



SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE  
REFERENCES COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND THE  
ISLAND STATES OF THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC  
SUBMISSION <sup>r/b\*</sup>

Submission No: 45

Submittor: Environment Australia

Contact: Mr David Anderson

FAS Strategic Development Division

Address: GPO Box 787

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Tel: 6274 1111

Fax: 6274 1666

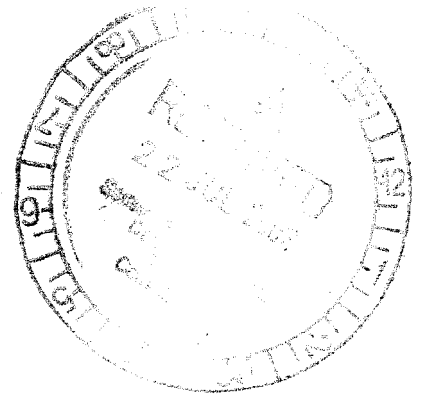
Email: [www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)

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Department of the Environment and Heritage



Mr Brenton Holmes  
Secretary of the Committee  
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Holmes

**Inquiry dealing with Papua New Guinea and South Pacific States**

Thank you for your letter of April 2002 inviting a submission to the inquiry into Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea and other Pacific island countries. Attached is the submission from Environment Australia. The contact officer for any queries regarding the submission is Mr Andrew Taplin, International Regional Unit (Ph. 6274 2072, email [andrew.taplin@Ccea.gov.au](mailto:andrew.taplin@Ccea.gov.au)).

Yours sincerely

David Anderson  
First Assistant Secretary  
Strategic Development Division

July 2002

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MEMBER

SUBMISSION FROM  
ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA  
TO  
SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES  
COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

July

1. This submission relates primarily to item (c) in the terms of reference 'Development cooperation relationships with the various states of the region, including the future direction of the overall development cooperation program.'
2. Environment Australia's relationships and activities in the PNG and the South Pacific region occur primarily through a close bilateral relationship with PNG and a more open multilateral regional relationship with other South Pacific countries through the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. The primary objective for development of the relationships is to build the capacity of governments in the region to achieve improved environmental management.
3. This submission covers:
  - The extent of EA's relationships with Pacific countries;
  - The bilateral relationship with PNG; and
  - The future direction of both the PNG and Pacific country relationships.

**The extent of EA's relationships with Pacific countries**

4. EA's relationship with Pacific Island countries is developed primarily through the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The Environment Minister or Parliamentary Secretary generally attends SPREP Ministerial level meetings, which are held biannually. The Department also participates in Australian government delegations to SPREP meetings.
5. Joint activities with SPREP primarily involve technical workshops on a range of issues including protection of wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and management of trade in endangered species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). SPREP staff visits to EA provide opportunities for a dialogue on key environment issues affecting the Pacific. These issues have included whales, climate change, and preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

**The Bilateral Relationship with PNG**

6. Environment Australia's bilateral relationship with PNG is expressed primarily through a joint cooperation program with the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

7. The relationship has strengthened in recent years following DEC's formal engagement with EA through their becoming members of the former Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) and more recently their observer status in its successors - the Environment Protection and Heritage Ministerial Council and the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council. Environment Australia has provided funding (airfares and accommodation) to support PNG participation in these Councils. DEC has participated at Ministerial and Department Secretary levels.

8. DEC is a member of the Torres Strait Environment Management Committee (EMC), a sub-committee under the Torres Strait Joint Advisory Council meeting under the auspices of the Torres Strait Treaty. The EMC meets approximately every 12 months to discuss a range of issues including fisheries management, turtles and dugong, mining and marine pollution.

9. The previous Environment Minister Senator Hill participated in the 12th Australia-PNG Ministerial Forum held in Port Moresby in March 2000, represented Australia at the PNG Silver Jubilee celebrations during September 2000 and participated in the 13th Australia-PNG Ministerial Forum held in Canberra in February 2001.

10. In the margins of the March 2000 Australia-PNG Ministerial Forum the previous Environment Minister, Senator Robert Hill endorsed joint activities in six key areas during a meeting with his PNG counterpart Herowa Agiwa. The activities identified during the meeting involved both the environment protection and conservation sectors and covered assistance with World Heritage, sustainable forest management, wildlife trade, marine planning and chemicals management.

11. Activities are being developed in each of the other priority areas, with the primary emphasis on the sustainable forest management activity.

#### **The Future Direction of the PNG and Pacific Country Relationships**

12. The relationship EA is developing with PNG is based upon a program of activities in the forest sector covering the key areas required to develop a framework for improving environmental protection in forests. If successful, the model being developed in the PNG forest sector may be extended to other sectors within PNG (eg. marine), and to other Pacific countries where it can assist in integrating environmental, social and economic objectives in national planning.

13. We are developing the South Pacific Regional Environment Program as our principal interlocutors in the South Pacific, with bilateral work largely undertaken in a SPREP context. We are conscious that the most effective capacity building work is that undertaken in country, because it can engage and develop networks among relevant staff from the full range of relevant agencies within and beyond government. Regional meetings and workshops, which necessarily engage only one or two staff from each country, are appropriate for introductory work and for

developing coherent regional positions for wider forums such as meetings of parties to the global environment conventions.

14. Environment Australia's engagement in the South Pacific is undertaken to pursue Australia's national interests. We are happy to make available to the peoples of the Pacific the knowledge, skills and expertise of Australia's national environment agency to assist them to pursue their goals for environmental management.