPNG (and Chair of the Central Agencies' Coordinating Committee) was also an important positive development.

4.75 **Australian aid also appears to have made an important contribution to PNGEC's capacity to engage externally.**

4.76 Some assistance was provided between 2002-05, including support for the national committee set up to manage the Southern Highlands Province supplementary elections (2003), which by all accounts worked well. The approach, however, was not institutionalised and levels of coordination declined (particularly with civil society) in subsequent by-elections.

4.77 The main thrust of support to external engagement came with the advent of ESP Phase 2 from late 2005. Greater coordination across government and civil society was an explicit design principle and ambition of the phase. For the purposes of the evaluation, we have looked at four particular priority areas: engagement and coordination with central agencies, provincial governments and with civil society, as well with

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<sup>28</sup> "System" is used here in a general sense to refer to the the mix of actors, organisations, and formal and informal rules that govern how electoral processes operate; it also has a narrower, more technical meaning in terms of the methods used to translate votes into representatives (e.g. FPTP, LPV).

<sup>29</sup> Review of Australia's electoral assistance program to PNG, Report of the AusAID Review Team, January 2003, p.22

the RPNGC. Strengths and weaknesses of Australian assistance in each area are considered in more detail in **Annex E**. In summary:

- Without Australian aid, PNGEC would certainly have engaged with the Inter-Departmental Election Committee (IDEC), which pre-dated Phase 2. Australian support for organising, structuring and back-stopping coordination activities around IDEC has, however, made a positive difference to the quality of PNGEC's engagement, enabled PNGEC to secure support from IDEC members for important developments (e.g. decentralised election financing mechanisms) and has likely led to better coordination among GoPNG agencies around major election events.
- The development of PNGEC's relations with civil society over the period also represents a success for Australian aid. Prior to 2005, there was limited engagement and little recognition of the role of civil society in elections within PNGEC. Australian aid supported a major face-to-face, community awareness program in 2007 using civil society groups for the first time. It also engaged civil society groups to develop and refine awareness materials and resources. Supported by the Program, the period after 2007 was characterised by increasing ownership of the initiative by PNGEC and of the concept of a civil society network. The shift achieved is evidenced by the civil society awareness program managed by PNGEC's Information, Communications and Awareness Branch (ICAB) for the 2012 elections, involving more than twice as many civil society groups as in 2007.
- There are, however, some caveats to this generally positive picture: The evidence suggests that when faced with indifference or obstruction, Australian aid has not been able to force the pace of external engagement – the unsuccessful efforts to convene IDEC in 2009 provide a clear illustration of this, but other opportunities for better coordination, such as submission of joint election budgets (with potential for efficiency savings) and conduct of joint reviews and debriefs have also not been realised. Delays in PNGEC's election planning have also limited the extent of coordination achieved in practice. In general, IDEC has not yet provided a vehicle to drive joint-working and greater shared accountability across GoPNG for elections.
- In a similar vein, the civil society network has been promoted but it is relatively under-developed at this point, with engagement for many members episodic and largely contractual in nature. CSOs in PNG are typically weak but PNGEC and GoPNG attitudes towards the value of their involvement vary across provinces, as does the capacity of CSOs to engage; work is still on-going to build broader acceptance of the need for civil society engagement. And in spite of significant progress in ICAB, capacity constraints are still an issue: delays in mobilising CSOs in the field for the 2012 awareness program appears to have limited effectiveness of the face-to-face awareness program in some areas.
- Australian aid has also supported efforts to establish better bilateral relations between the police (RPNGC), as lead agency on election security, and PNGEC. Advisory support and convening functions (joint workshops, conferences, etc.) have contributed significantly to joint RPNGC-PNGEC election security planning, and improvements in implementation (with better communications), compared with 2002. Better organised security has been a key factor explaining the experiences in major election events since 2002. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go to achieve an optimal level of coordination, with delays in PNGEC's own planning processes continuing to have adverse effects. The broader topics of tackling electoral offences and the appropriate conduct of the Police during elections have received limited attention by the Australian aid.
- There is some evidence of improvements in coordination between PNGEC and provincial-level government since 2002. Prior to the 2007 national elections, provincial election committees operated on an ad hoc basis and not PNG-wide. Australian aid has assisted formalise Provincial Election Steering Committees (PESCs), helping to define their terms of reference and membership. It has supported email systems for provincial Election Managers and the production of a regular elections newsletter from HQ. It also funded local, regionally-based, 'whole-of-government coordination advisers' in 2012 to improve the flow of information between the provinces and the centre. They seem to have had some success in this regard, though their impact on the PESCs appears to have been marginal. More generally, improvements in provinces appear heavily dependent on the mindset and capacity of Provincial Administrations and Election Managers. Provincial level engagement on elections was an area of weakness identified by the independent evaluation of ESP Phase 2, but this prompted only limited action by Australian aid; the limited progress noted by this evaluation team is therefore not surprising.

4.78 The differential experiences of engaging with civil society on voter awareness and provincial authorities on election delivery provide useful insights into the conditions affecting the success of capacity building efforts. The context surrounding civil society involvement was (and is) far more favourable than the challenge of bridging the centre–provincial divide in PNG. There is also greater acceptance of the value of the concept – even the most unsavoury candidate needs voters to understand how actually to vote – compared with the more contested arena of election administration (and the political interests involved). The quality and commitment of the core ICAB team<sup>30</sup> in taking the process on within PNGEC has also been a factor. While there are clearly some very capable provincial Election Managers, who have supported well-functioning PESCs, the picture is necessarily more variable. Finally, Australian aid has provided significant funding for civil society engagement, in the form of advisers but also crucially in meeting the operating costs associated with the engagement to implement plans. Provincial-level engagement has not received comparable, sustained assistance.

#### Key findings: PNGEC internal capacity development

4.79 It is a misconception to think of a PNG national election as one event: in practice there are 111 elections, implemented by the Returning Officers in each constituency. At election time, PNGEC is basically the organisational structure that provides these Officers with the funds, ballots, ballot boxes and other materials needed to implement the task. Notwithstanding the essentially simple nature of the task, a joint PNGEC-AEC review of the 2002 national election found that PNGEC fell short in a number of areas of its election preparations, in particular in planning, monitoring, internal and external communications, financial management, organisational management, staff supervision, and decision making.

4.80 As a result, the design of ESP Phase 2 broadened the focus and distinguished explicitly between capacity specifically for planning and conducting elections, and organisational capacity in PNGEC. The substantive difference between these two objectives is not particularly clear to us, though it seems the former was intended to include the capacity of other stakeholders involved in the electoral process. In practice, capacity-building primarily focused on both elections-specific functions and ‘back office’, corporate functions in PNGEC.

4.81 Australian aid was used to support activities in a wide range of areas, the most significant of which were: electoral roll management; election planning (and review); financial management; ITC systems; staff recruitment and performance management; strategic/corporate planning and reporting; and staff development. Capacity building efforts have also taken a number of different forms: introducing new or improved policies and systems; developing skills of individual members of staff and teams; promoting new ways of working internally; and supporting increases in established capacity.

