



## **Submission No 24**

**Inquiry into Australia's aid program and its impact on human rights and security in the Pacific**

**Organisation:** NCCA Christian World Service

**Contact Person:** Mr Alistair Gee  
Director

**Address:** 379 Kent Street  
SYDNEY NSW 1230



## NCCA Christian World Service

The Aid and Development Agency of the  
National Council of Churches in Australia

379 Kent Street Sydney  
Locked Bag 199  
Sydney NSW 1230  
Australia

Ph: 61 2 9299 2215  
Fax: 61 2 9262 4514

[www.ncca.org.au/cws](http://www.ncca.org.au/cws)

ABN 64 493 941 795

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The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on  
Foreign, Affairs, Defence and Trade  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Please find enclosed a submission from Christian World Service for the *Inquiry into Australia's aid program in the Pacific*.

In regard to the attached submission, please contact Mr Mark Hobson. Christian World Service welcomes the opportunity for further input into the Inquiry and future opportunities to assist the Government.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Alistair Gee  
Director  
Christian World Service



# **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA / CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE**

**Submission to the  
Joint Standing Committee on  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and  
Trade**

**Human Rights Sub-  
Committee**

**Inquiry into Australia's Aid  
Program in the Pacific**

Prepared by: Mark Hobson  
The National Council of Churches in Australia  
379 Kent Street, Sydney Australia  
Locked Bag 199, Sydney NSW 1230 Australia  
+61 2 9299 2215 | +61 2 9262 4514  
[secretariat@ncca.org.au](mailto:secretariat@ncca.org.au) | [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)

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## **1. SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Christian World Service recommends:

### **1.1 Australia's aid program;**

- The Government ensures that bi-lateral aid is delivered within the context of credible and sustainable bilateral relationships and its broader regional policy. The terms of reference and management of aid programs reflect and capture the priority and importance given to the bilateral relationship.
- The Government review delivery policies to ensure that national government programs are supplementary in nature. Sector programs be designed to directly supplement and enable existing institutions and infrastructure. Programs shift from a complementary design and approach to be embedded within and thereby systemically strengthen and provide recurrent budget assistance.

### **1.2 Strengthening law and justice;**

- Australia assist in strengthening the surveillance of common borders and customs services between Australia, Indonesia, P.N.G and the Solomon Islands in the areas of firearms, ammunition and narcotics.
- Australia assist in the strengthening the infrastructure for weapon and ammunition control systems of police and defence forces. (Especially Australian made and sourced.)
- Australia assist in national government gun reduction and eradication reform programs.
- Comprehensive support to national government prosecution and judicial systems.
- Assist in the relocation of criminal detention centres that are not currently close to provincial hubs, to ensure access to relevant infrastructure support.

### **1.3 Maintaining access to basic services (especially health);**

- Australia revise its policy to community and welfare services and make the development of national government community services a high priority.
- HIV prevention programs be primarily orientated to local contexts that promote responsible sexual behaviour and relationships. Education, training and dialogue in relational and sexual values be recognized as the primary prevention mechanism of HIV.
- A comprehensive review and sustained assistance be given to state land management systems. The formation and implementation of a permanent public education program in regard to the utilization of land for State use.
- Significant investment in the strategic planning and infrastructure of nationalised road maintenance programs.

#### **1.4 Anti-corruption and good governance measures;**

- Significant assistance be provided for the enforcement of forestry protection legislation.
- Land tenure reforms accommodate the asset value and significance of land to subsistence land owners. The provision of realistic poverty protection safety nets and viable livelihood alternatives.

#### **1.5 Supporting peace-building and community and civil society development;**

- Australia support growth in the informal and subsistence sectors, through lending programs for micro-finance institutions and micro-enterprise development.
- Australia provides support to civil society sectors seeking to develop leadership and governance capacity. In the church sector, the Pacific Churches Institute of Leadership & Management and the Pacific Churches Finance & Management Society require institutional support to educate and train church and civil society leaders have the institutional support to intervene at all levels of society and develop the governance structures in our institutions that encourages responsive leadership.
- Strategic and long-term investment in key national and regional peak organisations of the civil society sector. Support be provided to ensure their development and sustainability.
- The Government consider its policy towards Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and consider further the cultural context of peace building in Pacific society and its relationship to criminal and punitive justice systems.

