

Tonga Australia Support Platform Independent Review - Summary of management response

The independent evaluation of the Tonga Australia Support Platform (TASP), a multi-sector facility, provides useful insights to guide Australia's future development engagement in the Kingdom of Tonga. It considers and analyses the program within the broader context of recent disasters and the limited implementation options available.

The findings and recommendations put forward in this report are welcomed and provide a critical input to DFAT's future development investments in Tonga. DFAT broadly accepts the findings in the evaluation report and agrees with all the recommendations.

We agree that extending TASP is sensible, especially given the time required to set up new implementation arrangements and establish trusted partnerships in-country. DFAT's priority is to develop a design update for a second phase of TASP. In incorporating these findings into future programming, an important challenge will be to balance our interest in long-term planning and consistent support, with the need to remain responsive to Tonga's national priorities.

DFAT undertakes to progress implementation of each recommendation according to the indicated timeframes.

Individual management response to recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation and Action	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 1 - Extension</p> <p><i>Given the slow start to TASP implementation and two of the four designs, extending the life of the program by at least one year will provide an opportunity to understand fully whether there is good value in having the Gender Equality and Skills programs co-located with the Health and the Governance Pillars.</i></p>	Agree	DFAT agrees to extend TASP to maximise overall efficiencies for program delivery and partnerships. DFAT will exercise the full four-year extension option and extend TASP into a second phase.	6 – 18 months
<p>Recommendation 2 - Health</p> <p><i>Embedded advisory support provided to Tonga Health can potentially be redirected or refocused on more effective health promotion activities and/or different partners. DFAT Post should work closely with TASP management to identify a quick realignment of funding to a more impactful solution.</i></p>	Agree	This is in line with findings from previous evaluations. DFAT has subsequently implemented recommendations resulting in changes to Australia's advisory footprint in Tonga's health sector. No further action is required.	Complete
<p>Recommendation 3 - Governance continuity</p> <p><i>With a new Governance design in progress (though delayed) there are building concerns and risks relating to future Governance program scenarios. DFAT needs to finalise the design quickly and facilitate an orderly and well communicated transition plan, as uncertainty can lead to a slowing down of activities. DFAT senior management will also need to ensure the upcoming change in DFAT's Senior Program Manager (SPM) for Governance does not have a destabilising effect, given the uncertain context.</i></p>	Agree	<p>DFAT finalised the governance investment design (March 2024) and will continue to proactively communicate implementation arrangements to partners.</p> <p>DFAT senior management will continue to manage any staff changes to ensure stability.</p>	Complete
<p>Recommendation 4 - Strategic Opportunities</p> <p><i>To raise visibility and reiterate their importance to DFAT, TASP and DFAT should agree on a strategic objective, outcome and measures of success for the Strategic Opportunities Mechanism (and for each tasking note within it), and report on these as a separate stream of work for TASP in regular six month and yearly reports. In addition, future facilities with flexible funding should ensure that it is included in the Program Logic for the investment.</i></p>	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that is sensible to include a relevant outcome and/or measure of success for the strategic opportunities mechanism and for tasking notes. This would feed into an overarching objective.</p> <p>To be considered and incorporated in the design update for TASP Phase 2.</p>	12 months

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<p>Recommendation 5 - Climate</p> <p><i>DFAT should reconsider the most strategic and cost-effective targeting of climate and related resourcing. With no expertise in TASP and only one year left of the program, meaningful results on climate action may not be possible to achieve.</i></p>	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that focus of the design update should be on how TASP can improve climate action, including on pillar-related activities and resourcing.</p> <p>To be considered and incorporated in the design update for TASP Phase 2.</p>	12 months
<p>Recommendation 6 - Accountability</p> <p><i>There needs to be systematic and regular documented opportunities for key counterparts to gain an adequate understanding of TASP and its program of work and participate in priority setting if TASP is to: provide deep and wide accountability to the Government of Tonga (GoT); gain their insights into the ongoing workplan of TASP; and achieve better buy-in and broader GoT ownership of outcomes.</i></p>	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that GoT should be provided adequate opportunities to shape programming under each pillar. DFAT will ensure GoT consultation informs the remaining pillar designs and is part of ongoing strategic dialogue and decision-making.</p> <p>To be considered and incorporated in the design update for TASP Phase 2 as well as remaining pillar designs.</p>	12-18 months
<p>Recommendation 7 - Working with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)</p> <p><i>With the new GEDSI Action Plan and GEDSI adviser in place, work in this area is expected to increase and build on the strong CSO relationships. TASP should continue to support partner CSOs with capacity building and system strengthening. DFAT should work closely with the TASP GEDSI Advisor and Disability Coordinator to maximise opportunities for GoA to be a strategic advocacy partner for greater equity and inclusion in Tonga.</i></p>	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that CSO engagement is a strength of the program and should continue. Strategic dialogue opportunities should be enhanced with appropriate emphasis on maximising advocacy opportunities and impact over TASP Phase 2.</p> <p>To be considered and incorporated in the design update for TASP Phase 2.</p>	12 months
<p>Recommendation 8 - Ways of Working</p> <p><i>TASP should develop a relationship map to attach to the Ways of Working agreement that outlines the different pathways of communication on different issues and with different partners that include GoT, GoA, TASP and CSOs on policy and programmatic work.</i></p>	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that the complex facility design (unique in Tonga) requires concerted efforts to ensure clear lines of communication with stakeholders.</p> <p>To be considered and incorporated in the design update for TASP Phase 2.</p>	12 months