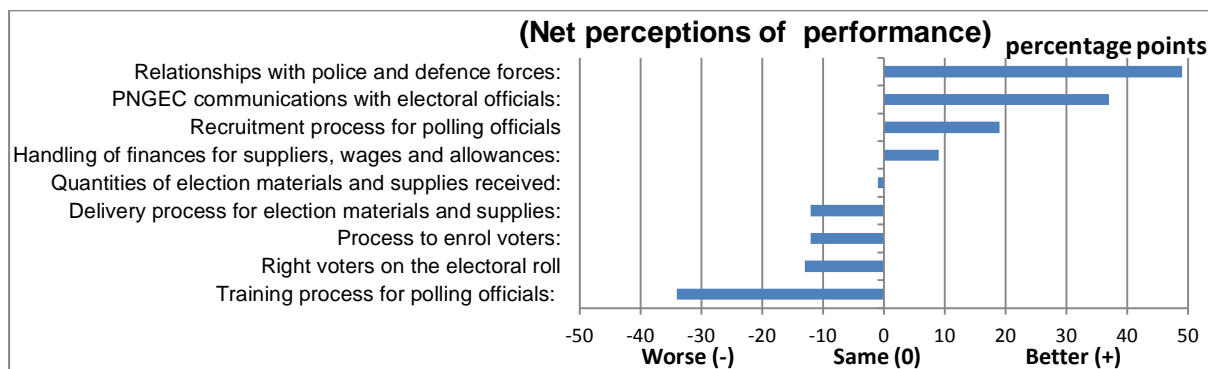
4.82 **In each area, the support provided has had positive impacts within PNGEC and in some cases these impacts are enduring.** Specific strengths and weaknesses are considered in more detail in **Annex F**. In particular, Australian aid has assisted PNGEC expand its capacity, through a restructuring process that increased the permanent staff complement by some 20 posts (or nearly 50 per cent). Australian aid also funded provincial accountants for the 2007 election that were subsequently incorporated into PNGEC’s election budget in 2012. Improvements in PNGEC’s financial management systems are evident; while changes to corporate processes appear to have enabled some in PNGEC to strengthen branch management processes and provided the opportunity to broaden and improve the selection of temporary election staff. Given adequate and timely funding, a supportive external environment and leeway for postponements and adjustment in the electoral schedule, PNGEC should have the capacity to organise future elections with limited or no external support. However, existing capacity is relatively fragile and, as discussed earlier in the report, effectiveness remains conditional on deeper institutional factors.

4.83 **But the overall conclusion of the evaluation team is that, in spite of these steps, the degree of improvement evident in PNGEC capacity is not commensurate with the effort invested.** Indeed, the results of PNGEC staff survey, conducted as part of the post-election review process, suggest that in a number of important areas of election implementation, PNGEC went backwards compared to performance in 2007 (figure 4.2).

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<sup>30</sup> We note that Australian aid supported individual development of a number of these through BRIDGE training.

**Figure 4.2: Assessment of 2012 election implementation, compared with 2007**



- Many of the problems limiting PNGEC effectiveness are not related to the complexity of the task required of them or fixable by improvements in systems, structure or skills/job match. Deep-seated institutional issues have had a significant effect on the degree of ownership of capacity-building initiatives. However, the challenges (at both HQ and in the provinces) around organisational culture, leadership, strategy, management practices and the incentives affecting staff motivation have received limited attention from Australian aid.
- Related to the above is the fact that there has been no comprehensive diagnostic assessment of capacity constraints within PNGEC. An organisational assessment was undertaken in 2006 but the results appear to have evaporated. There have been no detailed assessments that distinguish between what to do, when and how, (the subject of strategies and plans) and implementation requirements (i.e. what is needed to make things actually happen). In some cases, it may be an issue of funds or resources or timely access to those; in some cases, it may be staff ability, in which case implementation may take longer; in other cases the problem may be lack of inclination or interest, which may or may not be tractable with alternative incentives.
- The operating model adopted for delivery of capacity building support did not favour a focused approach that could be paced appropriately. Support involved a relatively large number of long-term advisers (LTAs)<sup>31</sup>. But effectiveness was at times undermined by unplanned (and planned) absenteeism of PNGEC staff, and poor knowledge transfer by some advisers. A facility was also used to fund project proposals under a broad set of 'strategic priorities' but the risk with such an instrument is that it encourages a project rather than organisational focus and that less effective projects are funded to maintain acceptable disbursement levels. At the same time, the combination of strategic, senior advisers (with limited election-specific knowledge) and relatively limited PNGEC operating funds in between elections has encouraged Australian aid to focus on senior levels in HQ, rather than engagement of the broader officer base, notably in the provinces, which is where elections are delivered.
- Finally, the (implicit) model of organisational development that Australian aid worked to was quite general and well-suited to a public sector body involved in routine functions, but less well-tailored to an organisation that oscillates between 70 and 30,000 employees on a 5-year cycle. It is true that PNGEC has to comply with GoPNG central planning and institutional requirements, and Australian support has been instrumental in assisting it do so. Nevertheless, we found little evidence of wider learning from relevant organisations such as humanitarian/disaster relief agencies that also face the dual challenge of operating at scale at times, while maintaining capability during periods of relative inactivity.

<sup>31</sup> From 2006-2011, an average equivalent of 5.5 LTAs per year, compared with total PNGEC staff of about 70.

## 5. Approach of Australian aid

### Design of assistance

5.1 We encountered a number of issues regarding broad design aspects of Australian assistance that, in part, have contributed to the observed results discussed in the previous chapter. We have already highlighted the problem posed for the evaluation by the lack of clear, measurable objectives for Australian aid over the period (section 2). But in reality it is a more serious limitation for implementation. The objectives as stated provided only limited direction for the provision of assistance or focus for on-going review. The use of broad 'components' in place of specific objectives, or the reliance on general statements such as 'build capacity', in our view did not enable the sort of performance discussions and challenge needed in any long-term program of assistance.

5.2 A second feature has been the predominant focus on the capacity of PNGEC. A key critique of ESP phase 1 was that it was too narrowly focused on technical support within PNGEC, with insufficient attention to wider political, social and cultural factors. Phase 2 design envisaged a broadening of the engagement, which to some extent occurred with respect to GoPNG election coordination and CSO involvement in voter awareness. But these engagements have, nevertheless, been *through* PNGEC. In contrast, Phase 2 design advocated a more mixed model, whereby the Program would engage directly with other stakeholders to strengthen aspects of the electoral process in PNG. It is not clear to us why support reverted to a predominantly PNGEC-based model.

5.3 On a related point, the Phase 2 design document identified issues of absorptive capacity within PNGEC and thus proposed support that would be more closely targeted to PNGEC's needs and capacity, most likely requiring fewer advisers. The document advocated a model that was based on a long-term Program Manager/Senior Adviser who would coordinate a series of short-term deployments of specialist advisers to achieve specific goals, "rather than a permanent team of advisers working on capacity building". But in practice, the latter is largely how Australian aid has been delivered. Again, the reason for shifting from the original design intentions is not clear. But we believe that the concerns about PNGEC's absorptive capacity were well-founded and the failure to take these on board adversely affected the cost-effectiveness of capacity building efforts.

5.4 Finally, a key feature of assistance to PNGEC since 2005 has been the demand-led nature of assistance. This has been most noticeable with the introduction of a facility function in ESP Phase 2, but it has also been a driver of support under the Twinning Program. The approach has potential advantages in terms of flexibility and responsiveness and may increase scope for partner involvement and control. A sensible level of flexibility is a pre-requisite of any assistance, but the fit with this mode of assistance and the long-term capacity development needs in PNGEC (which are not particularly fluid) is less clear<sup>32</sup>. In practice, it has resulted in a relatively large number of 'mini-projects' active at any one time, with limited attention to review on completion. It has proved difficult to relate and track the multiple activities supported in this manner to a coherent and timebound organisational change program.

### Approach to the electoral cycle

5.5 Electoral assistance is a relatively new activity. Support to elections expanded in the early 1990s, closely following the decline in states operating single-party systems. In the initial years, all support was concentrated around the electoral event. Very limited support was provided in the years between elections or to other related activities. However, it was soon recognised that such support was not sufficient to ensure the sustainability of subsequent electoral processes or independence and transparency of the Electoral Management Body (EMB).