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

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Christian World Service (CWS) welcomes the opportunity to submit its views to the Human Rights Sub-Committee, and to contribute the knowledge it has gained from its involvement in overseas aid and development since 1948.

CWS congratulates the Government on the release of the *White Paper* and *Pacific 2020* documents. Both documents are representative of Australia's increasing commitment to long-term and considered engagement with its neighbours. The themes identified represent greatly needed initiatives. CWS endorses and commends the recognition and subsequent utilization of the churches and their associated representative organizations in the development process.

CWS is the accredited aid and development agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA). The NCCA is comprised of 15 major Christian churches working together to strengthen relationships and understanding of each other and to fulfill common witness, mission and service. Through the NCCA, member churches come together to break down the structures that create and perpetuate poverty, oppression, injustice and division.

CWS supports programs of 39 national and regional partner organisations in 22 countries worldwide. CWS works in partnership with national councils of churches around the world, regional councils in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific; and the World Council of Churches. CWS is a member of the Australian Council for International Development.

In the Pacific region, CWS has been present over the last thirty years. The organisation works with the key church peak body organisations of Melanesia and the Pacific region. (See Appendix A) These organisations play a significant and strategic role in the South-West Pacific and region as a whole. They are the primary peak national and regional church bodies of Melanesia and the Pacific; representing the mainline churches. They represent the majority of the largely Christian population and a substantial part of civil society.

The role of the churches in the Pacific has been increasingly acknowledged and understood by the Australian Government. The church has historically had a greater capacity than national governments to provide education and health services. The church is the focal point of every community in bringing people together. Peak church bodies represent their member churches in a broad range of capacities. (See Appendix B) They play an instrumental role in representing church to society and contributing towards policy formation, providing a respected moral voice, education and training, and coordinating the aid, development and emergency response programs of the churches.

It is in these capacities that CWS and its partners have established high levels of expertise, long term relationships and gained invaluable experience and credibility in providing analysis and recommendations to issues of importance to society.

The submission speaks directly to the Inquiry focal areas and aid delivery more broadly. It is divided into two sections - Recommendations and Commentary.

### **3. COMMENTARY ON RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### **3.1 AUSTRALIA'S AID PROGRAM**

##### **The current climate of Australian engagement and aid delivery**

The Australian aid climate is currently in the process of transitioning from community/civil society development and access to basic services; to all inclusive government assistance missions that covers security enhancement and fostering stable and effective government and political reform.

Australia's engagement in the Pacific is increasingly being responsive to its neighbour's vulnerabilities to sudden and high levels of instability. The reoccurrence of crises in the Solomon Islands and East Timor in 2006 has confirmed this reality. The current climate now also requires a response to concurrent national crises. Australia's neighbours are primarily

fledgling states, between four to thirty years of age. Australian policy has been framed by its commitment to national sovereignty and democracy. This has essentially been based on instituting the machinery of democracy to enable the development of strong nation states.

The increase of ethnic, military and political crises demonstrate that the scope and mandate of Australian aid is experiencing an intensive process of adjustment and transition. The parameters of aid are being framed in the context of the volatility and fluidity of the region. National crises are being addressed alongside long term development frameworks.

This has resulted in the formation of two parallel but mutually dependent delivery mechanisms –

1. The provision of immediate intervention and assistance,
2. Fulfilling ongoing commitments through multi-year aid programs.

Traditional service provision, institutional strengthening and community development have to be increasingly balanced with security enhancement and government strengthening missions. Ongoing aid programs for the formal and informal sectors have to co-exist with whole of government multi-lateral assistance missions, to foster stable and effective government, political reform and growth.

