



**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**Overseas Property Office and Services**

# AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PROJECT HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

## CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CHANCERY, CHANCERY COMPOUND & SUPPORTING FACILITIES

### STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE FOR PRESENTATION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

SUBMISSION 1.0

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures, and Elders past and present.

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### 1.1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 The Australian High Commission (AHC) in Honiara, Solomon Islands, supports Australia’s diplomatic presence in the South Pacific and Australia’s engagement with the Solomon Islands. This is consistent with the objectives of the Pacific Step-up, one of Australia’s highest foreign policy priorities, highlighted in Australia’s 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, and National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023.
- 1.1.2 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Overseas Property Office (OPO) seeks approval from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PWC) to proceed with the construction of a new chancery and supporting facilities to house the functions of the mission to meet these strategic objectives, replacing existing office accommodation that are no longer fit-for-purpose. The Project has been funded through two approved New Policy Proposals (NPP) with a total budget of \$135.3 million (excluding Goods and Services Tax - GST).

## 2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEED

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### 2.1 Project Objectives

- 2.1.1 The new chancery will be constructed on a newly acquired site that was identified by the Solomon Islands Government and is subject to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with DFAT. The current AHC operates from two offices, the owned chancery and an Annex within leased commercial premises. The two offices will be replaced by the new chancery to be located at Lot 1792 Lengakiki Road, Honiara. On completion of the works, the AHC will be provided with a permanent purpose-built chancery, surrounding compound, and supporting facilities. The current lease of the Annex will no longer be required, and the owned site will be handed back to the Solomon Islands Government as required by the land exchange under the 2022 MoU.
- 2.1.2 The new contemporary AHC will incorporate a full range of facilities to meet the Australian Government’s ongoing and future whole of Australian Government foreign policy objectives and representational requirements. Operational and business needs will be provided in a functional, flexible and secure environment, and represent the Australian diplomatic standing at the centre of Australia’s engagement with Solomon Islands. OPO, as the building owner, will manage and deliver the works detailed under this submission, including the ongoing management and maintenance of the capital assets.

### 2.2 Background

- 2.2.1 The AHC operates from two offices: the owned chancery (Net Lettable Area (NLA) of 879 square metres (sqm) and the leased Annex (NLA of 755 sqm) totalling 1,634 sqm. The current facilities cater for current workforce numbers of 94 Full-time Employees (FTE) and includes a mixture of DFAT and other Australian Government agencies, including Locally Engaged Staff (LES) and Australian based (A-based) staff. Refer **Annexure 5.1** for location context, existing facilities imagery and renders of the proposed facilities.
- 2.2.2 The existing chancery was constructed in the 1980s and purchased by DFAT in 1988, formally opening the AHC in 1989. The building has undergone an extension and fit-out since opening to meet increasing operational demands, however the amenity and staff office accommodation no longer meets the Australian Government’s accommodation objectives.

- 2.2.3 The current building and associated fit out is not functionally fit for purpose and does not meet the modest expectations of an efficient and effective workplace. Further it does not meet current security or National Construction Code (NCC) requirements.
- 2.2.4 The Annex office space is located approximately 700 metres from the current AHC. Whilst relatively close in proximity to the AHC, the conditions in Honiara can impede safe pedestrian movement between the two facilities. The Annex is a leased office space located on the top level of the Bank of the South Pacific (BSP) Building, on Mendana Avenue. The Annex lacks basic amenities required to support Post operations, including no lift access to the Annex which is located on the top level of a three-story building.
- 2.2.5 The new AHC is to provide a contemporary and efficient office environment to facilitate the full range of activities for the chancery and satisfy security requirements. The chancery will provide a suitable and secure work environment while also providing appropriate facilities for representational use. The chancery will be occupied by DFAT as the lead agency and other attached government agencies, namely the Department of Defence (Defence) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP).
- 2.2.6 In 2017, DFAT identified the need to significantly improve the operational efficiency of the Honiara chancery. Subsequently, DFAT has investigated options to develop a new chancery in Honiara which involved investigating site options, the development of a feasibility study, and the development of a two stage Business Case (BC). Initial investigations were undertaken in 2017 and 2018 regarding potentially available parcels of land to address capacity concerns with the existing AHC in Honiara. Through investigations and collaboration with the Solomon Islands Government, a suitable land parcel was identified, and OPO undertook initial site due diligence confirming the suitability of the site. In 2019, an initial feasibility study was undertaken by OPO which resulted in the land exchange via an MoU as the best value option for the Commonwealth. Under this arrangement the new parcel of land will be exchanged for the current site once construction is complete and the mission has relocated.
- 2.2.7 In 2023, OPO undertook a procurement for a two-stage tender process for the D&C Contract. The Stage 1 (Expression of Interest - EOI) process resulted in a shortlist of contractors which were approached for Stage 2 (Request for Tender - RFT). The process concluded in July 2024 with C.C. Pines Pty Ltd (CC Pines) engaged as the D&C Contractor for Design the phase only. Subject to performance and this proposal being based approved, CC Pines will be engaged for Construction phase. The D&C Contractor is due to deliver their first design milestone in November 2024.
- 2.2.8 The design presented in this submission is from the Concept Design documentation that informs the contract design, scope, functional brief, and deliverables.
- 2.2.9 While it is expected that the current Concept Design will continue to evolve to enable integration of the D&C Contractor's prefabricated system through to attainment of the Final Design for construction, the overall design intent and scope will remain consistent, to be delivered within the contracted budget envelope.
- 2.2.10 This project under consideration, now seeks approval for the remainder of the design phase and construction of the new chancery, supporting facilities and surrounding compound.

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## 2.3 Need

- 2.3.1 This proposal is to design and construct a permanent replacement chancery building, supporting staff and security facilities, that defines and showcases Australia's physical presence in Solomon Islands and more widely in the South Pacific. It will provide for the Australian Government's existing operational requirements, as well as for future foreign policy objectives and needs.
- 2.3.2 Australia and the Solomon Islands enjoy a close and longstanding relationship based on regional and international cooperation, trade links, a substantial development assistance program and support for maritime surveillance within the context of broader security operations.

Australia's vision is to support the Solomon Islands in its own efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, improve its economic position and increase environmental resilience.

- 2.3.3 The Australian Government requires a permanent purpose-built chancery to ensure AHC staff are provided with secure, modern, and effective facilities. The new chancery will highlight a modern, vibrant Australia to the various visitors, business groups and agencies which will include Australians who seek passport and consular assistance, international visits by Australian Government Representatives and Australian business representatives who attend for trade development opportunities. Equally importantly, the new chancery will meet contemporary security requirements.
- 2.3.4 The current AHC (across two locations) has been reviewed against expectations and the following shortfalls were identified:
- (a) Facilities do not meet DFAT security, functionality or capacity requirements. These limitations generally restrict the ability of the AHC to conduct business.
  - (b) Lack of capacity to meet the planned growth future demand – planned growth is not able to be met by the existing AHC facilities. The existing facilities cannot achieve any further densification due to physical and engineering service limitations.
  - (c) Operational inefficiencies due to split campus: The existing facility is split between the chancery and the Annex, leading to a range of operational inefficiencies such separation of work areas and duplication of security, equipment, and public areas.
  - (d) Deteriorating existing infrastructure condition and non-compliant systems: The provision of engineering infrastructure to support the operations and maintenance of AHC facilities in the Pacific presents a range of challenges. The current issues include varying levels of non-compliance as well as building infrastructure which now at the end of its useful economic life.
  - (e) Inability to achieve inter government expectations: The existing facilities are not fit-for-purpose, and do not convey the importance of the relationship between the Australian and Solomon Islands governments.
  - (f) Inability to provide facilities for official purposes: The current facilities do not provide adequate representational areas required to host functions which is an expected responsibility of Australia in a host country.
- 2.3.5 **Annexure 5.1** (figures at 5.1.3 and 5.1.4) provides images of the current AHC and leased to indicate the quality and age of the facilities.
- 2.3.6 The new facilities will cater for the Australian Government's representational and cultural activities, greatly improving upon the capacity of the current AHC, while supporting operations on a 24-hour, seven days a week basis, as and when required.