5.6 This understanding underpins the electoral cycle approach. Endorsed by both UNDP and the EC, the approach proposes a longer term and more holistic commitment, which aims to align electoral assistance with all stages of the electoral process, from planning and registration in the pre-election period, through

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<sup>32</sup> Phase 2 proposed this mode as part of the envisaged wider engagement by the program, to enable it to respond to the demands and opportunities for electoral reform that this broader approach might throw up.

campaigning and voting, to reviewing, reforming and developing in the post-election period. The electoral cycle approach also aims to direct aid as necessary to all the actors, whose effective participation in elections is essential for a democratic outcome. That is likely to include political parties, the media and civil society, as well as state institutions. The emphasis is on capacity building as well as specific measures for cross-cutting issues such as the participation of women.

### Key findings

#### Box 5.1: Electoral Cycle

##### Pre-election period (c. about 18 months before elections)

- Planning (budgeting and financing, definition of election schedules, recruitment of temporary personnel, procurement of election items, planning of logistics and security)
- Training and education (training for election officials, civic education, voter information)
- Registration and nominations (usual voter registration final surge, registration of parties and candidates, observers accreditation)
- Management of the election campaign (party financing, media access, development and agreement on codes of conduct)

##### Election Period (c. one month<sup>1</sup>)

- Logistics related to voting and Election Day
- Vote counting, tabulation and verification of results
- Processing and adjudication of complaint and appeals

##### Post Election Period (a little over three years in PNG)

- Evaluations and Audits
- Reform of the Electoral Approach in those aspects depending on the PNGEC
- Development, Submission and Lobbying on Legal Framework Review Proposals
- Voters' Registration (if continuous registration) or periodic updates through enumerators or shortly before the elections
- Organizational review
- Institutional strengthening and professional development
- Review of boundaries

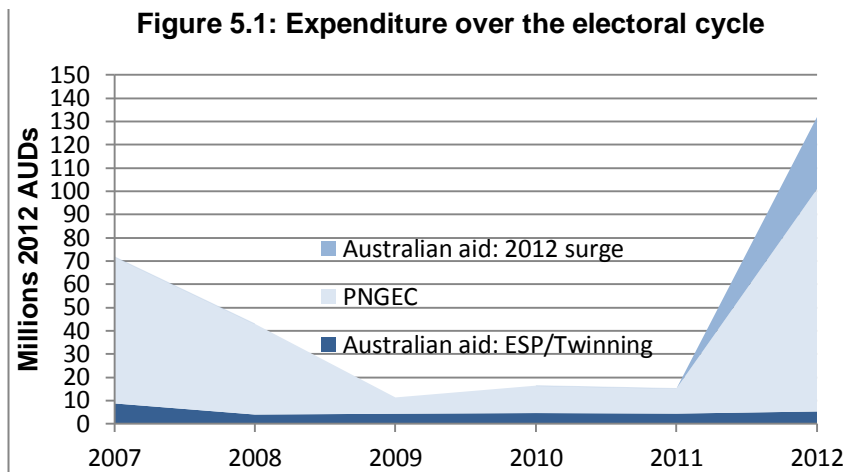
Note: 1 - processing of complaints/appeals may take longer

5.7 The approach usually divides the electoral cycle into three periods, each characterized by different activities, not all of which will be the responsibility of the EMB (see Box 5.1 for an approximate depiction). While Australian aid to the 2002 elections was more limited, support was provided across two completed electoral cycles for the 2007 and 2012 elections.

5.8 **Alignment of Australian aid with the electoral cycle was weak in a number of respects.** A key characteristic of the electoral cycle is the difference in resources (both human and material) at different stages of the cycle. Some activities are resource intensive, particularly voting/counting and registration. Others, like planning, might involve communications across the whole organization, but central responsibility usually belongs to a small group. Some activities, like the review of boundaries, require specialized knowledge, while others like voter registration (in its implementation phase<sup>33</sup>) and voting can be performed by

most persons with limited training. In some countries, a significant part of donor support is directed to the resource-intensive stages, and donors cover the cost of printing the ballots, or paying the cost of registration and polling officers.

Figure 5.1: Expenditure over the electoral cycle



5.9 Figure 5.1 highlights the expenditure variation over the electoral cycle (2007-2012). It also shows that with the exception of the significant ADF/ACC surge in 2012, the amounts of Australian aid provided through ESP 2 and 3 over the period were very similar throughout the period, irrespective of the stage

of the electoral cycle. Support remained focused on largely the same objectives: improving the capacity of the PNGEC; reform of electoral policy and improvement of the electoral system; and improving awareness and understanding of the electoral system, by voters and the community.

<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, design and planning of the registration process require significant knowledge and skills.



5.10 The type of support did change, switching from “hands-on” election assistance in 2007 to “transformational” activities (workshops, training, development of plans, etc.) in the inter-elections period. But alignment with post-election activities typically conducted in the electoral cycle is mixed (table 5.1). Furthermore, the funding provided seems somewhat disproportionate. For instance, in 2009 Australian aid was around 50% of PNGEC’s total budget. At the same time, given the decrease in electoral activities, it proved difficult to get the interest of partners. For instance, plans for 2009 emphasised support to IDEC, but IDEC did not convene throughout the year

**Table 5.1: Summary of Australian support during post-elections (2007/8) phase**

Area	Main activities
Evaluations and Audits	Evaluation of the 2007 election was conducted in late 2007 and the 2008 LLG elections in late 2008. No major activity during 2009-10
Reform of aspects of the electoral approach dependent on PNGEC	The analysis of the reforms to the electoral approach was contracted out; main role of Australian aid was funding.
Submission and Lobbying of Legal Framework Review Proposals	Australian aid was not involved in the submission and lobbying on reforms to the legal framework.
Voters’ Registration	A number of proposals developed with Australian support, but registration was not effectively conducted.
Review of boundaries	Not undertaken, no ESP support
Organizational review	ESP developed activities in this area, particularly in relation to the Direction of Operations.
Institutional strengthening and professional development	The main focus of efforts, supporting a range of activities (workshops, training, establishment of action working groups, etc.) during 2009-10

5.11 In other respects, we found evidence of weaknesses in the alignment with the cycle

- The decision to formally retender the Electoral Support Program when transitioning from Phase 2 to 3 meant that there were some four months during the pre-election period in late 2010, early 2011, when there was little or no assistance available for crucial preparatory work;
- The objectives of Phase 3 remained very similar to the Phase 2 in the post-election phase, in spite of the fact that Phase 3 was relatively short and focused on the 2012 elections; there was little surge capacity for implementation support planned or included in ESP Phase 3 or the Twinning program with AEC;
- The make-up of Phase 3 advisory expertise also seemed counter-intuitive given the immediacy of the national election, with three different advisers occupying the adviser position on Gender and HIV/AIDs due to leave requirements, two M&E positions (one full-time, one part-time), one full-time specialist on corporate planning, and only one election operations adviser. Furthermore, no advisory support was available for ‘corporate’ functions such as HR and training, in spite of the fact that at election time, more than 30,000 people have to be recruited and trained.

5.12 We understand that design of Phase 3 was in part influenced by the findings of the 2010 Review of the PNG-Australia Development Cooperation Treaty and the Joint Adviser Review – in particular, the recommendation to reduce reliance on technical assistance. We are not questioning the sense of the 2010 Review’s recommendation; indeed, it may well be appropriate to re-orientate and reduce the level of technical assistance provided over the electoral cycle. But how that change is implemented matters enormously in different settings. The significant demands in the build up to a national election are well-known.

5.13 **Engagement with other actors and stakeholders involved in electoral cycle activities was limited.** In the case of PNG, there are many stakeholders in the electoral system: electoral law reform can be assisted through support to the relevant commission in parliament; it may be necessary to work with political parties and/or the organisation responsible for accreditation to address campaign behavioural issues; for new ID documentation (for an electoral roll), support might be provided to whoever is in charge of issuing the new document and/or the related inter-government commissions; the judiciary or other bodies in charge of complaints and appeals might be included; advisory support might be provided to the Ministry of Education to work on early electoral education, to the Treasury and Finance to help them understand specific needs of the electoral process; to security agencies to promoting coordination and joint planning; and so on.