As Australia seeks to adapt to serve its regional neighbours, the terms and dynamics of its relationships are changing. The effectiveness of Australia's role is dependent on the value of relationship, as expressed by the bi-lateral terms of engagement. The terms of reference and ongoing management of aid packages must reflect and capture the priority and importance given to the relationship. This is a fundamental Pacific-wide value on which all behaviour hinges.

### **Perception – the determining factor of the aid relationship**

Aid delivery is the most significant component of Australia's bilateral relationships in the Pacific. Recipient nations assume that aid is foremost an expression of relationship based on values of mutual respect and trust. This is a fundamental assumption. On 28 August 2006, the editorial of the National Newspaper made the following comment on Australia, "*A relationship in which the wealthier party gives continuing aid with the one hand, while ensuring that the recipient's reputation and image becomes ever more blackened with the other, seems to us a strange relationship indeed*". If Australia's neighbours believe there is reason to question this assumption, inquiries about aid become largely irrelevant and inconsequential to the host nation. Inquiries and evaluative frameworks are therefore only as valuable as the strength of the relationship.

For example, RAMSI was initially welcomed by the Solomon Islands and embraced as a means of re-establishing stability and law and order. Over time RAMSI has been perceived as willing to "harbour" corrupt politicians for the sake of political stability and fore-going its



bilateral approach. This perception has impacted on and challenged the relationship. As a result, the community focus has questioned the underlying purpose and intent of programs. While the overarching security presence of RAMSI continues to be valued, the relationship has changed and been affected by perceptions of Australia.

RAMSI illustrates the imperative of the Australian Government to ensure that country programs are understood in the context of the broader regional policy. Relationships need to be understood in relation to Australia's policy of engagement in the Pacific region. In this context, it is essential that recipient communities are made aware international expectations of Australia's regional role and responsibilities.

The perception of Pacific nations of Australia is the most determinant factor of Australian aid effectiveness. If perception is relationally compromised and not understood to the satisfaction of the recipients, then legitimate and valuable programs will not have transforming or sustainable value.

### **Design and implementation of country and sector programs**

The implementation of the Government's aid priorities is dependent on their translation into effective initiatives. Transformative and sustainable change is dependent on it being an expression of the dreams and aspirations of the recipients. CWS welcomes Australia's commitment to continue to enhance the way in which it works with country partners.<sup>1</sup> It is essential that aid initiatives are an extension of national consultation and planning institutions, rather than by-products of short term consultations.

Many sector programs appear to be limited in design to by running parallel to existing infrastructure and institutions. Programs need to have the capacity to provide systemic strengthening by being embedded within existing structures. Complementary sector programs do not ultimately supplement and assist under-funded government budgets. Initiatives that are separate from recurrent budgets translate to a limited investment in primary infrastructure and institutional building. As national governments do not have the capacity to provide primary and essential public services, there is a fundamental limitation and deficit if international aid does not directly support those services. A focus on the provision of "consumables", such as medical and educational supplies and short-term technical assistance, does not holistically support public service function. Aid must invest in "bricks and mortar", and further, make long term provision in asset management, maintenance and depreciation.

Overseas assistance of national governments must be considered in local contexts and their systemic frameworks. The alternative is a limited and incomplete development of infrastructure and institutions. Improved and sustained growth cannot be achieved without holistic investment. A substantive opportunity exists for a shift towards a more organic approach that responds to local realities.

### **3.2 STRENGTHENING LAW AND JUSTICE**

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There are a number of key opportunities for the strengthening of law and justice of Pacific Island nations. The current deficits in the sector have the capacity to cripple the process of apprehending, prosecution, incarceration and rehabilitation. The majority of inadequacies relate to existing infrastructure that is aged, sub-standard or under funded. CWS welcomes the acknowledgement of the need for an integrated sectoral approach by targeting parallel improvements.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Gun control and reduction**

The high presence of firearms and ammunition in the community continues to be one of the strongest influences on law and order. Saturation levels would appear to be highest in Melanesia. Firearms have become an essential tool of the trade in tribal conflicts, for self-defence and criminal activity. Gun amnesty initiatives therefore provide minimal enticement and have minimal impact in absorbing firearms from within the community.

