

For: Dr Kathleen Dermody

Subject: Submission to the Inquiry into the economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the island states of the southwest Pacific

Dear Kathleen,

Competing priorities have prevented me preparing a stand-alone submission before the Inquiry. However, I believe that I have written a useful paper for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute that should be brought to the attention of the Inquiry.

So, may I draw your attention to:

Bob Breen, Peace Support Operations (Australia's contemporary contribution to peace in its regional neighbourhood), in ASPI Special Report, *Australia and the South Pacific: rising to the challenge*, Issue 12, March 2008, pp. 43-55.

The paper draws on Australia's history of peace support operations in the South Pacific and argues that Australia is moving towards a regional neighbourhood watch role. More particularly, the paper recommends that a high-level government task force should analyse the viability of a Regional Neighbourhood Development Program that includes examining peace monitoring models from Bougainville (Operation Bel Isi) and community engagement in the Solomon Islands (Operation Helpem Fren).

Thanking you in anticipation of your understanding and consideration,

Warmest regards abound,

Bob Breen

March 2008 — Issue 12

Australia and the South Pacific Rising to the challenge



Executive Director's introduction

In 2007 ASPI embarked on a major project that examines key issues in South Pacific security and Australia's role in the region. This *Special Report* is the first major output of this project and presents seven papers looking at different aspects of the regional security conundrum.

The island states of the South Pacific face severe challenges to the security needs of their peoples: most have between 30 and 40% of their population aged fourteen or under, their economic growth is slow with income levels falling and high youth unemployment; and there are problems of governance, including corruption. High rates of population growth will produce rising poverty unless income growth rates can be raised. Other problems include transnational crime, natural disasters and sea level rise.

The Pacific countries, whilst facing these problems, also have advantages that can be leveraged with the right policies. Prospects for stability are better in the smallest states—Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga—than the four most populous: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu.

Australia's vital interests are involved in the South Pacific: the stability of the region is an important factor in our own security, and this translates into on-going defence, security, economic, aid, environmental and humanitarian activities. We also have substantial assets to advance those interests, whilst also helping the Pacific Island countries. On occasions this might mean Australia having to directly respond to regional crises but more should be done to avert such outcomes. Australia has made a huge investment to date in partnerships in the Pacific, and this should continue. Australia's global partners expect us to lead in the region but increasing economic and political interest from other external powers may undermine Australia's ability to shape outcomes in the South Pacific.

Most of the challenges facing the island states will require a long term commitment. This *Special Report* offers a range of suggestions that should be considered in the development of Australia's regional strategy. I thank the contributors for their efforts in analysing the changes taking place in the region and for their ideas on how best to deal with future challenges. I also wish to acknowledge the work of ASPI's Director of Research Programs, Anthony Bergin, in leading this important project on our relations with the South Pacific.

Peter Abigail
Executive Director

Peace support operations

Bob Breen

This paper examines Australia's contemporary contribution to peace in its regional neighbourhood. Its focus is on a post-colonial struggle with nationhood. The emphasis is on peacekeeping in Bougainville in the 1990s where Australia made the transition from an *in extremis* intervention policy to an intervention policy based on applying regional solutions to neighbourhood internal security problems. In Bougainville Australia also began to take a whole of government approach to local peace support operations and to incorporate community engagement. Unarmed peacekeeping there presaged a regional approach to armed intervention into East Timor and Solomon Islands in 1999 and 2003 respectively, and again into both countries in 2006.

The paper argues that Australia is moving towards a regional neighbourhood watch role. Neighbourhood watch is collaboration between police and people that aims to prevent crime and build community solidarity. The preventative and cooperative approach to regional relations in the 1970s and 1980s echoed the crime prevention and community building objectives of neighbourhood watch.¹ However, it was neighbourhood watch without policing. In the late 1980s neighbourhood disturbances in Fiji, in Vanuatu and in Bougainville set the scene for neighbourhood watch with policing.

In the 1990s and early 2000s unarmed preventative neighbourhood policing (peacekeeping) evolved into armed policing (peace enforcement). The paper concludes that regional neighbourhood watch needs to incorporate adapted models of community engagement from earlier peacekeeping operations to prevent further crimes against

democratic governance and civil society and to help rebuild national governance and well-being among troubled neighbours by mobilising civil society.