5.14 There have been some notable developments: we have already referred to the engagement of civil society groups for voter awareness activities. Australian aid also funded domestic election observers (for the first time), which has promoted transparency and provided information for a later evaluation (though we note potential conflict of interest in either PNGEC or ESP providing the funds directly).

5.15 **Our overall sense is that the potential connections and value offered by AusAID's broad program in PNG were not realised in the context of electoral assistance.** Over the review period, Australian aid has engaged with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, though largely in relation to other activities with limited read across to electoral assistance objectives. We make two observations in this regard:

- The relevance or importance of strengthening electoral systems in PNG is not discussed in the Australia-PNG Partnership for Development document; nor does AusAID's Democratic Governance Strategy articulate how electoral support fits into the wider process of democratic development and its relationship with other Australian aid activities focused on voice and accountability with civil society or capacity development for other key institutions (parliament, media).
- An Electoral Support Program could address multiple institutional issues of democratic governance and involve multiple actors; however, locating it within the EMB, almost inevitably means that efforts will be concentrated on that organization, even if support could have provided more usefully elsewhere, while at the same time the approach to working with other actors will be constrained by concerns about political impartiality and independence of the EMB.

## Coordination of Australian aid

5.16 In the lead up to the 2012 national elections, there was significant whole-of-government coordination among Australian agencies with a role or interest in the election. We have not examined the effectiveness of the approach, but the accounts received suggest they were comprehensive and functioned well. A Canberra-based Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) was established in December 2011, comprising at various stages, DFAT, PM&C, ONA, DIO, ADF, AFP, AGD, AusAID (including ACC), and AEC. In parallel, and with an earlier establishment date, the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby convened a cross-agency committee which met regularly throughout the run-up to the election. By early 2012, IDC meetings routinely involved a hook-up with the High Commission in Port Moresby.

5.17 It is understood that both committees tracked political developments in PNG closely, especially during the periods of greatest momentum to delay the elections. The IDC coordinated advice for Cabinet level review in Canberra. Following a visit in February, the AEC briefed both committees on the findings of the 'Election Support Observation Team' which helped inform decision about the areas of support to deploy. The High Commission also engaged in operational coordination, notably in relation to the ADF deployments, infrastructure support for communications delivered by AFP and ACC deployment, as well as observation groups coordination during the polling period.

5.18 **On the face of it many aspects of the whole-of-government coordination in the run up to the 2012 election appear exemplary.** In the opinion of AEC, both committees, by virtue of their broad bases, their regularity and clear focus, provided effective forums for information sharing and cross-government coordination. We also note the specific inputs provided by the AusAID-funded Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen program and the Law and Justice Partnership for community awareness and training.

5.19 **We found much less evidence of coordination and coherence in the years in between elections.** Linkages between ESP and the Twinning Program, the two programs providing support to PNGEC, were relatively weak. ESP operated through a program board with, in principle, broad representation and the scope to influence Australian support. There was an AEC representative on this, but in practice the board was not heavily engaged in determining direction and attendance (by other PNG stakeholders) sporadic. In contrast, because of the organisational nature of the Twinning arrangement, the Electoral Commissioner and AEC could discuss options for support with limited ESP involvement. The level of coordination achieved can be characterised as avoiding overlap or duplication, rather than an active pooling of knowledge and joint strategising. For example, both ESP and Twinning provided training support for specific areas of staff development. They avoided overlap and duplication, but both employed different approaches to training and used different resources; they did not form a single view about critical short-comings in PNGEC and did not work from a joint staff development strategy.

5.20 **The finding about limited coordination in between elections applies more broadly to joint working between AusAID and DFAT.** International experience in the provision of electoral assistance highlights the inter-relationship between diplomatic/political, financial and technical support before, during and after elections. Good practice emphasises the importance of a coherent engagement to ensure that financial and technical assistance dovetails with diplomatic influence across the whole electoral cycle. We understand that Australian government agencies do meet regularly to coordinate around key themes of engagement, including “effective governance”. However, to date, there has been little joint working between AusAID and DFAT around electoral assistance outside of a specific national election event.

5.21 To the evaluation team at least, there would be significant potential value in closer working between AusAID, DFAT and AEC. Having a common, structured process for understanding the political context would assist with identification of key risks in the electoral process and with joint strategising to develop mitigation measures. However, this sort of joint approach is not routine

5.22 The importance of clear and consistent objectives for Australian support to electoral systems is the all the greater in PNG. Almost all major electoral support programmes are provided jointly with international partners. In PNG, Australia stands largely alone. The scale and nature of the assistance provided in 2012, albeit in response to particular circumstances at the time, has probably only served to increase the moral hazard risks faced by Australia around national elections in PNG. In these circumstances, general objectives relating to “strengthening the capacity of PNGEC” or “improving electoral processes” are probably not a sufficiently developed position.

5.23 Notwithstanding the need for realism, AusAID and DFAT have not developed a common view on objectives and role of Australian in the longer-term for strengthening electoral processes – what’s the balance between positive and preventative. There would also be merit in considering explicitly the level of financial and human resources that Australia is willing to commit to an election well in advance and using both aid and diplomatic channels to communicate with PNG stakeholders.

## Approach to cross-cutting issues

5.24 Australian aid promotes a strong focus on equality and inclusiveness; this has been reflected in the attention paid to cross-cutting issues in electoral processes during the review period: primarily on gender equity but also on HIV/AIDS risks around elections and broader issues of discrimination and stigma. More recently, Australian aid has supported PNGEC to engage on the rights of people with disability (PWD).

5.25 International standards require electoral rights to be provided to every adult citizen without distinction. In practice, women experience severe discrimination in PNG, including widespread violence, which largely curtails any opportunity for meaningful exercise of political rights on a basis of equality with men. While statistics on the involvement of people with disabilities (PWDs) in electoral processes are not available, discrimination and problems of access (particularly in rural areas) are thought to severely limit their participation also.

5.26 HIV is a growing concern in Papua New Guinea. The national prevalence among adults is estimated to be 0.9 per cent<sup>34</sup>. Elections in PNG are recognised as high-risk periods for HIV infection. The nature of campaign practices, increased movement of people within provinces, and stationing of large numbers of (mostly male) casual poll workers, Police, and Defence Force personnel, contribute to an increased vulnerability to HIV infection at election time.

5.27 In reviewing the approach to cross-cutting issues, we have considered the extent to which Australian aid has:

- influenced the policies and practices of PNGEC;
- enable disadvantaged groups to exercise their rights;
- promoted the rights of disadvantaged groups among the wider population; and
- supported greater political representation for disadvantaged groups.

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<sup>34</sup> Papua New Guinea’s National HIV and AIDS Strategy 2011-2015 (NHS), p.15.

5.28 **Annex G** presents the strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken. The following section summarises our key findings.

Key findings

5.29 **Australian aid has assisted PNGEC to integrate cross-cutting issues into its own policies and practices.** The progress made to date by PNGEC in this respect represents a strength, in ensuring its relevance to the broader development context in PNG. While the progress has been heavily dependent on the commitment of PNGEC senior management to these issues, Australian aid has been instrumental in assisting with these changes. Implementation is still on-going, but PNGEC nevertheless compares well in this area.

5.30 The attention given in PNGEC to gender balance among permanent and temporary staff is in line with greater emphasis internationally on women as election staff and voters, and not just on women in parliament. Few election management bodies in developing democracies are actively considering implementation of a gender policy that includes staffing issues. Training for election officials now includes gender specific awareness issues as well as HIV/AIDS and disability and women now have a more significant role in delivery of training.

5.31 Similarly, on the inclusion of HIV/AIDS, PNG is among a small number of countries where this issue is taken seriously in relation to elections and being fully mainstreamed into election work. Likewise, the PNGEC is among the leaders in work to ensure disability is not a barrier to election participation.