The P.N.G Government has increasingly recognised the lawlessness that has the capacity to paralyse entire provinces. The most current example of the “wild west” reality in P.N.G is the state of emergency imposed on the Southern Highlands Province where police are comparatively “out-gunned”.

The dynamics of illegal weapons in the community are essentially determined by two issues – 1. the ease of accessibility and 2. the high volume. There would appear to be two primary sources of illegal weapons - 1. police and defence force issue, 2. trans-border trafficking. A recent report by Sydney University Associate Professor Philip Alders, notes that the favoured weapon of criminal gangs in rural PNG and the Solomon Islands is the Australian FN-FAL self loading, semi-automatic rifle. The contribution of Australian guns to Pacific instability is an indication of the lack of control and accountability by the authorised recipients. It is inadequate for Australia to supply appropriate weaponry without assuring that recipient governments have the capacity for weapons to remain within their property. While strengthening the guarding of official weapons in government armouries is a significant step forward, controls need to be systemic by also ensuring firearms and ammunition are secure during active duty.

#### **Border security**

The monitoring of national borders and the effectiveness of government customs departments is a large determinant in gun trafficking. Trafficking is facilitated by porous land, sea and air borders and the capacity to easily smuggle weapons and munitions through official points of entry. It is extremely important that Australia's Transboundary Threats program<sup>3</sup> include these foci in supporting the strengthening of border security and customs services between Australia/PNG, PNG/Indonesia, PNG/Solomon Islands.

### **Police effectiveness**

Until possession of a firearm is a serious offense, with punishment that is upheld; policing will continue to take place in extremely dangerous environments. Police need operational budgets that will enable them to be adequately resourced and trained. They need special legislative backing and personnel reinforcements (including Defence Forces) to be able to challenge and defeat unlawful activity, especially during States of Emergency. There is the opportunity for senior police and police trainers and to receive additional training and career experience, through placement with neighbouring police forces and training institutions. This type of assistance will not be effective unless funding is imbedded within police and defence force budgets.

### **Judicial effectiveness**

Court trials are frequently dismissed because of the failure of prosecutors and police to provide appropriate evidence and/or adhere to due process. Many serious offenders (murder, rape, armed assault) are released without trial and are free to re-offend. This dramatically reduces the community's confidence in the judicial system, making their identification of justice much more culturally based. The credibility and relevance of the punitive system is dependent on its capacity to actually ensure the process works. It is natural for people to question whether the legal system can provide remedies for injustice, brutality and inhumanity.

A major reassessment of the way in which the prosecution of criminal cases is approached and presented is required. Present standards are not functional or constitutionally acceptable. There is the opportunity for significance assistance by Australia to both train and adequately resource police and state prosecutors.

### **Correctional institutions**

Many jails and detention centres are victims of age and a lack of funding. In June there was a break-out from the Bundaira Jail in the Eastern Highlands province. The escapees entered the near-by town of Kainantu where they did a lot of damage to property, raped student nurses from the hospital and held up vehicles at gun point. Neither jail officers nor local police had the capacity to respond. The jail is located nearly two hours from the provincial capital to have access to immediate assistance. Like many jails in PNG, Bundaira Jail struggles to adequately contain and humanely provide for prisoners.

Similar to other components of the justice system, jails do not have the necessary funding to adequately incarcerate offenders. As a result, local communities are extremely vulnerable. It is critical that detention centres are located within an adequate distance of provincial hubs for access to overall support mechanisms and that current and well resourced infrastructure is maintained.

## **Rehabilitation**

While criminality is a product of both personal choice and circumstance, prisoners in Pacific detention centres have a high potential for rehabilitation. Many NGOs and businesses supplement and support a government's capacity to provide care for prisoners through the provision of additional resources. This support mechanism reinforces a prisoner's identity of the prison as a part of the greater community. Churches in many communities provide a high level of assistance through rehabilitation programs that do not occur as a part of the normal operation of the jail. A significant opportunity exists to strengthen the effectiveness of incarceration through assisting community based organisations in their rehabilitation programs.

