

## **Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade**

### **Inquiry into Australia's involvement in peacekeeping**

#### **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

#### **Written question on notice 24 August 2007**

##### **Question 1: Pacific Islander representation in RAMSI**

Oxfam Australia in its submission to the inquiry comments that:

Given the large number of overseas personnel taking up positions in deployments like the Solomon Islands, there is potential to draw more active involvement of personnel from Pacific island countries to support the process of peacekeeping and rebuilding. The absence of meaningful numbers of Pacific Islanders in the civilian state-building elements of the RAMSI operation could be remedied.<sup>1</sup>

Oxfam suggests that RAMSI postings could be considered for Pacific Island staff, with Australian or New Zealand personnel 'temporarily backfilling positions in Suva, Port Vila or Nuku'alofa while island staff bring their unique understanding of Melanesia and the 'Pacific way' to their work in Honiara'.

Oxfam recommends that 'the government increases representation and participation from amongst the member states of the Pacific Islands Forum for regional peacekeeping missions'.

- What is DFAT's response to Oxfam's observations and recommendation regarding increased representation and participation of Pacific Island Forum member states in regional peacekeeping operations?

##### **Response**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) believes that RAMSI, as a regional initiative, should involve the participation of Pacific Islands country deployees to the greatest extent possible. Pacific Islanders provide relevant insight and experience, and often share a cultural affinity with local Solomon Islanders.

DFAT fully agrees with the recommendation contained in the Pacific Islands Forum Review of RAMSI, to engage more Pacific Islanders in RAMSI and increase the regional face of RAMSI. Australia has strongly supported concerted efforts by RAMSI to date to engage more Pacific Islanders. This has included placing in regional media and Pacific Islands countries' newspapers advertisements for RAMSI vacancies, briefing relevant senior officials in Pacific Islands countries (such as the Chief Justices or equivalent of contributing countries when seeking legal personnel for the law and justice program), and working with New Zealand to task our diplomatic missions to convey to governments news of the vacancies in their respective host nations.

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<sup>1</sup> *Submission 24*, pp 9–10.

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The reluctance of some Pacific countries to release public servants on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) remains an obstacle to greater regionalisation of RAMSI. The process would involve releasing officers on LWOP, so that they were able to continue to make contributions to their superannuation fund while employed by RAMSI, and have a confirmed position to which they could return upon completing their period of employment with RAMSI. We understand Tonga has recently amended its policy in this regard and welcome this development.

Australia supports RAMSI's intention to work more closely with the Pacific Islands Forum to address country-specific constraints to Pacific Islander deployments to RAMSI, including inviting the Forum Secretariat to assist in identifying possible candidates for specific positions within RAMSI's civilian programs.

DFAT supports ongoing efforts by RAMSI to identify senior executive positions in the Participating Police Force (PPF) and military Combined Task Force (CTF) that could be filled by appropriately qualified and experienced Pacific Islander police and military officers. While contributing Pacific Islands countries contribute significant numbers of personnel from their often-small police and military forces, RAMSI has recognised that the contributions of Pacific Islander officers should be reflected in the deployment of senior officers in RAMSI's PPF and CTF command structure.

The Australian and New Zealand Governments have agreed to examine options for Australian and New Zealand personnel to 'backfill' positions in those Pacific Islands governments from which Pacific Islanders are drawn for deployment to RAMSI, with a view to ensuring the contributing Pacific Islands government capacity is not diminished. Such backfilling would only occur with the full agreement, and at the invitation, of the contributing Pacific Islands government.

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## Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

### Inquiry into Australia's involvement in peacekeeping

#### Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Public hearing 13 September 2007

### Questions on Notice

#### Question 1: Number of women in decision making positions

CHAIR—When we talked to AusAID about the impact of the resolution in terms of Australia's approach, they indicated in response to a written question on notice that 'a strategy for advancing the position of women in government in the Solomon Islands, as part of the RAMSI Machinery of Government program', had been developed. The response stated:

'By supporting women to gain positions of decision-making power RAMSI seeks to ensure that women are well-placed to contribute effectively to conflict prevention and peace consolidation strategies'.

... Can you give us any indication of what we have achieved in that process and in other countries where we have a similar sort of engagement? Could you perhaps do similarly for Timor Leste?

...But, even if on notice, can you provide us with advice about the numbers that we may or may not have achieved by the implementation of the strategies that AusAID tell us about...

(*Proof Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 11)

#### Response

##### RAMSI

##### *Strategy for advancing the position of Women in Government'*

To assist in overcoming barriers to women's participation in all levels of government and to explore culturally appropriate strategies to address such constraints, RAMSI's Machinery of Government (MOG) program developed a 'Strategy for advancing the position of Women in Government' in November 2006. The strategy's overall goal is to increase women's participation in administrative and representative government. This strategy is structured on three objectives: (i) increase the percentage of women at all levels within the Public Service; (ii) reduce the barriers to women's election; and (iii) improve the capacity of those organisations that have the potential to foster women's aspirations to public office. To implement this strategy, a team is being established, which will consist of a locally-engaged experienced coordinator, with periodic inputs from an internationally-renowned expert on gender and government. Recruitment of the Strategy Coordinator is currently underway. Once this recruitment process has been completed, implementation of the Strategy will commence.