Why bother to keep the peace in the neighbourhood?² The Second World War was Australia's shock of the century. In the first three months of 1942 Japan humiliated Western powers in Southeast Asia and went on to encroach into the South Pacific. Australians feared invasion. If Gallipoli was a bloody initiation into nationhood, then the Kokoda Campaign in 1942 was a bloody initiation into strategic reality. Australians were fighting an Asian power in their own backyard without substantial American or British support. Sufficient American support did come, but Australian blood had to be spilt on southwest Pacific battlefields. Australian governments vowed to never let hostile powers use the islands of the South Pacific as stepping stones to Australia or as bases from which to cut Australia's maritime trading routes.

Australia neither sought hegemony nor proprietorship after the Second World War in anticipation of a decolonised neighbourhood. The challenge was not to interfere but to encourage and facilitate stable democratic governments underpinned by viable economies and well-behaved civil societies. Though the term 'neighbourhood watch' was not used at the time, Australia was a founding member of the South Pacific Forum in 1971 that became the venue for regional neighbourhood watch meetings, (name changed to Pacific Islands Forum in 2000). The Forum had met six times by the time the territories of Papua and New Guinea became independent as Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1975. Its focus was on creating the South Pacific as a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity. The British connection was also important. The Commonwealth of Nations, founded in 1949,

was also a mechanism for South Pacific neighbourhood watch. It was founded as 'a voluntary association of independent states with their shared inheritance in language, culture and the rule of law consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples, and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace'. South Pacific members were Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Neighbourhood disturbances

The first test for regional neighbourhood watch occurred in 1980, a few months before the birth of the new nation of Vanuatu, formerly called the New Hebrides. The micro-state of Vanuatu was based on a group of islands that Britain and France had colonised and then combined as the Anglo-French Condominium in 1906. In May Father Walter Lini, the Prime Minister-elect of Vanuatu, had asked for help from members of the South Pacific Forum to quell a Francophile secessionist movement centred on the island of Espiritu Santo. The response was muted. Britain and France, who were still responsible for law and order for two more months before independence, could not agree on military action. One neighbour was prepared to help. Sir Julius Chan, the PNG Prime Minister, after private talks with Lini, announced that PNG would provide a military force to put down the rebellion in conjunction with Vanuatu security forces.

Presented with a *fait accompli*, Australia was drawn into the neighbourhood's first post-war policing operation. An ad hoc 300-strong light infantry contingent supported by Australian-donated patrol boats and aircraft, called Kumul Force, deployed with Australian support personnel to Vanuatu. This force backed up a 65-strong Ni Vanuatu police contingent. Results were both impressive and foreboding. Within a

few days key secessionist leaders had been arrested. Kumul Force returned to Port Moresby after six weeks on operations to a warm and triumphal welcome. Unfortunately, PNG troops and patrol boat crews tarnished this good neighbour operation by abusing some detainees, looting and firing weapons carelessly.

There were lessons for Australia. Though Chan and Lini had conferred at a South Pacific Forum meeting, their decision to intervene had been made without consultation with other neighbours. As well, Australia had been instrumental in raising PNG's armed forces, but their behaviour in Vanuatu was a glimpse of a brutal ethos and poor professional standards.

Seven years later another indigenous army gave Australia a more emphatic demonstration of its post-colonial ethos. On 14 May 1987, the Fijian army overthrew a recently-elected government in a bloodless coup, a culmination of many years of tension between Fijians and Indo-Fijian immigrants about political rights. Many ethnic Fijians saw the new government as a threat to their ascendancy. The Alliance Party that had represented the Fijian chiefly class since independence from Britain in 1970 had been defeated. The new government's Cabinet included a number of Indo-Fijians and had the support of a coalition of moderate ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians as well as emerging Indo-Fijian dominated unions.

The Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, publicly deplored the coup, but quickly dismissed military intervention to restore democratic governance. The South Pacific Forum and the Commonwealth also regretted the interruption of democratic governance but failed to mediate a solution or mobilise strong neighbourhood condemnation. Australia deployed a navy task force with a 120-strong infantry company aboard to the

waters off Fiji as a contingency for evacuation operations. This force was back in Australia in a few weeks after calm returned to Fiji's capital, Suva, and other urban centres.