### **3.3 MAINTAINING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES (ESPECIALLY HEALTH)**

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#### **Infrastructure**

CWS welcomes the Government's recognition of the importance of infrastructure as a component of national growth. The availability and functionality of basic infrastructure, especially in rural areas, is an all defining issue. The lack of emphasis on national infrastructure plans is reflective of the interest in local versus national interests. National roads, power, health, education, law & order and communication remain at the mercy of the government of the day.

#### **Community services**

CWS expresses disappointment and concern that Government policy documents, do not acknowledge the importance and necessity of community services to the disabled and other minority groups. National governments do not have the capacity to adequately support the homeless, disabled, poverty stricken and orphaned. The current strain on service providers will continue to increase with the ongoing effects of urbanisation, HIV, illiteracy and poor health services.

Government policy does not support the assistance of service provision to minorities that require ongoing care. The reluctance to support welfare service providers on the grounds of dependency is increasingly unconscionable. The notion that welfare and development cannot co-exist, and that welfare cannot be supported through developmental means, is no longer tenable. A selective approach to long term engagement in the Pacific is not functional or sustainable. The Government must revise its policy approach, redefine the legitimacy of community services and prioritise the development of the community service sector as a critical priority.

#### **Reproductive and sexual health and HIV**

CWS welcomes the significant engagement by Australia in seeking to address HIV and sexual health issues and its consultation with the NGO community.<sup>4</sup> CWS acknowledges the

increasing cognisance and progressive steps that are being taken towards education and treatment of the HIV epidemic and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) more broadly; particularly in P.N.G and the Solomon Islands.

The church networks have a critical role to play in raising awareness on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. The multiplicity of cultural taboos and educational issues serve to exponentially compound the prevalence of the condition. Given that HIV symptoms are initially indicated through a range of common sicknesses, not traditionally associated with HIV, the challenge of intervention is daunting at best.

In Melanesia the most determinant factor in the spread of HIV is behaviour represented in relational values. Behaviours are reflective of values related to sexual violence and gratification, multiple partners, reproductive health, retribution (payback and compensation) and taboos related to menstruation, lactation and pregnancy. The risks and responsibilities associated with contracting or transferring an essentially "invisible" condition are seen within the cultural context as essentially irrelevant and inconsequential.

Given the challenge of influencing behaviour, prevention through protected sex, has been deemed a pivotal means of stemming the spread. Consistent with "international best practice", the saturation of condoms into local communities is perceived by program practitioners as an effective prevention mechanism, regardless of cultural norms. Society leadership has strongly challenged this notion as a fallacy and illogical because protected sex is not a cultural practice, outside of family planning. The inherent over-riding non-verbal message and perception is that condoms represent an opportunity that invites and removes personal responsibility rather than challenges promiscuity.

It would appear that externally funded development programs are yet to embed and orientate HIV programs within cultural values. National programs have been largely influenced by external HIV practitioners and expatriates who assume that changed behaviour and awareness comes from international best practice over and above community values. It is vital that national education programs target community and church leaders, educators and employers in programs which culturally contextual and sensitive.

Consistent with the concerns of national leadership about cultural values in the Pacific, the NCCA firmly believes that the format and role of preventive contraction mechanisms must be firmly entrenched in local contexts that promote responsible sexual behaviour and relationships. While sexuality is a culturally private and taboo topic; education, training and dialogue in relational and sexual values must be recognized as the primary prevention mechanism of HIV.

### **State land use**

CWS welcomes Australia's recognition of the factors that inhibit the capacity of national governments to utilize land for state use.<sup>5</sup> Many public services are intrinsically coupled with land ownership. In the Eastern Highlands Province of P.N.G, two separate and relatively small land disputes have recently halted services to large amounts of the country. The Highlands Highway at the Daulo Pass and the Yonki Power Station (providing power to Goroka, Lae and Madang) are both currently plagued by land owner disputes. Land owners have the power to affect the capacity of a service to flow and therefore hijack entire national infrastructure systems. These problems stem from the tension between traditional land values and the Government's will and capacity to ensure long term management and control of State land.