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### ***RAMSI Machinery of Government support***

In 2006, the RAMSI MOG program supported the training of seven female candidates standing for election, and their teams (a total of 35 trainees, of which 28 were women), across three Provinces (Malaita, Isabel and Guadalcanal). This training was delivered by the National Council of Women (NCW). The RAMSI MOG program is also supporting a partnership between the NCW and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to provide training to and support for female candidates in the upcoming provincial elections in Makira and two national by-elections in Malaita Province (Aoke-Langalanga and East Malaita). In mid-2006, the MOG program also commissioned research on the barriers to women in representative government, which facilitated the gathering, on different occasions, of some 23 female candidates and enabled a national discussion of the institutional and cultural barriers faced by women.

In 2006, the RAMSI MOG program supported a Public Service Commissioner to participate in the '2006 Women Lead in Promoting Peace and Stability workshop' in Washington, hosted by the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA).

The Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), which was re-established in 2006 as part of the RAMSI MOG program, after many years of lying dormant, has now provided training to over 1,600 public servants across the Solomon Islands Government. In 2006 and 2007 (to September), IPAM has provided training to 1,634 public servants, of whom 27 per cent (443) have been women.

RAMSI's support for the development of the Solomon Islands Police Force (SIPF) has included programs to strengthen the role of women in the SIPF and attract a higher percentage of new female recruits. Since SIPF recruitment re-commenced in 2004, 81 women have been recruited (from a total of 246 new recruits) and the SIPF has adopted a policy of aiming to recruit at least 33 per cent of women in each new recruit course. On 13 September 2007, 55 new officers of the Solomon Islands Police Force, who began their recruitment training in 2004, successfully completed their two-year probationary period, confirming their appointments as officers. Twenty-four of the newly-confirmed officers were women.

### ***AusAID bilateral support***

Separately, AusAID has established a gender working group in Solomon Islands to ensure gender mainstreaming by fostering a collaborative gender-proactive environment among AusAID and RAMSI-supported initiatives. Later this year, it is expected that training on gender mainstreaming, prepared in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government, will be provided to NGOs, public servants, and the AusAID team.

AusAID has established a partnership with UNIFEM-Pacific for the implementation of a regional initiative to increase political participation of women as active citizens and leaders. Solomon Islands is one of the first countries to have benefitted from this initiative in the Pacific.

### ***Solomon Islands Government achievements since RAMSI's arrival***

In July 2003, Ethel Sigimanu was the only woman in a Permanent Secretary position in the Solomon Islands Government (Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Women's Affairs).

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As at September 2007, five women are Permanent Secretaries in the Solomon Islands Government:

- Nairie Alamu, PS to the Department of Communication, Aviation and Meteorology
- Joy Kere, PS to the Department of National Reconciliation and Peace
- Ruth Liloqula, Secretary to Cabinet, Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Ethel Sigimanu, PS to the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs
- Jane Waetara, PS to the Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination

There is still a long way to go to achieve equal participation of women in government and public service in Solomon Islands. No women are represented in the current National Parliament and historically, only one woman has ever been elected to National Parliament. Women currently represent 33 per cent of the total public service (including police, teachers, doctors and nurses), 78 per cent of whom are represented in junior levels of the public service.

### **East Timor**

Australian police and military deployments to the UN Police and the International Security Force (ISF) in East Timor are different to those of RAMSI. Efforts to advance the role of local women in decision-making in East Timor fall outside the mandates of the UN Police and ISF in East Timor.

As at 27 September 2007, of the 815 ADF personnel deployed on Operation Astute in East Timor, 43 were female. Of the 50 personnel deployed by the AFP to the UN Integrated Mission to Timor-Leste (UNMIT), four are female.

### **Question 2: Australia-Japan security declaration**

Senator TROOD—Mr Potts, the joint declaration with the Japanese on security that was signed earlier in the year, I think, has included within it some proposals in relation to peacekeeping activities. Can you outline to the committee what is proposed in relation to that degree of cooperation at the moment? Are there fleshed out plans as to how that arrangement and cooperation might proceed?

*(Proof Committee Hansard, 13 September 2007, p. 12)*

### **Response**

Peacekeeping and peace building are key areas of interest we share with Japan. They have a high profile in the Australia–Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.

Japan participates in peacekeeping-related courses run by the Australian Defence Force Peacekeeping Centre. These courses include the International Peacekeeping Operations Seminar and the Military Observers Course. Japan will again be invited to attend both courses in 2008.

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Australian defence officials recently participated in Japan's 2007 Tokyo Defence Forum, held in Tokyo, 18-21 September, which focussed on national and international efforts for peace building in peace-time.

Also, the Action Plan to implement the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation provides for the exploration of additional opportunities for practical bilateral cooperation in international peace operations, including through more effective links in relation to asset management and capabilities.

Additionally, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) will contribute to Japan's peace building training workshop in Hiroshima in October by presenting on Australia's approach to security sector reform in third countries. Representatives of Japan's National Police Agency propose to attend the AFP's International Deployment Group pre-deployment briefing in 2008.

### **Question 3: Participation in United Nations senior leadership courses**

Senator TROOD—The proposition [General Ford] put to us was that Australia should think seriously about civilians and military people involved in peacekeeping operations getting some experience of the leadership courses provided by the United Nations...Is it typical or usual for you to send officers to those courses, and do you have any figures you might be able to provide to us on the number of people who have participated in them?

*(Proof Committee Hansard, 13 September 2007, p. 12)*

### **Response**

UN Senior Mission Leadership courses have been running for approximately two years. There have been three courses scheduled in 2007 (in Nigeria, Kenya and Sweden) and a further three courses are planned for 2008 (in India, Australia and Brazil). Approximately 160 people have completed the course during that time. Course participants usually comprise of eight military officers, eight police and eight civilians. An AFP officer has taken part in one of the courses as a trainer, however, no personnel from AusAID, Defence or DFAT have attended as participants.