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## 2.4 Current Leasing and Owned Arrangements

- 2.4.1 The current Annex is a leased property and is renewed on a yearly basis. It is intended for this lease not to be renewed when the new AHC is commissioned and occupied. The site will be decommissioned in accordance with DFAT's security procedures.
- 2.4.2 The current owned chancery will be decommissioned and handed back to the Solomon Islands Government under the 2022 MOU which facilitates the land exchange.

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## 2.5 Proposed Leasing Arrangements

- 2.5.1 Not applicable.

## 2.6 Additional Space Request

2.6.1 The AHC is currently occupied by DFAT, Defence and AFP. It has been designed to include adaptable office space to accommodate any future whole of Australian Government initiatives.

## 2.7 Description of Proposal

2.7.1 Five (5) options were considered to address the Business Case needs for the relocation and establishment of a new chancery to meet the current and future demands. These options have been considered and are provided here as background.

- (a) **Option 1 - Do nothing:** Involves continuing with the current arrangements, maintaining the chancery in its current form and continuing to lease the Annex building.
- (b) **Option 2 - Demolish and rebuild at current site:** Involves the demolition of the current chancery building, temporary relocation of chancery based staff to interim working accommodation, construct new premises on the current site to accommodate all persons in the one building, and cessation of the lease of the Annex.
- (c) **Option 3 - Lease at a new site and fit-out:** Involves the identification of a new lease site that will accommodate all users in one building, and a new fit-out that meets user and security requirements. The security brief requirements will need to be met by the leased facilities. Base building upgrades will likely be required at any new leased area and are likely to be extensive.
- (d) **Option 4 - Pre-commitment lease at a new unidentified site:** Involves entering into a pre-commitment lease for a new site, including fit-out. A new lease site that will accommodate all users in one building, and a new fit-out that meets user and security requirements.
- (e) **Option 5 - Land exchange and construct new chancery:** Involves a land exchange with the Solomon Islands Government and construction of a new, purpose-built facility.

2.7.2 Option 1 was assessed against the current and future requirements and determined it does not constitute a viable option as the current AHC is not fit for purpose and is not sufficient to cater for the current or future requirements.

2.7.3 The long-term outcome for Option 2 is feasible, however this option requires short to medium term accommodation for staff located in the owned chancery. This is noted as marginally feasible due to the challenge of short-term accommodation and carries significant risk in cost exposure due to rates for commercial rent in Honiara. Accordingly, with the assessment undertaken, Option 2 was also deemed as not representing value for money due to the expense of the temporary facilities.

2.7.4 Land availability in Honiara presents a challenge for the development of feasible options. Options 3 and 4 require the identification of either an existing building or land and a commercial entity to propose a value for money solution to enable DFAT to execute a lease. DFAT undertook research to identify opportunities to support these options however, no acceptable proposals have been identified.

2.7.5 Option 5 was assessed as the best option to support the current and forecast operational requirements of the Australian Government, to provide a safe and secure environment. In the Business Case, this preferred option was assessed in detail from a design, cost, qualitative benefit and delivery perspective and was assessed as offering the best value for money.

2.7.6 Upon completion, the new AHC compound will include a multi storey building, guard house, service compound area, outdoor areas and security infrastructure. The purpose-built compound will include Gross Floor Area (GFA) of 10,036 sqm all building and the chancery including two basements and four (4) floors for office accommodation, staff areas, building services equipment and representational areas.



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## 2.8 Options considered for the relocation and construction of a new AHC

### Option 5 – “Land exchange and construct new chancery”

- 2.8.1 Option 5 utilises the land identified by the Solomon Islands Government to enable the delivery of a new chancery. Site due diligence has been undertaken confirming the suitability of the site, and Concept Design demonstrates that the site will accommodate the space requirements of the mission, including the new chancery building, site infrastructure, parking, security infrastructure and external areas.
- 2.8.2 The Concept Design includes allowances to accommodate future growth based on forecast staff numbers ensuring DFAT and other whole of Australian Government current and future needs will be met by the new purpose-built facility.

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## 2.9 Proposed Course of Action: (purchase and construct new AHC)

- 2.9.1 Option 5 was assessed and agreed as the preferred solution, as it represented the best method to secure and consolidate Commonwealth assets. It will deliver a superior building product to meet the long-term needs of the AHC; increase asset value; and offers the lowest risk while providing additional functionality. It will ensure that the AHC is provided with a secure and environmentally efficient new facility from which Australian Government agencies can deliver the whole of Australian Government policy objectives.
- 2.9.2 This option required Commonwealth fund to design and construction of the new chancery and supporting facilities. DFAT has received funding for the project through two (2) New Policy Proposals (NPPs) approved by Government:
- (a) Budget Prioritisation NPP: AHC Honiara, New Chancery Construction (2020-21)
  - (b) Honiara Expansion NPP at MYEFO (2022-23)
- 2.9.3 Both NPPs have been approved and have provided the current approved budget. Further budgetary detail is provided in the Confidential Cost Estimate (**Submission 1.1**).

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## 2.10 Environmental Impact Assessments

- 2.10.1 Through the due diligence process, OPO commissioned studies to investigate the site for contamination and geotechnical survey. Through these activities, the site has been cleared of existing structures and debris in order to undertake the surveys and core holing for contamination and geotechnical investigations.
- 2.10.2 Combined with the site’s history and observations through the survey, it is considered there is a low potential for ground contamination on site. However, buried asbestos sheet and metal contamination was discovered from the previous demolition activities. The Contractor responsible for undertaking earth works will take the appropriate precautions to mitigate this risk of discovery of contaminated soil.

2.10.3 A comprehensive geotechnical investigation has been undertaken on the site. OPO commissioned a geotechnical report which included several bore holes and test pits. The report recommended classification of site seismic ratios, slope stabilisations, design of foundations, and pavement design requirements. The outcomes of the report had a significant impact on design and costs, as such a peer review was also commissioned, which ultimately arrived to the same assessment. Given the complex site characteristics, the geotechnical engineers provided additional design requirements to mitigate the seismic risk. The design requirements include setbacks from boundaries, additional design requirements and engineering advice on the existing retaining walls.

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## 2.11 Heritage and Moral Rights Considerations

2.11.1 There is no known heritage classification placed on the property or any of the structures on the property. OPO through the D&C Contractor and consultants, has confirmed that there are no applicable moral rights regulations or legislation in Honiara or more widely Solomon Islands. The only applicable requirement is the submission and approval process through the Honiara City Council for the Building Permit and Planning Approval when constructing a new building.

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## 2.12 Details of Organisations Consulted

2.12.1 The scope for the project has involved extensive consultations with DFAT Office of The Pacific (OTP), key Post stakeholders, and senior representatives of DFAT's Diplomatic Security Division (DSD) and Information Management Division (IMD).

2.12.2 Consultations have previously been undertaken in Honiara with the Honiara City Council, Solomon Power, Solomon Water as part of the previous design milestones.

2.12.3 The D&C Contractor visited Honiara in September 2024 and will re-engage with the local stakeholders, gaining an understanding of the requirements of development submissions and support required by Post to facilitate the timely submission, review, and approval of the works.

2.12.4 DSD has been consulted on the preliminary physical and technical security requirements for the design of the new permanent chancery and provided significant input during the establishment of the interim chancery.