A recent Post Courier editorial expressed the following, "*Crisis management seems to be the method of handling such flashpoints. Sirinuma dam, at Sogeri near Port Moresby, has been the scene of similar disturbances more than once in the past decade. The greatest living example of the failure of government to keep tabs on such landowner disputes is that of Panguna, the gold and copper mine run by Bougainville Copper Limited for nearly 20 years before the peoples revolution occurred. The Bougainville crisis, which took thousands of lives and ruined a generation, should have been the last example needed for the Government. Signs had been surfacing for months, with PNG Power advertisements about attempts to get local people to the negotiating table. Now the task is with the government negotiators to isolate the people who have a right to talk about the land, not every Tom, Dick and Harry.*"

While cultural values cannot be ignored, national governments must assume the will to fulfill their mandate of service provision. Where leases and Memorandums of Understanding are involved, governments must uphold and adhere to established frameworks and mechanisms of dispute resolution.

### **National highways**

The functionality of road systems has proven to be an essential indicator of infrastructure capacities and a primary enabler and component of law and order and economic growth.

There have been a range of approaches to enable the construction and maintenance of roads. This has primarily occurred through contracts with private companies and local communities. Australia has increasingly endorsed road maintenance through the utilization of local people community participation schemes.<sup>6</sup> This approach is highly innovative at the local level but provides potential challenges for significant roads and national highways. While local contracts provide a source of cash grants, it potentially promotes the mentality (especially in the PNG Highlands) that the oversight and control of roads can be assumed local landowners. This promotes traditional tribal thinking and justification for hijacking roads during tribal disputes, weather damage and compensation claims.

The limited capacity of provincial governments to construct roads through its own infrastructure is acknowledged. There have however been minimal in-roads made towards strengthening national government capacity to maintain established roads. The lack of government owned road infrastructure ensures that maintenance remains a development issue that can be outsourced through overseas aid. There must be a paradigm shift where road works are funded as a responsibility of government and not overseas aid assistance. As a minimum, investment must be made in national road maintenance strategies.

### **3.4 ANTI-CORRUPTION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE MEASURES**

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#### **Forestry**

CWS welcomes the White Paper's concerns of the crisis in the natural forestry sector.<sup>7</sup> The practices of national and foreign logging companies continue to be a source of local and international concern. National governments do not always deem illegal practices as "illegal". Regulatory and licensing bodies appear to be limited in both will and capacity to perform their mandates. PNG and the Solomon Islands would inaccurately appear to rely on logging as a long term and viable commodity for economic development. Meanwhile, local landowners, future resource stocks and the environment remain the victims. The timber industry has brought minimal development to rural areas and, if anything, has been largely destructive.

CWS equally welcomes Australia's response by strengthening environmental regulatory regimes.<sup>8</sup> The Government has the capacity to respond on a number of fronts. It has the option of Australian aid being conditional to mutually agreed logging practices. Australia can legislate to refuse illegal and destructive timber entering the country. It can continue to challenge the culture of resource management by assisting in the development of ecologically sustainable commodities. Regulatory bodies will thereby have a greater interest in ensuring responsible, legal and certified logging. Support can also be provided to community based organisations in providing advice, support and representation to landowners.

#### **Land tenure**

CWS recognises the complexities and vulnerabilities of land tenure reform. The logging industry is a prime example of the vulnerability of land owners to external entities taking advantage and doing permanent damage to their one and only life giving asset. The White Paper acknowledges that customary land provides a "safety net" from poverty.<sup>9</sup> However, if the current form of land systems will not meet emerging national needs there is no evidence of appropriate protection mechanisms. Land tenure reform must consider the ultimate value of ineffective reform if it does not counter its contribution to urban drift and landlessness. Land tenure reform must be a national process but is not viable without demonstrable local support and the capacity to protect livelihoods.