The Fijian army conducted a second surprise coup in September 1987 in response to a draft constitution that the army commander, Brigadier Sitiveni Rabuka, did not believe went far enough in guaranteeing indigenous Fijian political dominance. Bob Hawke expressed his disapproval again, but his rhetoric was not matched with either economic sanctions or military intervention to change the outcome. The South Pacific Forum and the Commonwealth again proved ineffectual in a neighbourhood crisis. Depending on one's perspective, either two major neighbourhood crimes had not been prevented and went unpunished, or the Fijian army had boldly protected the political future of ethnic Fijians in their own country.

Within a year Australia had to respond to another neighbourhood disturbance. The Australian Defence Force sent riot equipment and other security supplies to Vanuatu after politically-inspired riots in May 1988 and again after a constitutional crisis erupted unexpectedly in December 1988. Australian troops were on standby in their base in Townsville during both these crises in case of an emergency evacuation of Australian nationals, confirming that Australia's policy towards neighbourhood disturbances was *in extremis* intervention.

Regional neighbourhood watch

In September 1988, Australia's new Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, deliberately chose the South Pacific region for his first overseas round of visits. He reported back that Australia's relations with its neighbours were 'becoming richer, more interesting and challenging, and less predictable'. He said that:

For Australia, the South Pacific must be the region of the highest foreign policy and security significance: we have fundamental, long-standing and largely unchanging interests there, which deserve strong bipartisan support.

That said, he went on to point out that benign neglect—largely allowing events to take their course and reacting when they threatened Australian interests—was not a realistic option for Australia's engagement with the South Pacific. He said the three choices were; first, strategic denial: keep other powers out of the South Pacific, second, hegemony: control the South Pacific, and third, partnership: work with the neighbours to keep the South Pacific peaceful.

Evans then unveiled a maturing neighbourhood watch policy. He favoured partnership and went on to describe a strategy of constructive commitment that included creating a regional approach to situations, internal or external, which put regional stability at risk. In other words, South Pacific neighbours should have a shared view about how to maintain peace and stability in the neighbourhood. He emphasised that the protection of human rights would be an Australian priority and that Australia would deal with its neighbours on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect, not 'crude notions of relative size and power'. There would be no unacceptable interference in a neighbour's internal affairs.

The Bougainville crisis

This consultative but non-interventionist policy would soon be tested in Bougainville, PNG's most eastern island province. Militants closed a large copper mine at Panguna in Bougainville in November 1988. These actions were more than expressions of dissatisfaction by a group of landowners over compensation. They were violent expressions of economic and ethnic nationalism—a threat to PNG

unity—as well as an environmental protest. More trouble was on the way.

Australia denounced the sabotage and declared that the crisis was an internal problem for the PNG Government to solve. The PNG Government deployed riot police and then army units. By this time, both the police and the army had had extensive experience in internal security but were notoriously brutal. After arrival, both the riot police and later the army lived up to this reputation and ignited widespread Bougainvillean outrage and aroused latent support for secession.

By the New Year of 1990 Australian forces were on standby to protect the exodus of expatriates from Bougainville who were caught in the middle of an insurgency. The Australian Government decided to help PNG's security forces by providing contracted helicopter support and additional arms, ammunition and training. The use of these helicopters would curse the Australian–PNG relationship for years to come. The PNG Government had lost control of its armed forces in Bougainville, who, in defiance of the agreement with Australia, used the donated helicopters as platforms to fire on villages and also continued to abuse human rights.

Regional neighbourhood watch was not working. The South Pacific Forum and the Commonwealth had not been effective in preventing neighbourhood disturbances, mediating disputes or mobilising collective action to protect democratic governance in Fiji and Vanuatu or to resolve the worsening Bougainville crisis. Australia had balked at military intervention. Australia's logistical and training support for PNG's security forces contradicted Gareth Evan's emphasis on protecting human rights. Thus, more neighbourhood crimes were not being prevented and were going unpunished.

Neighbourhood peacekeeping

Over the next seven years, a neighbourhood peacekeeping solution to the Bougainville crisis evolved in an *ad hoc*, stop-start manner. New Zealand became involved in 1990 by providing Navy ships as venues for negotiations. In 1994 Sir Julius Chan began his second prime ministership by drawing Australia and then regional neighbours into a military intervention to protect a peace conference he convened in Bougainville after negotiating a truce. Though brief and politically unsuccessful, this peacekeeping operation, called Operation Lagoon, established a number of useful precedents for future neighbourhood peacekeeping efforts. Armed troops had been employed in a deterrent policing role. Australia and PNG worked with regional neighbours, Fiji, New Zealand, Tonga and Vanuatu, to begin a peace process. The Australian Defence Force provided command, communications, mobility, logistic support and training to the 1069-strong combined regional force. The Australian commander worked closely with an Australian diplomat as well as with his Fijian, Tongan and Ni Vanuatu contingent commanders.

