

## Independent Evaluation of the Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) program.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) would like to thank the Pacific Recovery Economic Support (PRES) independent evaluation team. The evaluation was commissioned in December 2024 and assessed the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, gender equality disability and social inclusion, monitoring evaluation and learning and sustainability of the PRES program.

Overall the evaluation assessed PRES as delivering significant achievement towards end of program outcomes. PRES aims to achieve two end-of-investment outcomes:

1. Use of technical advice and support: DFAT staff use the technical advice, products or services accessed through PRES to support evidence-based policy, strategy, program coherence and enhanced investment design, management and performance.
2. PRES contributes to improving knowledge management and learning within Pacific Economic and Trade Branch (PEB).

DFAT accepts the evaluation and agrees with the findings.

In response to the evaluation recommendations, the following management response and been agreed and accepted by DFAT leadership.

Recommendation	Management Response
<b>Effectiveness</b> <i>Recommendation 1 (Next phase / Strategic)</i> PRES should be continued, recognising the critical role it plays in providing DFAT with access to technical expertise and enhanced capabilities. PRES EOIOs should be reviewed in any subsequent design, in particular EOIO2.	Agree. An investment design process and EOI for a new PRES program is currently being progressed.
<b>Efficiency</b> <i>Recommendation 2.1 (Long term / Operational)</i> To ensure alignment with DFAT's needs, DFAT should work closely with PRES in the drafting of TNs and leverage the expertise of the PRES Core Team, where relevant. DFAT should continue to retain responsibility for final approval of all TNs in any future design.	Agree. Having PRES support the drafting of tasking notes has been operationally efficient, particularly for small value activities. PRES continues to support coherence across tasking notes, where relevant. Updated Standard Operating Procedures have been in place since January 2025 to ensure final tasking notes are approved by DFAT.
<i>Recommendation 2.2 (Next phase / Operational)</i> Any future design must consider the resourcing needs of the PRES Core Team, to ensure they are adequate to respond to the high demand for support and maximise the value of PRES.	Partially agree. The demand for PRES services fluctuates. Ensuring the PRES Core Team is able to adjust to changing demand is a key component of program value for money.
<i>Recommendation 2.3 (Short term / Operational)</i> Acknowledging PRES' ongoing efforts to deliver value for money, DFAT should continue to enhance transparency in its adviser selection process by providing clear justification for the selection of advisers, with the aim of achieving value for money, equitable consultant pay, and ongoing progress in adviser diversity.	Partially agree. DFAT will ensure adviser selection processes are transparent and accountable to progress key program objectives. DFAT acknowledges that for some highly specialised positions, there may be a limited number of advisers available.
<i>Recommendation 2.4 (Next phase / Strategic)</i> Any future design (including any Value for Money Framework refresh) should consider PRES' role and capacity to strengthen PEB linkages.	Partially agree. The outcomes for any future PRES investment design will be considered in line with the sustainable and resilient economic development objective of the Australia-Pacific Regional Development Partnership Plan.
<i>Recommendation 2.5 (Short term / Operational)</i> DFAT should ensure that all deliverables are quality assured by PRES and support the PRES managing contractor in this process.	Partially agree. DFAT will enable PRES to quality assure all PRES deliverables and outputs, unless the content of those outputs are classified above the level

	of the PRES Core Team, or otherwise sensitive, as determined by the Assistant Secretary, Pacific Economic and Trade Branch.
<i>Recommendation 2.6 (Short term / Operational)</i> The PAG should actively participate in prioritisation and strategic planning.	Agree. In 2025 the PAG will focus on prioritisation, strategic planning, program completion and sustainability.
<b>Relevance</b> <i>Recommendation 3 (Next phase/Strategic)</i> Any future design should consider continued alignment of PRES' scope with DFAT's strategic priorities and contextual needs. Any future design should re-name the program to reflect its new operating context.	Agree. Any next phase of PRES will be aligned with DFAT's strategic priorities in the Pacific. A refreshed name for PRES will be considered in any next phase.
<b>GEDSI</b> <i>Recommendation 4.1 (Short term / Operational)</i> To ensure equitable compensation practices, it is recommended that PRES undertake a GEDSI analysis to examine pay equity among advisers.	Agree. PRES will undertake ongoing analysis of gender pay equity as part of existing reporting arrangements.
<i>Recommendation 4.2 (Short term / Operational)</i> To increase visibility of strategic entry points for GEDSI work, the PRES GEDSI adviser should be included in PRES governance meetings.	Agree. In 2025, the PRES GEDSI adviser will participate in quarterly PRES Advisory Group meetings.
<i>Recommendation 4.3 (Next phase / Strategic)</i> In any future program, opportunities for, and suitability of, engaging Pacific Islander expertise for relevant TNs / deliverables should continue to be explored, acknowledging much of PRES' work is Canberra-based.	Agree. PRES will ensure contestability by proposing a range of advisers for available positions. This will include Pacific Islander personnel where possible. Proactive steps will be taken to identify and include Pacific Islander personnel on PRES assignments.
<b>Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning</b> <i>Recommendation 5.1 (Short term / Operational)</i> PRES should conduct a small number of case studies, exploring the collective influence of multiple TNs in key thematic areas, with reference to EOIO1 and EOIO2; the factors influencing PRES effectiveness; and the appropriateness of PRES' responsive, tasking-based modality for optimising its thematic contribution.	Agree. PRES will undertake a small number of case studies to explore the collective influence of multiple tasking notes in key thematic areas in quarter one of 2025/26.

<p><i>Recommendation 5.2 (Next phase / Operational)</i> In any future program, PRES and DFAT should revise reporting templates and timeframes so that quarterly reports provide concise operational updates and annual reports provide more in-depth exploration of strategic issues. The rating scales used in both reports should also be more closely aligned to DFAT Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) or Investment Monitoring Report (IMR) rating scales.</p>	<p>Agree. Having a more streamlined approach to reporting, including the reporting criteria, will be considered as part of the investment design for a future program.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b>  <i>Recommendation 6 (Next phase / Strategic)</i> In any future program, DFAT and PRES should develop a written sustainability strategy to capture sustainability in the PRES context. In developing a sustainability strategy, factors to consider include how TNs can be used to enhance sustainability, enhance linkages, mitigate key person risk, and increase the pool of expertise (particularly Pacific Islands expertise).</p>	<p>Agree. DFAT and PRES have commenced drafting a sustainability strategy for the current program. Approaches to sustainability will be embedded into any future program investment design.</p>