2.12.5 Further detailed consultations with all stakeholders (within DFAT and external partners) will be undertaken as part of the design development process.

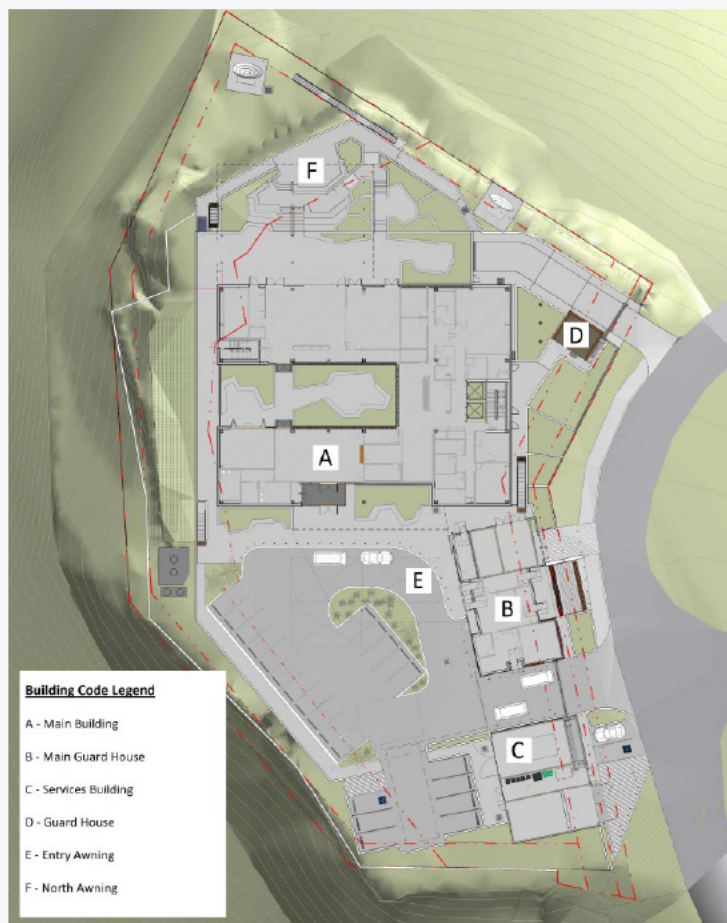
### 3 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

#### 3.1 Context, Location and Climate

- 3.1.1 Solomon Islands is an archipelagic state located in the south-west Pacific Ocean, approximately 2,000 kms to the northeast of Australia. It's land mass of 28,400 km<sup>2</sup> extends over nearly 1000 islands comprising nine main island groups. The capital, Honiara, is located on Guadalcanal, the largest island.
- 3.1.2 The population of Solomon Islands, estimated to be about 720,000 (2022), is predominantly Melanesian, although there are small Polynesian, Micronesian, Chinese and European communities. There are 63 distinct languages in the country, with numerous local dialects. English is the official language, but Solomons' Pijin is most commonly spoken.
- 3.1.3 In 1893, the UK Government established a protectorate over the eastern group of islands, with Germany controlling most of the west. The UK protectorate was extended to all nine main island groups now part of Solomon Islands, while Buka and Bougainville became part of German New Guinea (later incorporated into Papua New Guinea).
- 3.1.4 Honiara's modern history began during World War II. In 1942-1943, the Battle of Guadalcanal was a strategically crucial and intense campaign fought between Allied forces, primarily American, and Japanese forces. The battle of Battle of Guadalcanal exemplifies the geostrategic importance of the island nation, ultimately the Allies' victory was a turning point in the Pacific Theatre.
- 3.1.5 After the war, Honiara was chosen as the new capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, replacing the former capital, Tulagi, which had been heavily damaged during the war. This decision was influenced by the existing infrastructure and strategic location.
- 3.1.6 Solomon Islands was granted internal self-government in 1976, followed by independence on 7 July 1978. At independence, Solomon Islands joined the Commonwealth.
- 3.1.7 Average temperatures in Honiara range from 24°C to 31°C throughout the year. There is little variation in temperature between seasons, maintaining a consistently warm climate. Honiara experiences significant rainfall year-round, with an average annual precipitation of about 3,000 mm. The wettest months are typically from November to April, coinciding with the northwest wet season. The drier period usually spans from May to October, though rain can still occur frequently. High humidity levels are common in Honiara, often exceeding 80%.
- 3.1.8 Honiara and the broader Solomon Islands are highly susceptible to seismic events due to their location in the Pacific Ring of Fire including the Pacific Plate, the Indo-Australian Plate, and the smaller Solomon Sea Plate. The region's complex tectonic setting results in frequent earthquakes, with notable historical events causing significant damage and loss of life. Earthquakes in the Solomon Islands includes;
- A magnitude 8.1 earthquake event happened April 2007 which triggered a tsunami that caused extensive damage and loss of life, particularly in the Western Province.
  - A magnitude 8.0 earthquake event happened February 2013 which struck near the Santa Cruz Islands, generating a tsunami that caused significant damage and fatalities.
  - A magnitude 7.0 earthquake event happened November 2022 which resulted in the current AHC Annex suffering a collapsed ceiling and services. The Project has engaged appropriately with seismic risk, undertaking extensive geotechnical and seismic assessments. The proposed structural design has been developed in consultation with subject matter experts and is highly resilient to the risk of future seismic events.

## 3.2 Scope of Work

- 3.2.1 The proposal is to construct new permanent facilities including a chancery and supporting facilities on the new site as provided by the Solomon Island Government.
- 3.2.2 The scope of work comprises the construction of a four-storey chancery, guardhouse with sallyport, and services facilities. The proposal will be in accordance with DFAT's spatial, operational and security requirements and will be achieve enhanced seismic resistance.
- 3.2.3 The new chancery will consist of four storeys of 5,623 sqm of GFA and two basement of approximately 3,668 sqm of GFA with 2,759 sqm of NLA to meet the current and future specific space and functional requirements of Post. These figures are based on the previous design work and will be validated by the D&C Contractor. To support the office building, an additional 393 sqm will be provided in the guardhouse and services buildings.
- 3.2.4 The construction works will comprise the following as outlined in the indicative site plan below:
- Permanent chancery (Main Building)
  - Guardhouse and sallyport (Main Guard House)
  - Services facilities and landscaping (Services Building)
  - Secondary guard facility (Guard House)
  - On grade carparks, and porte cochère (Entry Awning)
  - Terraces and covered awning (North Awning)



*Indicative site plan. Refer to Annexures for additional information.*

### 3.3 Zoning and Approvals

3.3.1 The MoU states the ‘Australian Government is to build a new High Commission to meet its future accommodation and operational needs’. Planning approvals will be managed through the City Council and the D&C Contractor with continue the previous communications with the Council in the coming months.

### 3.4 Land Acquisition

3.4.1 The land for the AHC compound is subject to the MoU dated 20th October 2022. Upon completion and occupation of the new AHC, DFAT will vacate and decommission the current owned AHC for handing to the Solomon Island Government.

### 3.5 Codes and Standards

3.5.1 All works will be designed to comply to Australian codes and standards, and Solomon Islands codes and standards, whichever is more onerous. The project works will be delivered in accordance with the Australian National Construction Code and the Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). Particular attention will be given to equality in access to premises and amenities in the facility. In terms of seismic requirements, the project is utilising the New Zealand codes given the similarities to the Solomon Islands.

### 3.6 Architecture

3.6.1 The proposed design of the new AHC compound provides a safe and secure working and social environment for staff and guests with high quality operational buildings to undertake Australia’s diplomatic representation in Solomon Islands. The visual external and internal presentation and materials reflects unique ‘Brand Australia’ styling – welcoming, optimistic, genuine, and down to earth – in the context of the local architectural features of the Solomon Islands environment.