5.32 **With Australian assistance, PNGEC has undertaken a range of activities to promote equality, inclusiveness and HIV risk management practices around elections.** The core resource manual for election awareness training, developed with ESP assistance, mainstreams cross-cutting issues through all aspects and specifically includes sections on gender equity, HIV/AIDS and rights of people with disabilities. Voter awareness campaigns have emphasised equality and inclusiveness, and highlighted STI risks with unsafe sexual activity. Australian aid has assisted PNGEC develop relationships with a range of organisations, such as National AIDS Council (NAC), National HIV and AIDS Training Unit, Department of Education, National Advisory Committee on Disability and with donor programs.

5.33 Effective delivery of these messages, however, is largely conditional on PNGEC delivery capacity more generally and delays during 2012 reduced the amount of training provided to polling officials, especially on cross-cutting issues, and delayed mobilisation of CSOs to deliver face-to-face awareness activities with communities.

5.34 **Evidence of the impact of PNGEC initiatives to promote equity, inclusiveness and HIV risk management is limited.** The effectiveness of delivery and impact of cross-cutting messages in community awareness activities has not been assessed in detail by the Program. Nor have people’s reactions to messages about equity, inclusiveness and risky sexual behaviour delivered through the mass media or posters.

5.35 Results of the large-scale voter awareness survey supported by Australian aid in 2012, however, suggest a relatively low recall rate for equity and sexual health messages following CSO community awareness activities (table 5.2). It is unclear whether this is a recall problem or reflects non-coverage during the awareness event. (The fact that only a little more than half of respondents recalled hearing about the LPV system also raises questions).

**Table 5.2: Voter recall of community awareness messages**

Topic of discussion at CSO meeting	% of respondents recalling discussion
LPV system	54%
What good leadership is	49%
Understanding ballot papers/how to vote	35%
Governance issues	31%
Gender equality and inclusion	14%
Understanding HIV and AIDS	12%

Source: Voter Awareness Project, Tebbutt Research, PNGEC 2012

5.36 In terms of the impact on behaviour, the direct evidence is similarly scarce. The 2008 evaluation of CSO awareness activities presented anecdotal evidence that HIV/AIDS messages had resulted in reduced attendance at campaign houses but the reliability of these assessments are hard to judge. For example, the initiative to provide separate polling booths for men and women on a large scale in the 2012 national elections, while lauded, does not appear to have been implemented widely in practice.

5.37 Furthermore, we would also argue for realism about what is feasible for electoral assistance to achieve. For example, the 2008 evaluation noted that many people in remote areas had not heard any HIV infection prevention messages before community awareness activities for the 2007 election; it then, however, proposed that “[l]ong term it seems electoral awareness can be used as a hook to hang HIV/AIDS prevention messages. People want to come to hear about elections so this awareness draws large public crowds whereas HIV/AIDS prevention may not”.

5.38 **The issue of women’s political representation received little attention from the Electoral Support or Twinning Programs, though Australian aid has engaged through other means.** A range of possible initiatives could be supported in an attempt to level the playing fields for women aspirants: networks linking civil and political society; cross-party caucuses; capacity building opportunities; civic and voter education; access to information; campaigns; support for women’s movements; parliamentary strengthening activities; political party support; electoral reforms. These were not a feature of the assistance provided through ESP or Twinning during the period. AusAID has, however, funded UNDP’s Women in Leadership program that advocated for temporary women’s seats, UNIFEM’s work in the region and the Centre for Democratic Institutions, which provided training for women candidates.

5.39 Alongside this, we note also the relatively limited attention paid to local level government elections, where women’s representation is understood to be greater. Local level government may provide opportunities for women to gain experience and to build greater acceptance in the community. This appears to have been an omission in the approach.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

5.40 We are not aware of the detail of M&E activities conducted during ESP Phase 1 or under the Twinning Program (2005-12) , though regular activity reports were provided. For this reason, our findings are largely limited to Phase 2 and 3 of ESP. A number of monitoring and evaluation activities and initiatives have been supported during the course of the two phases:

- Provision of international (short-term) and local (long-term) monitoring and evaluation advisory support throughout phases 2 and 3 - including for the first year of Phase 2, an experienced elections analyst charged with assessing the broader context;
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework (MEF) for the Program, revised in 2008 and again in 2011;
- Running annual workshops with PNGEC and external stakeholders (2006-10) to receive feedback on progress and challenges and identify potential areas of work;
- Commissioning regular reviews of contractor performance (for at least part of Phase 2) conducted by a local consulting firm;
- Running post-election review workshops and questionnaires with PNGEC staff and other stakeholders after major election events;
- Conducting two questionnaire surveys (2007 and 2010) to seek feedback about achievements of ESP from stakeholders;
- Commissioning a major evaluation study in 2008 of the community awareness program delivered by civil society groups for the 2007 national elections;
- Funding a large-scale, rigorous survey of voter awareness for the 2012 national elections
- Progress reporting on a six-monthly basis.

5.41 In addition, AusAID commissioned an Independent Completion Report of ESP Phase 1 (2003) and Phase 2 (2010) and a mid-term desk-review of Phase 3 (2012).

#### Key findings

5.42 **The processes employed were useful in informing the Program about areas of progress, problematic areas and opportunities.** The findings from the annual workshops with stakeholders (summarised in the relevant six-monthly reports) appear to have provided useful feedback to the Program on the areas of greater or lesser progress. They also provided suggestions for improvements that were in a number of cases acted upon by ESP and PNGEC.

5.43 **But as a means to assess the effectiveness of activities supported by Australian aid, they had a number of limitations.** Little systematic use was made of the MEF as a basis for assessing and reporting progress. Progress reports have generally been long (typically over 70 pages), activity-focused and descriptive rather than diagnostic. To some extent this reflects the design of the MEF, which is largely silent about specific changes targeted under each component of program support.

5.44 Support for capacity building must be based on a results orientation: with the intended results the starting point for dialogue and clarity on the expected changes in capacity, performance and deliverables. However, even where performance indicators were specified<sup>35</sup>, six-monthly reports do not report achievement against the indicators. The revised MEF in 2008 elaborated more clearly the rationale and objectives of specific capacity-building activities supported by the program. But even then, the performance indicators identified were not routinely referred to in progress reports. Similarly, where indicators of improvement were either missed or unmoved, it is not clear what action was prompted in response. For example, between 2007 and 2012, the program's risk register reported every six months the unchanged, high risk posed by weak and variable capacity at a provincial level, though this does not appear to have prompted a consistent and sustained response.

5.45 With the exception of the large-scale voter awareness survey recently commissioned, most evaluative activities have used informal designs. At the same time, they have commonly attempted to answer broad questions around program effectiveness. As a consequence, results obtained have typically not been statistically reliable and have often provided only general insights into the desirability of the activities supported. The 2008 evaluation of CSO awareness-raising activities, in spite of its size, was no exception to this.

5.46 But even if rigorous, large-scale data collection exercises were not feasible for particular exercises, the approach taken could have been improved by reference to more formal designs. For example, the selection of respondents for the 2010 stakeholder questionnaire survey appears unsystematic, questionnaires were not pretested (with the result that some misunderstandings were evident in responses), non-PNGEC respondents were asked for their opinion on matters that they did not know about, the meaning of the mid-point on the response scale used was confusing, and there was limited analysis of differences in the views of the different stakeholder segments.

5.47 We are not convinced about the merit of asking simple and very general questions about the effectiveness of Australian aid in particular areas; this is particularly so in PNG where there is a general bias against being openly critical. At the same time, we found little evidence of the use of more 'fine-tuned' evaluative enquiries to test the efficacy of program strategies in different settings. For example, there might have been merit in examining which of the variety of methods and messages used in face-to-face community awareness activities worked better in different places.