The Bougainville crisis dragged on for another three years until revelations that the Chan Government had engaged international mercenaries to find and kill secessionist leaders in Bougainville. The subsequent scandal ended Chan's political career and brought down his government. The New Zealand Foreign Minister, Don Mackinnon, took this opportunity to organise peace talks in New Zealand. The result was a truce declaration in October 1997. At short notice, Australia and New Zealand combined again to deploy a regional peacekeeping force to Bougainville, called the Truce Monitoring Group; this time the force was unarmed and commanded by a New Zealand brigadier with an Australian diplomat at his elbow.

Soldiers and diplomats were working closely together in the field again. Fiji and Vanuatu sent contingents to participate in this group that would rely on good offices, trust, cultural sensitivity and impartiality to succeed. The truce was followed in early 1998 with a ceasefire. An Australian-led unarmed Peace Monitoring Group monitored compliance with the ceasefire over the following years of negotiation. This time Australian-provided helicopters carried peace monitors rather than indigenous troops. A three-person UN political office deployed to Bougainville to provide good offices on the future of Bougainville. The operation concluded successfully on 30 June 2003 after parties to the conflict had signed a final peace agreement in August 2001.

This peacekeeping operation, called Operation Bel Isi, consolidated diplomatic and military connections among regional neighbours, as well as inter-departmental relationships within the Australian Government for regional peacekeeping. For the first time military and civilian peace monitors deployed. They included military personnel from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu as well as Australian diplomats, police and officials from the Department of Defence and Australia's international aid agency, AusAID. Thus began an operational level partnership between military personnel, diplomats, police and civil servants for good neighbour operations. Operation Bel Isi marked the transition from a non-interventionist neighbourhood watch to multi-agency neighbourhood intervention.

Intervention at community level was one of the strengths of Operation Bel Isi. For the first time there was a sustained effort by regional neighbours to engage communities to reconcile their differences and to rebuild civil society. New Zealanders, Fijians and Ni Vanuatu set the precedents for this engagement in 1997. Australians joined in and followed them for the

next six years. Peace monitoring teams encouraged and mobilised key groups in civil society—Bougainvillean women, the churches and traditional leaders—to support a peace process. Unlike thousands of foreign construction workers and many expatriate Panguna mine employees, they behaved in culturally appropriate ways as guests of the Bougainvillean people. Peace monitors did not consume alcohol, fraternise with local women or lead ostentatious, hedonistic lifestyles. They lived in houses in villages and towns, not in specially-constructed compounds. They learned local languages and attended church services, community events, neighbourhood meetings, reconciliation ceremonies and markets. They did not just drive through villages in air-conditioned cars. They walked and drove to villages and stayed long enough to accept hospitality, listen to stories, discuss issues and build relationships. They were good neighbours; giving people lifts, sharing meals, hosting film nights, playing guitars, singing songs and playing sport.

It was in this manner that sustained community engagement strengthened regional neighbourhood watch. At one level, it was crucial to engage indigenous political elites and facilitate democratic governance, institution building and economic development. Peacekeeping in Bougainville demonstrated that at a lower, 'grassroots' level community commitment to reconciliation and peace was a useful accompaniment to higher level negotiations, and assisted to prevent further outbreaks of violence and to integrate former combatants back into their villages. The legacy from hundreds of Australian, Fijian, New Zealand and Ni Vanuatu military and civilian peace monitors in Bougainville was a neighbourhood peacekeeping model for building secure, confident communities that mobilised in support of peace, reconciliation and a return to civil society.

Operation Bel Isi was another evolution of regional neighbourhood watch. Though unarmed and not charged with law enforcement responsibilities, both the Truce Monitoring Group and the Peace Monitoring Group collaborated with local communities to prevent and report on violence and criminal activities. Though the context was reporting breaches of a ceasefire agreement, most reports referred to violent and criminal behaviour that was not politically motivated, but nonetheless undermined civil society and community confidence in the peace process.