3.6.2 DFAT proposes to use an Australian “modular” prefabricated, off-site manufactured approach for the construction of the new facilities. The modular construction creates an innovative response to achieving the long-term operational facilities required of the mission, enabling the buildings to be constructed and commissioned in Australia, dismantled, shipped, and reassembled on-site in Honiara. Each of the buildings will be developed utilising modular techniques to provide efficient, functional, and flexible working environments cognisant of the local environmental conditions and security considerations. The modular approach to design is reflected throughout the site, from the planned orientation of the buildings, through to the secure environment of the chancery and the open, outdoor spaces for the staff facilities. The building shape and overall site design is optimised to employ natural light, efficient passive temperature control, and integrates the buildings within the surrounding landscaping to provide a high-quality working environment.

3.6.3 The finishes, both internally and externally, will be selected to withstand the challenges of the harsh climate, whilst reflecting both the Australian and the Pacific context. The D&C Contractor has recently been engaged and are developing the design for their first milestone in November 2024.

3.6.4 The renders provided at **Annexure 5.2** are sourced from the Concept Design and may change through design development.

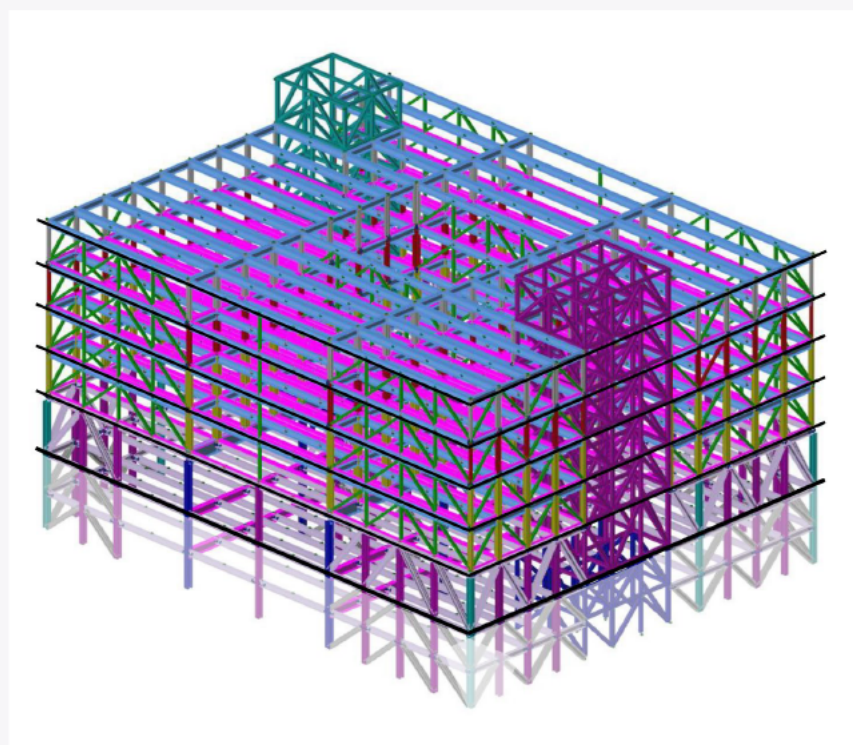
3.6.5 **Facade Representation:** Façade and external materials will be selected to identify with the built environment to the Australian landscape, whilst also being representative of the inland Solomon Islands built and natural context, providing a strong connection to the host country.

### 3.7 Master Planning and Site Planning

- 3.7.1 Site Layout:** The DFAT physical security requirements provide the basis for the overall layout of the compound and the positioning and form of the chancery. The compound layout allows the chancery to form the heart of the complex, with the auxiliary facilities located around the perimeter, providing effective access and circulation around the site. Functional relationships of the buildings, and their respective security requirements, provides the basis for the site circulation. The overall layout of the site has been designed with consideration for constraints such as minimum setbacks, geotechnical requirements and the limited routes for vehicle and pedestrian entrances (Lengakiki Road on the east boundary is the only way to access the site).
- 3.7.2 Natural Light:** Is a significant positive benefit to a working environment, is an important factor in the design of the chancery. While considerate of external glazing limitations due to security requirements, an internal light well has been integrated into the design, providing extensive glazing offering solar penetration, heat load minimisation and visual amenity while framing views within the compound and internal courtyard. The project has successfully balanced access to natural light while responding appropriately to the security overlay that is applicable in this location.
- 3.7.3 Pedestrian Connection:** Access to the chancery for pedestrian visitors is controlled initially at the perimeter wall, and again at the main guardhouse where security screening occurs. Once screening is complete, pedestrians gain access to the public external zone of the site. Paving materials delineate pathways leading from the guardhouse to the chancery entry. Visual connection with the chancery is highlighted by landscape, proximity, and the pronounced port cochere identifying the chancery entry. Egress for pedestrian visitors is controlled by the main guardhouse.
- 3.7.4 Vehicle Access:** The new compound contains two (2) new vehicle access locations. The primary access point is located to the southeast corner of the site from Lengakiki and consists of a vehicle sally port adjacent to Guardhouse. This location provides access into the external public zone and visitor parking. A second vehicle access point is located at the north of the compound from Lengakiki Road. This location is provided as the entrance for the basement car parking.
- 3.7.5 Perimeter Security:** Is provided via the external compound wall and security lighting. This physical security layer is augmented by electronic security and monitoring of the wall both externally and internally.
- 3.7.6 Public Access:** Access to the public is strictly controlled by the Guardhouse. Visitors, while out on the street can contact the Guardhouse operations room and seek access to enter the guardhouse for screening. Screening within the guardhouse then permits access to the external public zone, leading to the front entrance of the chancery. This external zone will provide a welcoming environment for transition from the guardhouse to the chancery. Pedestrian access is limited with secure barriers preventing access directing visitors to the chancery entrance.
- 3.7.7 Staff Access:** Access to the compound will be via the staff vehicle entry or the guardhouse. From the public external space, staff with appropriate authorization can access the chancery front entry, or selected gates within the compound.
- 3.7.8 Floor Plate/ Grid:** The layout of each building has been designed around the volumetric modular system. For this, 20 and 40 foot (ft) container sizing has been utilised. These modules set the floor plate and grid spacing for the majority of the buildings on site. In utilising these modules, the depth of the buildings has been limited while creating a large column free structure for the fit out with consideration for future reconfiguration if required. The below figure provides the breakup of the standard floorplate with containers and the isometric view of the structural design with approximately 180 container modules integrating together.



*Diagram of the proposed Prefabricated Methodology*



*Structural Design for Seismic Requirements*

- 3.7.9 **Core / Vertical Movement:** The chancery contains a lift core and service risers to support from the building engineering services. The core includes multiple elevators, to provide DDA compliant access to all floors floor while doubling as a goods lift for equipment transfer.
- 3.7.10 **Parking:** Visitor parking is provided directly outside the compound and within the compound through the sally port with a total of 25 surface spaces. 58 secure staff parking spaces are included in the basements including provision of spaces for persons with a disability are provided externally and within the secure area of the compound. The total number of carparks provided is 83.
- 3.7.11 **Services/ Waste Management:** Facilities are located away from other buildings within the services compound. The proximity of this zone to the primary vehicle access point limits waste vehicle access to the wider site and provides maximum separation to the chancery.

### 3.8 Materials and Finishes

- 3.8.1 Materials and finishes will be selected to present a high quality, durable finish that requires minimal maintenance. Materials selections will reflect the natural characteristics of Australia and Solomon Islands.
- 3.8.2 Where practicable materials will be sourced locally in Australia due to the modular construction being assembled in Australia. This will allow for quantity and quality control of selected materials to minimise cost, provide expediency, and reduce the building’s carbon footprint. Internal partitions with a security requirement will be constructed in accordance with DFAT requirements.