5.48 **Australian aid has promoted analysis and learning within PNGEC but the approach should have been more methodical and tailored.** With program assistance, PNGEC has adopted analysis and prioritisation processes following electoral events as routine. Moreover, these processes in general have been participatory, involving a range of staff and external stakeholders. While this has been a positive achievement, the process employed has a number of weaknesses, limiting its effectiveness.

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<sup>35</sup> For example: "75% of participants trained by civil society groups demonstrate a good knowledge of LPV and how to complete a valid ballot paper"; "80% of milestones listed in the General Election 2007 Plan are completed by PNGEC staff on the due date"

- the most significant strengths and weaknesses are not identified or prioritised from the large number identified by participants;
- relatively little focus is given to the identification of improvement strategies, compared with the effort devoted to describing weaknesses (and strengths); and
- the process has not systematically drawn out differences in experience between locales.

5.49 This last point is particularly pertinent in the PNG context, given the significant variation between regions and provinces. More generally, we found very little explicit recognition of both the challenges and opportunities provided by this variation in the main program M&E products.

5.50 More generally, the Independent Completion Report for Phase 2 concluded that the program had made insufficient use of research as a tool to motivate behavioural change both within government and within [the] broader community. Given the range of high quality research available on electoral issues in PNG, the apparently limited incorporation of this into the program’s own work, and the limited amount of research initiated by the program, we tend to concur with the Completion Report’s finding.

**Box 5.2: Draft aid effectiveness principles for electoral assistance**

- Take the local context seriously
- Be alert to electoral risk
- Don’t misuse electoral aid
- Ground electoral aid in complementary diplomatic policies
- Recognise the role of regional organisations
- Embrace a full concept of ownership
- Build on donor coordination
- Be as comprehensive as possible
- Think and act across the electoral cycle
- Push for integration with wider democracy support
- Emphasise citizens’ understanding and engagement
- Include a focus on local elections
- Make connections to work on accountability
- Don’t neglect gender
- Respond more consistently to flawed elections
- Keep learning about impact, and act on it

*Source: OECD*

**Aid effectiveness and value for money**

5.51 The urgent, event-driven nature of electoral assistance and political sensitivities around support means that it can often be an area where relatively little attention is paid to aid effectiveness principles. OECD DAC has produced some draft principles for elections assistance (box 5.2). Many of these reiterate the principles expressed in the electoral cycle approach. But we have a few additional observations regarding the fit with the approach adopted by Australian aid.

5.52 The Electoral Support Program used a facility model to allocate funding annual, managed by the managing contractor (Cardno); this model has provided flexibility in the allocation of resources to tasks but in practice, it has tended to ‘projectise’ support into a number of discrete

activities. Maintaining a sustained focus on a few, longer-term objectives with a facility-based model is difficult. It appears that mechanisms to align PNGEC’s planning processes with activities supported under the facility generally worked, though we were told about cases where Program activities were added to Branch plans later in the year with little consultation. It is unclear whether there was scope to provide funds more ‘programmatically’ – for example in a fund that PNGEC managed, allocated and accounted for against an agreed budget and program of activities. It seems, however, that the decision to keep control within the Contractor’s responsibilities was not taken in response to any particular political sensitivities or explicit concerns about PNGEC capacity to fulfil this function, which might warrant tighter control over Australian funds.

5.53 On donor coordination, ordinarily one finds a plurality of donors providing assistance to different areas/stages of the electoral process, including observation. There is also typically a variety of coordination mechanisms, with working groups for the donors’ officers involved in electoral assistance, operational meetings involving those providing assistance and occasional meetings at Ambassador level.

5.54 The development partner election focus group, co-chaired by AusAID and the UNDP, met regularly before and during the 2012 election. But more generally, there are very few other donors active in electoral

assistance in PNG. USAID is one.<sup>36</sup> USAID operated two programmes: one, through the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which examined how public views can be incorporated into the work of political parties, civil society and others; the other was the Women Advocating for Voices in Government (WAVIG) program, implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and designed to address issues of women's participation and representation in politics. Operational coordination between these programs and Australian aid appears to have been relatively weak, with only occasional and limited contacts, centred on information exchange. In part this reflects timing issues, but we understand that AusAID is seeking greater engagement on these issues in the future.

5.55 We note that PNGEC has not actively sought larger-scale support from other donors to, for example, address limitations in GoPNG appropriations. In most EMBs, there is an identified position or unit in charge of external relations. We would strongly suggest that PNGEC consider this option and the possibility of exploring additional donor support from other sources in the future.

5.56 Finally, the Terms of reference asked the evaluation team to consider whether the aid provided represents value for money. A full VFM assessment has been beyond the scope of the team for this exercise, given the strategic as well as operational dimensions of such an analysis. But we offer the following observations:

- Overall assessment of VFM depends in part on assessing alternative possible investments in democratic development in PNG; AusAID's democratic governance program strategy does not articulate the different options considered;
- Without Australian aid, there would have been a greater likelihood of delays and other problems affecting polling, counting and results transmission. Views on the potential impact of such disruption range from not significant impact, to increased risk of violence, to constitutional crisis and civil unrest. Most commentators tend towards the more damaging end of the scale. The economic costs associated with civil strife, even if geographically isolated *might* make the investments in election delivery represent good VFM, but a more detailed analysis would be required to reach such a conclusion;
- The lack of integration of short-term assistance for election delivery in the broader capacity-building effort is, in our opinion, sub-optimal in VFM terms, given the limited scope for advance planning, dialogue and a structured/sequenced build-up of support;
- In terms of the sizeable level of assistance for *capacity building in PNGEC* specifically, our overall conclusion is that the return achieved represents relatively poor value for money. That is not to say that there have not been successes, but that cheaper modes of assistance – that did not, for example rely on long-term advisers in an organisation where absenteeism is a perennial problem – could in all likelihood have achieved the same results;
- Finally, the type of analysis and appraisal that is needed to underpin the 'management' of VFM has not been undertaken: e.g. quantification (if not monetization) of the scale of particular risks especially violence; estimation of cost per voter and benchmarking with international experience; the implementation of strategies to reduce election costs; less reliance on long-term advisers in a situation where absenteeism (planned and unplanned) is a perennial problem; and so on.

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<sup>36</sup> South Korea electoral commission provided laptops to PNGEC, New Zealand provided sea transport for island polling in Bougainville and in 2007, the EU supported the PNGEC media centre. These are positive developments to be encouraged.



## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 The evaluation findings indicate that Australian assistance has made some important contributions to electoral processes in PNG but overall results have been mixed. We do not underestimate the challenge of electoral assistance in the PNG context, but a number of broader conclusions can be drawn from our review regarding the effectiveness of Australian assistance:

- Australian assistance to electoral processes in PNG has been important over the period reviewed. As the major donor, Australia has provided continuing assistance to the process through AusAID and the AEC, and funding and personnel to PNG directly to support the holding of key elections.
- Nevertheless, the focus on building the organisational capacity of PNGEC, without sufficient attention to strengthening the broader institutional environment for elections, has not been an effective strategy. We say this not simply because the institutional environment, especially in the provinces, is far more significant in determining the conduct and integrity of the electoral process in PNG; but because the effectiveness of organisational capacity-building in PNGEC is also heavily conditioned by it.
- AusAID lacks a broader influencing strategy that articulates a long-term strategic and shared vision for the democratic and electoral processes in PNG, and the steps needed to get there. This is an inter-agency issue for Australia as well as a bilateral one with the PNG Government. Developing this will require clearer objectives for Australian assistance and more effective review mechanisms than have been established to date.
- The short-term operational assistance available from Australia to support implementation of elections in PNG needs to be better integrated with longer-term capacity building efforts across the electoral cycle. While the former has successfully supported PNGEC deliver key election tasks, it has been provided more as 'emergency' assistance. In order to maximise its value and minimise the potential risks, more forward planning is required.
- Finally, the approach to organisational capacity-building itself needs careful attention if it is to be cost-effective. It is important that the type and form of assistance is well matched to the conditions, needs and characteristics of the partner organisation.