### **3.5 SUPPORTING PEACE-BUILDING AND COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT**

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#### **Growth in the informal and subsistence sectors**

CWS recognises the White Paper's emphasis on growth in regard to the agricultural, tourism, logging, fishery and extraction sectors while also recognising the importance of small-scale private sector development.<sup>10</sup> A critical area of micro-economic growth in the informal and subsistence sectors is the facilitation of small scale enterprise development and entrepreneurship.

To date, minimal opportunities have existed for Pacific people, in cash and subsistence economies, to access micro-enterprise loans. Long-term business security, greater family incomes for education and health care cannot occur without intentional enterprise investment at the grass roots level. Communities need to be supported and encouraged by having access to small and short-term loans. Loans can be made available through the development of micro-finance institutions through community banks or government programs. CWS would welcome a commitment by the Government on policy that specifically makes provision for national governments and community based organisations in micro-enterprise lending.

#### **Peak body and network fatigue**

Pacific peak body organisations and networks within the civil society sector play an essential role in supporting and representing their respective constituencies. They are however experiencing increasing levels of fatigue in their capacity and financial viability. National and regional bodies are blighted with an endemic lack of financial support. Financial solvency is compromising the capacity of core functions and programs. Organisations are often forced to operate by less than transparent means to remain operational. These circumstances damage organisational credibility and reputations. This causes a distancing of their constituencies, diminishing the legitimacy of organizations that have a credible and substantive history.

The issue of fatigue is equally endemic in peak church organizations. The national and regional stability of the Pacific is reliant on the corporate strength and service capacity of church peak bodies. The effectiveness of church in society is dependent not only on denominational strength but the entire network to provide functional and cohesive representation. Membership is suffering as churches and para-church organisations are reducing their support to instead focus on core activities. A number of peak bodies are showing increasing signs of fragility and vulnerability of becoming insolvent and imploding.

In Papua New Guinea, the PNG Council of Churches, Churches Medical Board and Church Education Board have all experienced challenges in maintaining an active membership. This has meant the services they provide have suffered. The effectiveness of service delivery at the denominational level is reliant on the coordination and quality control mechanism of their secretariats. The viability of peak bodies organisations is therefore integral to this.



The Government has recognized the critical role of the PNG churches in their provision of health and education services and has sought to strengthen capacity accordingly. While AusAID's Churches Partnership Program has been critical and timely an additional tier of engagement is required at the secretariat level, to enable effectiveness in aid and development delivery.

There are four critical policy opportunities to support the programs of national and regional church peak bodies to facilitate the unity of the churches and assist in their service to the community -

1. The coordination of church aid and community development programs and program management training.
2. The coordination and capacity development of churches in disaster preparedness and response.
3. Church organizational strengthening in governance and management.
4. Community empowerment methodologies of civil society and leadership training.

### **Church in civil society**

CWS recognises the emphasis placed on leadership in the White Paper.<sup>11</sup> The Pacific region has been rocked by crises at a national level in the past two decades affecting many of our societies. Civil unrest, law and order, corruption, economic and natural disasters have led to certain Pacific countries being labelled as "failed states". The role of the church in these trying times has often been "reactive" rather than anticipatory or proactive. Leadership and good governance is a key component missing in these crisis situations. It is important that the Pacific Churches embrace their special role in the development of future leaders and the need for leadership at all levels.

Globalization impacts our Pacific Island countries affecting the livelihoods of our people. Global issues such as Climate Change threaten the survival of our small island countries. HIV AIDS, environment, poverty and other pressing issues impact our communities and urban drift and over crowding urban situations threaten both our social structures and our environment. The role of the churches is critical but has been limited by the lack of institutional capacity to respond and engage effectively on many of these pressing issues. It is important that leaders are nurtured with an ecumenical spirit / vision, who are able to effectively intervene at all levels of society and develop the governance structures in our institutions that encourages responsive leadership.

### **Capacity development of church sector**

Traditional governance structures within the Pacific Churches are another major challenge. Churches have maintained systems and structures that are sometimes over 100 years old and these traditional systems have rarely been examined for effectiveness. Pacific Churches need the institutional support that will enable discussion and examination of governance issues in Pacific churches and ensure current and future leaders are aware of the challenges ahead of them. The importance of Good Governance in our societies at local and national level cannot

be underestimated and developing leaders of integrity and character is a critical contribution an effective leadership institution can make to the Pacific.