### 3.9 Chancery Fit Out

- 3.9.1 **Fit-out:** The new permanent chancery as part of the D&C Contractors scope of works will receive an integrated fit-out.

#### Occupational Density

- 3.9.2 The Australian Government Property Register (AGPR) guidelines for determining Non-Office Area and in turn occupational density have been applied<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.9.3 The new chancery will provide **129 work-points** in total, equating to a **nominal (fit-out) occupational density of 14.7sqm** of Usable Office Area (UOA) per work-point. Table 1 defines this calculation in further detail including the number of work-points, the total NLA, Non-Office Areas as applicable to overseas property and this particular fit-out, the resultant UOA and density calculation.

Table 1 - Occupational Density Workings and Calculation

Area	Metric
A. NLA – DFAT Tenancy	2759
B. NLA - PRODAC exclusions	840
Non-Office Area C – Basement or Inadequate Amenity	129
Non-Office Area E – Specifically for Operational Activity	0.0
Non-Office Area F – Public Facility	153
Non-Office Area J – Exempt Area	0.0
Non-Office Area L - Shopfronts	85.8
Non-office Area M – ICT/Data Warehouse	473
C. NLA for occupational density calculation (A minus B)	1918.1
D. Chancery Work-point Requirement	129
E. Occupational density (C divided by D)	14.8sqm/person

Note: Total GFA for the entire project is 10,036 sqm.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Property Register - 2023 Office Data Collection Manual, Australian Government Department of Finance



- 3.9.4 The Department provides for the Committee’s consideration the following commentary relating to the occupational density:
- (a) The new chancery will provide a UOA of 1,918.1 sqm once DFAT’s chancery specific requirements (non-office areas) are taken into account; and
  - (b) The occupational density target of 14 sqm only applies to domestic properties that contain more than 500 sqm of UOA2, and as such the Honiara chancery is exempt. However, the design optimises the working accommodation spaces in order to maximise the density. The design includes areas which can be converted to additional office space to increase occupancy to facilitate future requirements.

### 3.10 Structure

- 3.10.1 The buildings will be designed in accordance with the relevant Australian and Solomon Island Codes and Standards, with reference to DFAT design requirements where appropriate. Engineering considerations will respond to local site conditions including geotechnical, wind, and potential seismic performance to meet a building Importance Level of 3. The site is not exposed to tsunami related hazard due to its elevation.
- 3.10.2 **Excavation:** Given the site characteristics and the requirement for basements, the excavation will be extensive. Investigations have been undertaken with no unexploded ordinance or soil contamination identified.

### 3.11 Mechanical Services

- 3.11.1 The building will be designed in accordance with the relevant Australian and Solomon Islands standards, with reference to DFAT design requirements and Australian design codes where appropriate.
- 3.11.2 The mechanical systems are based on contemporary modular technology and systems that offer energy efficiency and versatility over the life of the AHC compound buildings. The proposed mechanical design provides a VAV (Variable Air Volume) fully ducted air distribution system for the chancery, and dedicated VRV (Variable Refrigerant Volume) split systems for the guardhouses, and the ancillary buildings. The selected mechanical systems provide a high quality, safe, comfortable indoor environment in accordance with the best current practice. Separate air handling systems are also provided for specialist areas with different occupancy requirements i.e., meeting rooms, communications rooms.
- 3.11.3 Plant and equipment for the chancery will be located within a plant room on the upper levels. The conditioned air will be ducted throughout the building via the intermediate services modules allowing for easy access for maintenance and away from office areas to minimise interruption of AHC functions. The mechanical system also includes pre-conditioning of fresh air intakes to enhance the efficient operation and extend the life of the air conditioning equipment.
- 3.11.4 All plant and equipment will be designed with consideration of the following attributes: local capacity for supply and maintenance of parts and materials, long service life; high energy efficiency, low noise and vibration levels and high reliability.
- 3.11.5 Exhaust ventilation systems will be provided for the amenities, utility areas and kitchen areas.

<sup>2</sup> Resource Management Guide No. 500, Commonwealth Property Management Framework, Australian Government Department of Finance

### 3.12 Hydraulic Services

- 3.12.1 The hydraulic systems design for the building will be designed in accordance with the relevant Australian and Solomon Islands Standards, with reference to DFAT design requirements and Australian Design Codes where applicable. The design is also specific to the project location. Whilst the Honiara municipality services include separate sewer and stormwater systems and all designs must be adherent to Solomon Islands Water Authority approved standard designs. The designed system reflects separate sewer and stormwater discharge from the site. The system is also designed for the provision of a future on-site sewer treatment plant.
- 3.12.2 Mains potable water supply is provided by Solomon Water. The water supply to the site runs along the eastern boundary. Water tanks will be provided underground for the storage of potable water.
- 3.12.3 Firefighting response from local fire brigade services is limited and so onsite firefighting water capacity is required. The site will include active water storage, pumps and booster cabinet to ensure provision of firefighting capacity onsite prior to local fire brigade arrival.

### 3.13 Electrical Services

- 3.13.1 Electrical design for the site will be designed in accordance with the relevant Australian and Solomon Islands Standards, with reference to DFAT design requirements and Australian Design Codes where applicable.
- 3.13.2 All equipment will require robust construction to minimise the need for local servicing and maintenance, particularly equipment mounted externally such as luminaires. The design of the electrical supply will provide redundancy and secure power and communications cable pathways, rooms, and cupboards in response to DFAT requirements as appropriate and in line with any requirements from Solomon Power.
- 3.13.3 Honiara's electrical power supply is intermittent, with multiple supply failures and scheduled power shedding occurring frequently. A stand-by power system with all associated equipment (switchboards, generators, and diesel tanks), sized for redundancy, is therefore included in the scope of work to provide back-up to the local grid power. The system incorporated in the design of the new development takes account the sizing of the generators, fuel storage and voltage regulators.
- 3.13.4 Security and access, including ease of servicing, redundancy and where possible integration with landscape, has been considered in the locating of site utilities. Some items considered include but are not limited to:
- (a) Diesel storage tanks located within the services zone to the eastern end of the site and a remote filling station provided to enable refuelling without requiring vehicle access within the site.
  - (b) Diesel generators are located adjacent to fuel storage and within a secure services compound.
  - (c) Water storage co-located with potable main entry and storage.
- 3.13.5 Indoor lighting will enhance the interior design and provide a comfortable and productive working environment that is both energy efficient and low maintenance. The distributed lighting control system will provide control, monitoring of lamps and energy-efficient operation. LED lighting will be used including for general office lighting and other buildings and facilities onsite.
- 3.13.6 Existing external security lighting will be augmented by energy efficient new luminaires as required by the new buildings and external landscape design.

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### 3.14 Telecommunications

3.14.1 The telecommunications system has been designed to the DFAT ICT and Equipment Specifications Brief. The consultant team will continue to work with DFAT throughout the design development process to ensure the telecommunications system meets their requirements.

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### 3.15 Lightning Protection

3.15.1 Lightning protection has been reviewed and is not required for the site's location.

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### 3.16 Public Address System

3.16.1 A Public Address (PA) system has been provided as part of the Emergency Warning and Intercommunication System (EWIS).

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### 3.17 Security

3.17.1 DFAT security requirements are incorporated into the physical design of the chancery and compound and costs are included in the project budget.

3.17.2 Electronic and physical security measures include:

- (a) Closed circuit television (CCTV) and entry access control systems (EACS).
- (b) Duress alarms and public address (PA) systems.
- (c) Security counters, windows, doors, hardware, and locks.
- (d) SCEC endorsed Intruder alarms.
- (e) Security lighting, screening areas and associated equipment.
- (f) Sally port and perimeter fencing.