East Timor intervention

Meanwhile, in September 1999 regional neighbourhood watch made a dramatic transition from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. An Indonesian Government request for the international community to assist with the restoration of law and order in East Timor prompted neighbourhood intervention; this time neighbours came from Southeast Asia as well as the South Pacific. Australia took a lead role in the UN-mandated International Force-East Timor. As the most militarily capable neighbour, Australia provided most of the mobility, muscle and logistic support and took most of the risks. Once again the Australian military commander worked closely with an Australian diplomat. After this short notice intervention, a coalition of neighbours supported a UN transitional administration in East Timor with several thousand soldiers, and hundreds of police and scores of seconded government officials until East Timor became independent in May 2002. Australian troops left in 2005.

Good neighbour operations in East Timor consolidated Australia's peace operations partnership with neighbours as well as among Australian government departments and agencies through shared operational experience. There was also sustained community-level engagement by Australian

civil-military liaison teams, UN agencies and government and non-government aid agencies to help resettle thousands of displaced people back in their homes and to rebuild secure, confident East Timorese communities after the trauma of 1999. Thus, the first success was the emergency intervention, but the more enduring achievement was resettlement and giving East Timorese families the confidence to plant crops and to send their children back to school.

Solomon Islands intervention

Meanwhile, democratic governance and law and order were breaking down in Solomon Islands. On 5 June 2000 a local militia group, together with ethnic colleagues from the police force, staged a successful coup in the capital Honiara. The subsequent parliamentary nomination of a new prime minister did not restore stability. Australian good offices resulted in a peace agreement being signed in Townsville in October 2000. Australia sponsored a group called the International Peace Monitoring Team to monitor compliance to this agreement. This team did not have any coercive or policing capabilities. Lawlessness and corruption grew and major enterprises closed, and eventually the Solomon Islands prime minister invited neighbourhood military and police intervention in July 2003.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute provided the blueprint for this intervention. The ASPI report *Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the Future of Solomon Islands* recommended a multi-agency Australian response in conjunction with neighbourhood contingents. This time an Australian diplomat led the intervention and an Australian Federal policeman commanded participating personnel and assets. The Australian Defence Force assigned a 1,250-strong joint task force to give the operation the necessary

command and control, muscle, mobility and logistic support to achieve its mission. AusAID officials were closely involved from the beginning, coordinating the expenditure of funds to rebuild democratic governance, judicial, policing and corrective services institutions and the economy. Like the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) became another patient good neighbour organisation characterised by community level engagement. Unlike Operation Bel Isi, however, peace monitors did not engage communities to facilitate reconciliation and mobilise civil society to underpin institutional assistance programs. Commendable progress was made, however, in police–community liaison and disarming ethnic militias and arresting those responsible for violence, extortion and corruption.

The Solomon Islands intervention was another evolution of regional neighbourhood watch. Australia had become the regional law enforcement agency by virtue of its military and policing capabilities and ability to project coercive force at short notice to quell outbreaks of violence and lawlessness. At the same time, Australia partnered with neighbours for this regional policing role. This neighbourhood collaboration and shared effort to restore law and order and rebuild secure and confident communities through community level engagement echoed the objectives of domestic neighbourhood watch movements in countries around the world.

Breakdowns in law and order

The first five years of the 21st century set the scene for more neighbourhood disturbances. In 2006, several capitals erupted in violence, looting and arson and the Fijian military conducted another coup. Mobs of young men rampaged through Honiara, Dili, and Nuku'alofa in Tonga. There were complex reasons for all of these breakdowns in law and

order. The triggers for violence were diverse. In Honiara violence erupted after the election of an allegedly corrupt prime minister. In Dili the government sacked an army battalion and a group of disaffected troops attacked police. In Tonga pro-democracy groups rampaged against Tonga's monarchy. Seven people died and 80% of the capital's central business district was destroyed.

Australia, supported by neighbourhood contingents, intervened with military forces and also deployed police contingents in response to all of these neighbourhood disturbances. In Fiji the Fijian army commander forced an elected government from office after weeks of intimidation—a strangulation coup. Australian troops and police did not deploy to Fiji where armed opposition probably awaited them. In a reprise of 1987, Australia sent a navy task force offshore with troops aboard in case there was a need for emergency evacuation. Fiji settled down again and this force sailed home.

Commenting on the intervention into Timor-Leste, Prime Minister John Howard emphasised that Australia had special responsibilities as a major regional power. In August 2006 he announced substantial increases to both ADF and AFP capabilities that would increase Australia's capacity to quell neighbourhood disturbances.