Finance and management training is a critical need. Pacific Church financial secretaries and executive leadership have become increasingly conscious of the role and responsibility of the churches in regard to finance, administration and development. Despite the important role of the churches in education and other development activities the overall performance of such initiatives has often been discouraging. Financial mismanagement and ineffective use of its resources have often hampered the church's ability to carry out its core mission.

An active leadership and management network and institute would provide the capacity, resources and expert services to the Pacific churches to review, revitalize and strengthen their institutions. A strong network of experts and a central resource of best practices and relevant information would be available to churches and Pacific institutions. An emphasis on leadership training would provide a niche that is relevant and would be available to Pacific leadership in all sectors and essential for developing future leaders in the church, community and nations throughout the Pacific.

### **Peace building**

CWS welcomes the Government's support of peace-building in the Pacific. The ethnic violence in the Solomon Islands is an example of where the volume of crimes that require investigation has resulted in significant investment in peace-building. This is evidenced in the funding of the National Peace Council and providing significant assistance to the formal justice system.

Cultural values and practices attached to reconciliation are the most vital and critical component of establishing peace. All other approaches to justice are inconsequential, without recognising and incorporating traditional practices. Confronting massive levels of violence, trauma and corruption requires a government's endorsement and a willingness to support the facilitation of an independent peace-building process. It relies on a whole-of-community/people group engagement in the process of acknowledgement and reconciliation.

Crime involving many people cannot be adequately addressed or absorbed by punitive systems. Punitive systems depend on the notion of punishment for justice. This does not accommodate a process of reconciliation. To date, the Australian Government has been cautious to support Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) because they are not seen to be conducive to political stability. Such a policy however, enables selectiveness in who will face or escape justice. TRCs are an internationally proven method of confronting crimes, providing accountability and consequence and the reconciliation of relationships. In the Pacific it is critical that where necessary, justice mechanisms not only make people accountable for their actions but address the relationships that have been broken and ultimately enabling the harmony of society. Australia's support of peace-building must recognise and respond to non-institutional values and practices.

**Further information:** Alistair Gee (Director), [agee@ncca.org.au](mailto:agee@ncca.org.au)  
Mark Hobson (Pacific Program Officer), [mhobson@ncca.org.au](mailto:mhobson@ncca.org.au)  
NCCA Christian World Service  
Locked Bag 199  
Sydney, NSW 1230  
Ph: 61 2 9299 2215 Fax: 61 2 9262 4514

## APPENDICIES

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### Appendix A

1. Ecumenical Centre for Research Education & Advocacy (Fiji)
2. Pacific Concerns Resource Centre
3. Pacific Conference of Churches
4. Pacific Theological College
5. Papua New Guinea Council of Churches
6. Solomon Islands Christian Association
7. World Council of Churches Pacific Desk

### Appendix B

1. Representation on government boards.
2. Chaplaincy role to parliamentarians.
3. Advocacy role in civil society.
4. The moral/prophetic voice of the church in society.
5. Awareness raising, education and training.
6. Consultations for policy formation and implementation.
7. Conducting and disseminating research.
8. Coordination of church programs (community development, disaster response, youth and women)
9. Conducting national programs. (HIV, peace building).

## REFEERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability – A *White Paper* on the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program, 2006, p. 22

<sup>2</sup> White Paper, p. 46

<sup>3</sup> White Paper, p. 55

<sup>4</sup> White Paper, p. 49-50

<sup>5</sup> *Pacific 2020*, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth, 2006, p. 86-88

<sup>6</sup> *Pacific 2020*, p. 76

<sup>7</sup> *Pacific 2020*, p. 6, 50

<sup>8</sup> *Pacific 2020*, p. 119-120

<sup>9</sup> *Pacific 2020*, p. 81

<sup>10</sup> White Paper, p. 39-40

<sup>11</sup> White Paper, p. 43