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### 3.18 Lift Services

3.18.1 Lift systems will be designed in accordance with Australian regulations and in response to DDA input criteria and be fully compliant with codes for persons with disabilities. The lifts will provide a commercial office handling capacity with conventional controls.

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### 3.19 Civil Works

3.19.1 **Earthwork:** The redevelopment of the compound consists of multiple buildings with the chancery requiring extensive excavation to facilitate footings and structural elements. This will result in significant earthworks occurring during construction. New platforms for the buildings, changes to civil levels for the landscape, footpaths and vehicle paths, and revised design for stormwater overland flow are all required. The D&C Contractor is responsible for the design and is required to facilitate the removal of surplus fill responsibly.

3.19.2 **Pavement, Walkways and Grading:** The design of pavement and footpaths will comply with Australian regulations and provide for DDA compliant access to all public and staff areas and facilities. Grading of paths will be developed in the detailed design phase to allow for wheelchair access throughout the external areas of the site. Material selection and finishes will help with stormwater collection and drainage while providing wayfinding around the landscape areas.

**3.19.3 Vehicle Turning Paths:** Vehicle access to and within the site has been designed in accordance with relevant Australian and Solomon Islands standards. Internal vehicle pathways have been designed with sufficient turning space to allow for entry and exit, parking, and drop-off manoeuvring.

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### 3.20 Landscape Design

**3.20.1** The focus of the landscape has been to create high quality contemporary spaces that respond to the architecture and creates opportunities for interaction, activities, and gatherings, each influenced by the lifestyle, community, and context of Honiara and broader Pacific environment.

**3.20.2** The terrace areas will serve as spaces to cater for events, gatherings, and provide opportunities for passive and active recreation. The pavilion and garden areas can accommodate group gatherings in a relaxed setting to truly reflect the outdoor Australian lifestyle. Annexure 5.2 provides an indicative render of this area.

**3.20.3** Plant selection will be appropriate to the local environment, respecting light conditions, prevailing breezes and availability of soil depth and types. Species being considered for selection, exhibits characteristics of hardiness, low maintenance, low to moderate water requirements and overall suitability to the local climate. Plant species, material colours and textures are all used to represent common elements of the Australian landscapes with those of Honiara.

**3.20.4** Average temperatures in Honiara range from 24°C to 31°C with high sun angles close to the equator, the natural shade provided by trees provides significant cooling to external areas while also reducing solar heat gain by sheltering the external facades of the buildings. Trees and landscaping have also been used to frame views, provide vertical scale, and soften building facades.

**3.20.5** The landscape has been designed to be accessible and compliant with DDA requirements across the different landscape levels of the site. Compliant ramps and gradients have been incorporated providing access to all external areas within the compound.

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### 3.21 Operations, Maintenance and Warranties

**3.21.1** Operation and maintenance manuals will be provided by the D&C Contractor. The manuals will contain equipment data, supplier identification and contacts, specifications, recommended maintenance procedures and manufacturers manuals. As built documentation will be incorporated into the Hand-Over Completion Report.

**3.21.2** Warranties and guarantees will be provided in the name of the Commonwealth of Australia.

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### 3.22 Acoustics

**3.22.1** Acoustic attenuation measures will be included in the design in accordance with the requirements and recommendations of *AS1055: 'Acoustics – Description and Measurement of Environmental Noise'* and *'Design Aids for Noise Control in and around Buildings'* specifically *'Design Criteria for use inside Buildings'* to minimise noise across the office interiors, specifically open plan spaces, enclosed offices, and meeting room. The final scope of acoustic works will be detailed in the design development phase of the project and respond to local external noise requirements.

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### 3.23 Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD)

- 3.23.1 The design of the AHC has been undertaken with the intent of achieving a best practice sustainability outcome. ESD considerations also will extend across the entire lifecycle of the project. DFAT will apply the principles of sustainable design and energy efficiency, reducing the environmental impact during construction, and simplifying enduring maintenance of the facilities throughout the project.
- 3.23.2 Due to the project location, project typology and construction delivery method, direct alignment of the development against Green Building Council of Australia's (GBCA) Greenstar building rating is not achievable, however effort has been made to ensure the intent of the tool and design benchmarks has been met as far as practicably possible. By way of example, Green Star calls for a prescribed level of daylight access which is not achievable within the security requirements for the project. Along with Green Star alignment, the design also aligns with the performance against Australian Building Code requirements for energy efficiency (Section J).
- 3.23.3 The design incorporates the following ESD principles:
- (a) Passive building design including consideration of the local climatic conditions and appropriate balance of windows, walls and shading.
  - (b) Facade treatments to manage heat transfer, solar gain, daylight, and glare.
  - (c) Meeting and exceeding Australian building code requirements for energy efficiency where applicable.
  - (d) Rooftop photovoltaic system.
  - (e) Use of variable air volume type air conditioning to enable efficient, occupancy driven system loading.
  - (f) Water sensitive design strategies that are integrated into the different buildings and structures including.
  - (g) Where possible, sustainable materials that provide improved indoor air quality and are sustainably sourced.
  - (h) Increased levels of outdoor air ventilation and filtration to improve air quality and amenity.
  - (i) Metering of water and electricity use to facilitate ongoing resource management, monitoring, and reporting.

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### 3.24 Provisions for People with Disabilities

- 3.24.1 The chancery and external surrounds will be designed in accordance with DDA requirements to make provision for people with disabilities, including ingress and egress routes, lifts, car parking, access toilets and other facilities.

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### 3.25 Heritage Issues

- 3.25.1 There are no heritage limitations regarding the site or existing buildings on the site.

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### 3.26 Childcare Provisions

- 3.26.1 No change to existing arrangements. The project will not incorporate childcare facilities, however services such as international schools are available locally in Honiara.

### 3.27 Fire Protection

3.27.1 The fire protection systems design for the buildings have been designed in accordance with the relevant Australian and Solomon Islands Standards, with reference to DFAT design requirements and Australian Design Codes where applicable. The buildings will be provided with smoke and thermal detection systems linked to the main Fire Indicator Panel (FIP).

### 3.28 Work Health and Safety

3.28.1 Compliance with Work Health and Safety (WHS) standards is of high importance to OPO as the building owner. In accordance with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, considerable attention has been and will be given to this aspect during the detailed planning of the project and continued preparation of the contract documentation.

3.28.2 WHS issues will be particularly important during the demolition and construction stages of the project. The D&C Contractor is required to implement a stringent project specific WHS Management Plan including safety induction training for all workers and visitors on site. This requirement will also extend to the off-site manufacturing facilities for fabrication of the volumetric modules in Australia.

### 3.29 Authorities and Local Industry Consultation

3.29.1 As part of the early project development process, the project has consulted with key local authorities including:

- (a) The Honiara City Council and its Planning department.
- (b) Telekom (Telecommunications authority).
- (c) Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (Solomon Power).
- (d) Solomon Islands Water Authority (Solomon Water).

3.29.2 Feedback from each of the authorities to the proposed development has been favourable.

3.29.3 The D&C Contractor has engaged local architects, engineers, and suppliers to commence preparing the preliminary designs and to assess local planning and permitting approvals, and to assess the availability and maintainability of local materials and equipment.

3.29.4 Local consultants have also been engaged to review and confirm compliance of the design with the Solomon Islands standards.

3.29.5 The D&C Contractor will endeavour to maximise the involvement of local labour for the traditionally built elements and in the assembly of prefabricated components to support community goodwill, upskill the local workforce and showcase Australian construction practices.