With the prospect of further crises in law and order, problems with democratic governance and declining living standards, Australia and its neighbours maintain troops and police on the ground in Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands as well as capabilities for military and police emergency responses from homelands. Thus, regional neighbourhood watch has begun a new phase in a troubled region.

The way ahead

Almost twenty years ago in 1988 when Gareth Evans unknowingly described the

beginning of regional neighbourhood watch, he did not envisage Australia becoming the neighbourhood policeman. But that has happened and will continue to be so. In 2003 John Howard emphasised that intervention into Solomon Islands was in Australia's national interest because failed states in the neighbourhood could become safe havens for transnational criminals and terrorists. Thus, he updated deep-seated fears of the islands of the South Pacific becoming stepping stones to Australia for hostile forces. The Defence Update 2007 specifies a lasting commitment to help build stability and prosperity in the South Pacific and Timor-Leste. The question is how to do so effectively and reverse the trend towards periodic reactive operations and more neighbourhood garrisons? Australia's recent peacekeeping and peace enforcement experiences provide lessons and some of the options in the areas of reactive capacity and community building.

Reactive capacity

The ADF and the AFP, in conjunction with neighbourhood military and police contingents, can handle both sharp-end peace enforcement and contemporary stabilisation operations. This capacity forms the region's reactive policing response when governments have lost control or are under intense violent pressure from hostile groups. The success of the decisive multi-national intervention in 1999 that dominated Dili in a few days and secured East Timor in a few weeks should not be forgotten. A strong show of force, air mobility and employment of Special Forces were the keys to initial success. The rapport that Australian and neighbourhood troops established with the East Timorese people and their speedy return to their homes and community life were the key features of post-emergency success. In this manner, the ADF can also complement multi-agency peacekeeping and nation-building operations with capabilities such as communications,

mobility and logistic support, as well as liaison through civil–military cooperation teams and military observers. In Solomon Islands Australian and neighbourhood police contingents assist in maintaining law and order supported by a regional military garrison.

The focus for the neighbourhood's reactive capacity for the future needs to be on regional capital cities and major urban centres. The ADF has enforced peace twice in Dili and in Honiara, and once in Nuku'alofa in the past eighty years. Forces have been on standby for operations in Port Vila and Port Moresby several times. The most likely contingencies for emergency intervention in the future will be major outbreaks of violence, looting and arson in regional capital cities. Australia's disciplined forces will need to learn from previous urban operations and train and prepare themselves, as well as neighbourhood partners, to deploy to and secure neighbourhood capitals quickly.

Community building

Regional neighbourhood watch should not depend solely on swift reactive military and policing capacity. It has to encourage a democratic, prosperous neighbourhood supported by contented communities. The challenge for regional preventative diplomacy is to reduce the influence of undemocratic and corrupt elites, sometimes backed by debased security forces, militias or gangs. These elites may sell their country's sovereignty for personal gain to transnational criminals and exploitive and environmentally irresponsible commercial operators in extractive industries, such as mining, fishing and forestry. Concurrently, the 'whole of region' challenge is to lift South Pacific communities from poverty and revitalise civil society. Impoverished, unemployed and divided communities are less likely

to participate in or insist on democratic governance. They too can be sold out cheaply by venal elites and their violent cohorts.

The use of peace monitors in Bougainville from 1997 until 2003 is a useful model for both mobilising community pressure on political elites and ex-combatants as well as encouraging communities to reconcile, re-establish civil society and capitalise on aid programs. The time may have come for including and adapting the Bougainville peace monitor model into AusAID's more community-focused regional aid program. The 2006 AusAID White Paper includes a new Mobilising New Australian Links to the Region Initiative. The paper states that there should be broader community involvement through research and encouraging links between Australian community-based organisations, professional bodies, businesses, local governments and schools and equivalent entities in Timor-Leste and the South Pacific. In addition there is a Building Demand for Better Governance Program that will involve media, civil society and civic education programs, women's groups, churches, Transparency International, business councils and universities. An Australia-Pacific Technical College was established in 2005. A Pacific Leadership Program is giving selected young people, who are showing leadership potential, opportunities for study and personal development. Some of these initiatives are reflected in the Pacific Islands Forum's Pacific Plan released in 2005 and updated annually.