6.2 In light of these conclusions, we offer a number of recommendations below to inform AusAID's thinking about Australian aid for electoral assistance in the future. These in the main look beyond the next 12 months, though to effect the changes proposed, action will be required in the short term. Given that there is an existing program of support and Local Level Government elections scheduled for 2013, AusAID will naturally wish to manage any transition period carefully. With this in mind, we suggest the following:

- Extend those aspects of the Electoral Support Program as required to support the Local Level Government (LLG) elections. The present ESP phase should be considered complete when the evaluation of the LLG elections is finished.
- In the meantime, AusAID should establish a multidisciplinary design team to develop a new engagement as soon as possible, comprising electoral specialists as well as experts from other relevant areas, such as civil society and the broader governance sector in PNG; in addition, the team would benefit from expertise in AusAID modalities, to ensure available design options are fully considered.
- We understand that formulation and approval of a new phase of electoral assistance might extend beyond the recommended conclusion of ESP. Any gap, however, is likely to be short and could be covered by extension/adaptation of the existing twinning arrangements with AEC. However, we note that there will be a federal election in Australia over this timeframe; as such, it would be prudent to discuss potential requirements with AEC as soon as feasible.

6.3 Our recommendations are arranged in two groups: the first (recommendations 1-3) relate to AusAID's approach to future electoral assistance in the round; the second (recommendations 4 – 6) relate to the nature of any possible assistance to the PNGEC that is considered appropriate in the future.

**1) Australia’s strategy for electoral assistance in PNG should be informed by deeper and broader analysis of the opportunities and constraints to supporting electoral processes in PNG.**

6.4 Any future assistance should be premised on a fundamental review of the challenges affecting the electoral system and accompanied with clear objectives for Australian aid, based on an assessment of where it can make the most difference, given the political economy. Power analyses or Drivers of Change studies provide tools that could be usefully employed to develop the strategy, while VFM assessment, albeit indicative, would be a useful complement to help refine and guide implementation.

6.5 Such an analysis is not a one-time exercise. We see significant merit in closer working between AusAID, DFAT and AEC across the electoral cycle, to conduct such analyses and in joint strategising around approaches to engaging PNG stakeholders. The proposed design exercise (see 6.1 above) provides the obvious opportunity to initiate the process.

**2) Future electoral assistance would benefit from a more holistic approach.**

6.6 There are a range of entities and issues that offer potential entry points for Australian aid to support electoral processes in PNG: the electoral management body (PNGEC), Parliament, political parties, candidates, cross-government election committee (IDEC), relevant government bodies (Treasury/Finance, police, education, women’s affairs), the media, civil society, the body established to consider implementation of a national identify scheme, advocates of women’s political representation, and so on . The proposed design mission should consider all options and we do not wish to pre-empt the findings of that exercise. However, we can offer some conclusions on the characteristics of future support, based on our review’s findings:

- Future assistance should not be limited predominantly to the Electoral Commission. It may be appropriate to continue to support aspects of PNGEC’s development (see below), but Australian aid should seek to engage with other key stakeholders in line with opportunities identified in the strategy, not as add-ons. In particular, we believe the role of the provincial officers who essentially deliver elections in PNG is a key consideration.
- A more holistic approach requires AusAID to operate a coherent influencing strategy using a more ‘distributed’ program of electoral assistance, with engagement through a larger number of channels, and a premium on the ability to manage across these. Assuming the engagement is underpinned by a clear strategy, however, we do not feel that a broader engagement is at odds with the desire for a targeted approach. Given this broader focus, there would be merit in establishing a central locus for the engagement – for instance with the Chief Secretary’s Office – to enable on-going dialogue about progress in the ‘sector’;
- A more holistic approach also requires better integration of AusAID’s electoral assistance strategy with its broader Governance Program, given the degree of ‘overlap’ in stakeholders involved, the mutually reinforcing aims of electoral assistance and the broader program; and the potential efficiencies that such synergies offer - Strongim Gavman Program (SGP), Economic and Public Sector Program and Provincial Local Government Program provide clear opportunities.
- AusAID should try to work as far as possible with other international partners, to spread the costs of electoral assistance among the donor community. In reality, of course, AusAID will remain by far the most significant donor, but fostering greater coordination across donors would also spread the risks for Australia associated with providing electoral assistance.<sup>37</sup>
- Such an approach implicitly acknowledges that systemic improvement is required, but this will involve local political process and incremental change. This is likely to place higher demands on AusAID, given the need for broader engagement, more agile and opportunistic programming, and the ability to pace and flex assistance in line with ‘sector’ results. The capacity of AusAID’s democratic governance team might usefully be reinforced in light of these demands.

6.7 Without prejudicing the outcome of the strategic analysis proposed under recommendation 1, topics for potential future engagement can be identified from the evaluation exercise. Unsurprisingly, a number are

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<sup>37</sup> In relation to this recommendation, we have also suggested in the main text (5.52) separately that the Electoral Commissioner consider creating an external relations position within PNGEC, to build links with a wider range of partners

not 'new' to Australian electoral assistance since 2000; but we suggest there is a need for alternative approaches and for working more directly with the stakeholders involved:

- **Legal framework:** Reforms to the legal framework could potentially benefit not only electoral administration but also promote more meaningful engagement by citizens in electoral processes – through for example reducing the number of candidates, redefining electoral boundaries. A number of reviews of election laws exist – some of which Australian aid has funded – which provide sound analysis and recommendations. AusAID has also already funded some highly relevant activities<sup>38</sup>. But this is an area where a coherent influencing strategy is essential. While any reforms would of course need to be owned and driven by PNG stakeholders, Australian aid can support the process, for example: building on the available reviews to compile a consolidated set of recommendations, engaging with (nascent) groups that support change, and assisting with the process of consultation, debate and option development.
- **Cost of national elections:** We see real merit in a thorough and independent review of the cost of running the national election, to provide a credible estimate of base costs and crucially to identify options to reduce the cost, including re-engineering of the model of election delivery. Such work might be operationalised through existing Australian channels with Treasury/Finance. Assuming that such a review would be of interest to GoPNG, the Central Agencies Coordinating Committee (CACC) might be the natural audience for this work, though PNGEC should also find such analysis valuable.
- **Options for the electoral roll:** Many electoral irregularities observed are related to problems in the roll. The need for a fundamental review is clear, starting from an assessment of whether the roll serves its basic purpose in enabling the franchise. The approach presently chosen for the updating of the roll appears inadequate for a task of such magnitude with the limited resources presently available. But there appears to be a window of opportunity now, given the likelihood that in the next few years PNG will initiate a National Identification system (with China's support). This has the potential to simplify significantly PNGEC's task in compiling an electoral roll. However, a National Identification scheme is an enormously complex and expensive task with potential application for a wide range of government functions beyond elections. In the short run, therefore, it will be important to assess the likelihood that the new ID document will be ready in time for the 2017 elections. A short-term specialized consultancy to assess this and Australia's eventual interest in supporting the activity should be considered as soon as possible.
  - If completion of the scheme in time for the 2017 elections is likely, a key consideration would be how the institution in charge of the new document can be best supported, as well as ensuring that the specific electoral needs are adequately incorporated in its design and supporting databases. We believe that such assistance should be a component of a strategy, and support located within the institution in charge of issuing the new document rather than within ESP and/or the PNGEC. PNGEC might receive short-term technical assistance to address the problems related to informing the people where to vote.
  - If completion of the scheme is unlikely before 2017 elections, then alternative solutions should be considered, either for the whole country, or for the provinces where the document will not have been distributed<sup>39</sup>. It may be necessary to prepare an entirely new roll, as it was done in 2007. In that case, a proposal made by the National Research Institute (NRI) in 2010<sup>40</sup> which suggests using polling stations as registration centres might be considered: "it enables strategic rolling deployment of resources...is often approved by voters" and is a standard approach in many other countries. The implementation of such a proposal (or the identification of other alternatives) requires specific technical expertise.