## 4 COST EFFECTIVENESS AND PUBLIC VALUE

### 4.1 Project Delivery Strategy

4.1.1 Following a detailed analysis, a Design & Construct (D&C) delivery methodology was selected as appropriate for this project. This method is also appropriate to a volumetric modular construction methodology for delivery of a project to a remote location to the required quality outcome.

- 4.1.2 It represents the best value for money for the Commonwealth and enables OPO to maintain control of the various project stages including the approval of selections and specifications for building finishes, materials, and services, while allowing the D&C Contractor to utilise market knowledge and competition to control cost and value for money.
- 4.1.3 In the early stages of the project, James Cubitt Architects (JCA) was engaged to prepare sketch plan documentation for the project having been provided with a detailed Functional Design Brief (FDB) including a cost estimate. As the project evolved, the FDB was amended with the development of the Concept Design documentation. The Concept design was undertaken by CK Architecture (CKA) and their sub-consultants.
- 4.1.4 The D&C Contractor has previous volumetric modular construction experience with DFAT having successfully delivered the new Australian Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, and having industry knowledge of sub-contractors capable of delivering volumetric modular construction to Australian and DFAT quality and legislative standards. The D&C Contractor will build on the Concept Design and have engaged a substantial team of sub-consultants to further develop design documentation as well as engaging local consultants in Honiara to facilitate knowledge of local construction requirements and expectations, facilitate local authority approvals and enable a comparative compliance assessment between Solomon Islands and Australian codes and standards.
- 4.1.5 The D&C Contractor has been engaged under a two-stage lump sum contract for the new chancery and facilities works, with PWC approval required to progress past the 50% design stage. This engagement was conducted by way of an open tender Expression of Interest (EOI) and subsequent Request for Tender (RFT) from a selected short list of building contractors.
- 4.1.6 As the building industry in Honiara is variable, and experience and qualified contractors are limited, the modular delivery method will allow for the majority of the structures on site to be constructed in Australia, to Australian legislative and quality standards and delivered to site for reassembly, cladding and commissioning. This methodology will limit the onsite construction period while maintaining standards and utilising sub-contractors with appropriate skills and experience. The fit out works of the chancery is also part of the D&C Contractor scope of works.
- 4.1.7 Submission and management of local authority and utility supply approvals are the responsibility of the D&C Contractor and their local partners benefitting the Commonwealth by consolidating management of the approval process while limiting Commonwealth input to supporting the process rather than management.
- 4.1.8 A project management and contract administration (PMCA) consultancy with international experience has been engaged to provide project administrative and superintendency services to oversee the D&C contract, with on-site support to be provided by a security cleared OPO Project Manager. The engagement of RPS AAP Consulting (RPS) benefits the Commonwealth by utilising a consultant that was involved in other OPO projects and understands the nature and delivery of volumetric modular construction.
- 4.1.9 An independent cost planning consultant (under RPS) Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB) has been engaged to manage the review of project budgets provided by the D&C Contractor and provide input and advice on any project variations or claims put forth by the D&C Contractor. RLB also developed the cost estimates for the Concept Design which was peer reviewed by another cost planning consultant (Turner & Townsend) to verify the estimate.

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## 4.2 Project Cost Estimates

- 4.2.1 The D&C Contractor has been engaged after submitting a lump sum fixed price quote. The out-turn cost estimate has been developed by the D&C Contractor tendered submission and includes demolition, construction of the works and all other related elements such as design consultant fees, project management, supervision, and site office expenses. Escalation risk will be borne by the D&C Contractor.
- 4.2.2 The estimated out-turn cost of the proposed Works is further detailed in **Submission 1.1**.

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## 4.3 Public Value and Local Impact

- 4.3.1 The modular construction approach will contribute to the development of the modular construction industry within Australia, while keeping a larger proportion of jobs and government expenditure in Australia.
- 4.3.2 The D&C Contractor will employ and train professionals and tradespeople for in-country works with a view to develop the local construction industry as non-reliant on external support to deliver complex projects. They will continue to engage with the Australian Pacific Training Coalition in sourcing undergraduates to provide vital on the job training.
- 4.3.3 The impact on local business and community of the new AHC is expected to be sporadic with the site being in a residential area.
- 4.3.4 The nature of the demolition work and construction of the new buildings will provide a certain amount of disruption to neighbours, and occasionally to passing traffic. Consultation with the approving authorities, community stakeholders and immediate neighbours will be undertaken prior to the commencement of any of the works and will continue through all the stages to keep all informed of activities and progress. All appropriate measures will be taken to mitigate the disruption, nuisance and other issues that may arise while undertaking the works. The modular construction methodology significantly helps to minimise time and construction noise onsite over traditional construction methods.
- 4.3.5 The D&C Contractor is obliged to ensure that an effective traffic management and site management plans are applied and all WHS requirements of the work site and surrounds are carried out and maintained in accordance with the Honiara local authority laws, regulations, and ordinances.

## 5 PROGRAM

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### 5.1 Construction Program

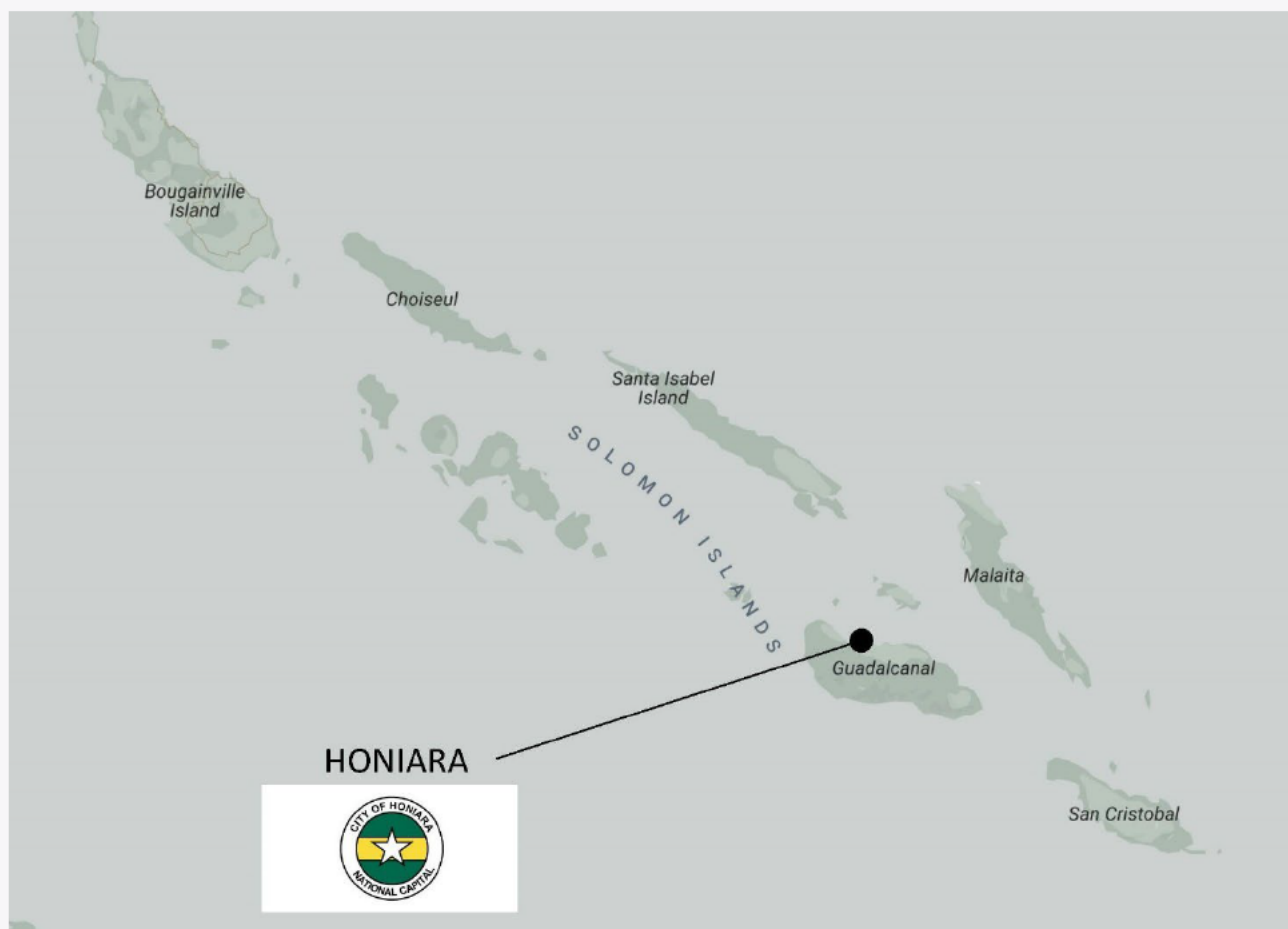
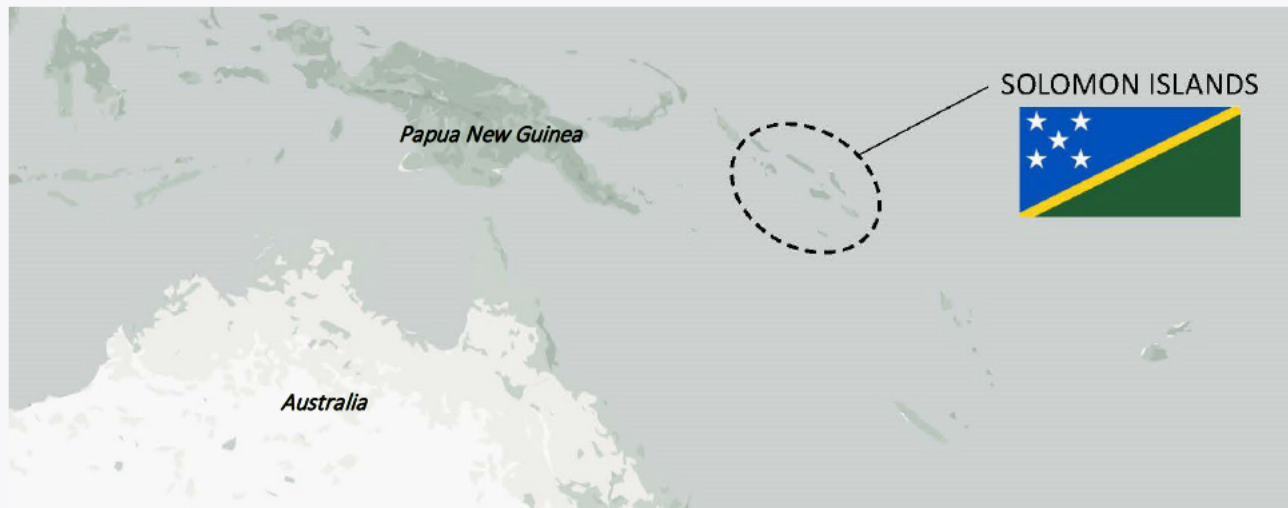
- 5.1.1 Subject to Parliamentary approval, including resolution of any outstanding requirements, construction is expected to commence in mid-2025. Further information regarding the project programme is available in **Submission 1.1**.



## 6 ANNEXURES

### 6.1 Maps and Context Imagery

#### 6.1.1 Location Context – Pacific Context



6.1.2 Site Context – Current and future AHC context



6.1.3 Site Context – Images of Lot 1792 Lengakiki Road, Honiara



View from south end of the vacant site



View from north end of the vacant site

### 6.1.4 Context – Existing owned chancery



Street view of owned chancery



Chancery entrance within the compound



Office space in owned chancery



Breakout area within owned chancery

### 6.1.5 Context – Leased office accommodation



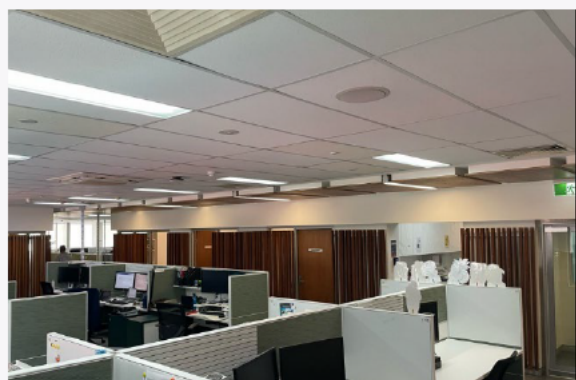
Street view looking at building outside



Street view looking at building outside



Entry foyer of leased office accommodation



Office space within leased office accommodation

## 6.2 Concept Design Imagery



Front of Chancery



Chancery Entrance



Northern Terrace



Internal Lightwell Courtyard



Breakout area

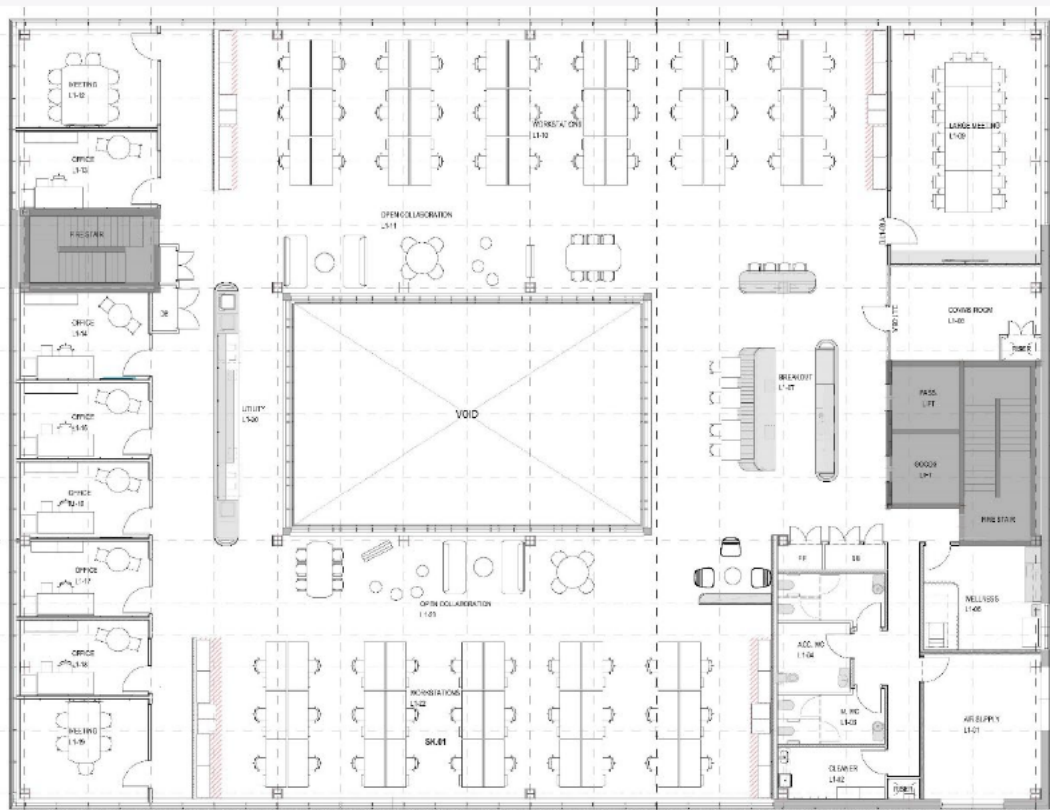


Entry foyer

### 6.3 Concept Design Plans



Indicative Ground Floor Layout



Indicative Typical Office Level Layout