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<sup>38</sup> AusAID funding for the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) to work with the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPCC) in PNG to examine ways to enhance political stability; PNG's National Research Institute (NRI) has also worked with CDI to launch a Parliamentary Democracy Program, papers for which are currently being developed.

<sup>39</sup> We are assuming that the document will be distributed by provinces sequentially, and that even if the distribution is not complete, the database supporting the document can be used in developing the electoral roll in the provinces covered.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Ladley, Ole Holtved and Solomon Kantha, "Improving the Electoral Roll and Voter Identification in Papua New Guinea", The National Research Institute, Discussion Paper, No 111, July 2010

- **Strengthening IDEC:** Assuming interest on the part of the Chief Secretary (IDEC chair) and other key members, opportunities might include support for restructuring of IDEC or revision of its TOR to ensure it is fit for purpose; short-term provision of experienced, election liaison officers to work in key agencies in the lead up to an election; support to help develop a shared, coordinated election plan and budget submission. This would be an extension of rather than departure from the work to date promoting cross-government coordination around elections. However, we see merit in Australian aid working more directly with the stakeholders such as the Chief Secretary's Office and the Police.
- **Voter awareness:** Australian aid has been instrumental in assisting with the development of voter awareness programs in the run up to elections. The evaluation suggests expectations that such programs impact positively on voting behaviours are likely to be unrealistic. However, if this area of work is agreed to be an on-going priority, there is scope to foster a more strategic approach: this would be based on clearer objectives, distinguishing between short-term voter education needs and longer-term attitudinal change, a more coherent relationship with civil society – drawing on the variety of AusAID entry points and greater attention to targeting and cost-effectiveness concerns. This might involve support to PNGEC as a stakeholder, but not exclusively, potentially including Department of Education directly and certainly other AusAID programs.

**3) Any future electoral assistance should explicitly address the issue of 'surge' assistance for national elections and actively manage the moral hazard associated with such support.**

6.8 Dialogue about the nature of any short-term, operational assistance should start well in advance of an election to allow a planned approach and greater integration of assistance across the electoral cycle. This should consider not just needs (compared to some 'ideal'), but also what is desirable and sustainable. Options could include funding to enable PNGEC to implement the surge itself in areas like personnel and procurement with national personnel.

6.9 Australia can use both aid and diplomatic channels to communicate and discuss with PNG stakeholders in good time. To facilitate this process, there may be merit in deploying an electoral expert in the High Commission during the pre-electoral period, to work with AusAID and DFAT jointly.

6.10 Support to the Electoral Management Body is typically an important part of electoral assistance programs. While not prejudicing the outcome of the review proposed above (recommendation 1), if we assume that AusAID's and PNGEC maintain a relationship, we offer the following recommendations to inform the future approach:

**4) The nature of any future Australian assistance to PNGEC should be premised on more of a partnership model and part of the broader strategy for electoral assistance.**

6.11 The experience of Australian aid in PNG tells us that acceptance and ownership by local stakeholders are crucial factors in effective capacity development. We see merit in locating any future engagement with PNGEC within the wider engagement strategy proposed and adopting a more partnership-based approach, whereby:

- AusAID and PNGEC develop and agree shared priorities that reflect openly both parties' interests and constraints and that acknowledge other factors critical for improving performance. There should be a preparedness to discuss difficult issues, on the understanding that AusAID is a committed partner.
- Any support for capacity development in PNGEC should be based on clear objectives and implementation plans, with PNGEC leading the process and support paced in line with progress.
- The model of support shifts from a group of five or more long-term advisers located in a separate section of PNGEC to a lighter-touch approach led by an experienced electoral expert, who could agree priority areas for support with PNGEC and help develop the appropriate package of assistance to facilitate PNGEC reform processes.

In developing this approach, we would suggest AusAID draws on the useful experience it has gained in partnership working through its Pacific Leadership Program.

**5) Any future Australian assistance to PNGEC should focus mainly on strengthening election delivery capacity.**

6.12 The approach to capacity development in PNGEC has been based on too general a model of organisational development and separate from the type of ‘surge’ support provided at election time. We would recommend that future assistance is more tailored to the specific needs of election delivery, with a shift away from corporate HQ activities, and a focus on the end-to-end process of election delivery and associated attention to front-line issues in the provinces.

6.13 Australian aid has choices in how it provides such support. In principle, the Australian Electoral Commission has the necessary technical expertise. However, there are a number of potential issues to be considered:

- Can AEC commit to provide the support at the level and times required: a detailed forward plan would need to be developed, informed by an assessment of AEC’s internal capacity and the domestic demands it faces;
- Experience with Twinning programs elsewhere indicates that they are less effective when key constraints pertain to wider issues of governance and not just technical issues<sup>41</sup>. For this reason, mechanisms would need to be in place to ensure the Twinning Program does not operate separately from Australia’s broader strategy for electoral assistance;
- The nature of formal Twinning relationships may limit the AEC’s ability to engage on particular issues that might be perceived as questions of sovereignty or political acceptability. The same reservations are unlikely to exist for “independent” international experts.
- Twinning may be an effective means of transferring operational knowledge, but even technical election capacity in PNGEC will require analysis of broader institutional factors limiting effectiveness, development of strategies to combat these, and an approach that promotes organisational (in addition to individual) learning. These tasks may be outside the AEC’s core competencies.

6.14 As a result, we also see merit in the engagement being led by an international electoral expert, with extensive experience working with developing democracies, and supported by organizations/contractors with significant background in the field of elections. Such an approach could promote wider learning from regional and international practice; building linkages with other electoral management bodies – from outside the region – whose experience might be more directly relevant to PNGEC would be valuable.

6.15 At the same time, how an international expert lead could engage with AEC Twinning would need to be thought through. We do not consider the challenge insurmountable. But any solution will require open acknowledgement of the risks and limitations of different approaches and the development of strategies to manage these.

**6) PNGEC’s proposed diagnostic review of capacity provides AusAID with an opportunity to discuss options for capacity development**

6.16 We identified the lack of detailed diagnosis of capacity constraints in PNGEC as a significant short-coming. There appears at present an appetite within PNGEC to conduct such an exercise. In principle, this is something that Australian aid could support. While ultimately it is for the Commissioner to decide questions of scope, we have the following observations (beyond the normal requirements of clear aims and objectives):

- Any Australian assistance should source expertise from outside the current Electoral Support Program, with a focus on electoral and (relevant) organisational development skills; (while AEC may have the electoral expertise there is value in involving ‘fresh eyes’).
- The extent of ownership of the exercise among key stakeholders, beyond the Electoral Commissioner, should be considered; any proposal that has no buy-in beyond the Commissioner is unlikely to have much impact.
- Unless the exercise focuses on the role and importance of front-line, provincial electoral officials, it is unlikely to have much impact and this should be the starting point for any review;

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<sup>41</sup> Ouchi, F (2004) Twinning as a method for institutional development: a desk review. World Bank Institute, May.

- The scope should be broad enough to consider the effectiveness of current PNGEC governance arrangements. High external demands and expectations on PNGEC coincide with internal leadership pressures during national elections. Any review of structure should consider the governance arrangements needed to manage the multiple risks and requirements of election delivery.
- Finally, any diagnostic capacity review should also look at workforce planning, given the age profile of PNGEC staff. In the short-term, the risks associated with large numbers of experienced staff due to retire before the 2017 national election need to be considered. In the medium term, attracting and retaining young, committed staff is important for PNGEC and options such as the development of “Young Officers Scheme” may have potential.