None of these new programs and initiatives appear to include establishing permanent teams, made up of representatives from neighbouring countries, in towns and villages to engage in and encourage community development. Peace monitors from regional neighbours living, working and building relationships on the ground in communities proved to be a useful and

influential accompaniment to higher level engagement with political elites, peace processes and institutional reform programs in Bougainville. More particularly, monitors encouraged reconciliation and democratic processes at grassroots level and community confidence in the future. Monitors also enabled communities to capitalise on aid programs through assistance with paperwork, justifications, mediation and good offices.

Future community-level engagement should be a regional effort to solve neighbourhood problems. Contributions and participation would be voluntary. This engagement would be another way to address social and economic problems. It would be a means for neighbours to invest goodwill as well as money in regional security and stability. While the level of financial assistance from neighbours would vary, the quality of people will make the difference, as was the case in Bougainville and continues to be the case in Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands.

Regional Neighbourhood Development Program

The next evolution of regional neighbourhood watch should be the inclusion of a Regional Neighbourhood Development Program. This program would be the second tier of regional neighbourhood watch. At the first tier, diplomats would engage political and business elites and government bureaucracies. AusAID officials and officials from the World Bank and other international organisations would manage rehabilitation programs at central government and district levels. At the second tier, Neighbourhood Development Teams (NDT) would engage with communities and encourage self-help, civil society, effective aid delivery and confidence in the future. Members of NDT would mentor indigenous administrative staff, police, community groups and local leaders.

The Pacific Islands Forum should be the mechanisms for developing this neighbourhood program as well as conducting planning, recruitment, training and implementation. NDT would be made up of military, police and civilian representatives from members from the Pacific Islands Forum. Members of NDT could be recruited from the vocational education and training sectors of contributing countries to transfer skills to assist with vocational training in communities. Some monitors might come from local government sectors with the skills to mentor and advise local government officials. Unemployed local youths could be incorporated into teams. The reintegration of unemployed young men back into civil society and useful work is one of the region's major challenges. Membership of NDT in their local areas would give them status, enable them to learn new skills as well as encourage positive contribution to community development.

From an Australian perspective, time and money spent supporting a Regional Neighbourhood Development Program might prove to be a less expensive and a more effective investment in regional stability than time and resources spent on garrisons and reactive capacities in times of crisis. Based on five 25-strong monitoring teams being employed successfully among 180,000 Bougainvilleans for Operation Bel Isi, 12 NDT might be sufficient in Solomon Islands and 24 NDT in Timor-Leste.

Conclusion

The future of regional neighbourhood watch should not be just about neighbourhood garrison troops and police riot squads sallying forth from fortified compounds in armoured vehicles, Range Rovers and lock-up vans in response to violence, looting and arson. More troops, more police, more money and more consultants will not be enough. These measures are reactions to symptoms

that do not attend to the deeper causes of neighbourhood problems.

Sustained higher level intervention is futile unless there is enduring and effective improvement at the community level. Secure and confident communities are the foundations for democratic governance and economic progress. Communities cannot be built or rebuilt unless there is a shared sense of security and optimism. For the time being, garrisons and swift responses to neighbourhood disturbances should remain in place to engender a sense of security in the future. When civil society has prevailed over lawlessness in the streets and corruption and instability in government there will be no need for these emergency measures.

Neighbourhood Watch began in the 1970s in one suburb, one county, in one city and in one nation. By the mid 1980s, there were tens of thousands of Neighbourhood Watch groups around the world meeting to prevent crime and build community confidence. Today the neighbourhood watch movement in Britain covers six million households. There are some 170,000 neighbourhood watch groups ranging from the smallest schemes covering a dozen or so homes in a single street, to county-wide associations with many thousands of members.

Neighbourhood Watch is a partnership where people come together to make their communities safer. It involves police, local authorities, other voluntary organisations and, above all, individuals and families who want to make their neighbourhoods better places to live. It aims to help people protect themselves and their properties and to reduce the fear of crime through greater vigilance, accurate reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and by fostering a community spirit. Though these characteristics are not an exact formula for building secure and confident communities in Australia's regional

neighbourhood, adapting neighbourhood watch concepts and applying lessons from contemporary neighbourhood peace support operations are useful places to start.

Endnotes

- 1 The objectives of Neighbourhood Watch are: To prevent crime by improving security, increasing vigilance, creating and maintaining a caring community and reducing opportunities for crime by increasing crime prevention awareness; To assist the police in detecting crime by promoting effective communication and the prompt reporting of suspicious and criminal activity; To reduce undue fear of crime by providing accurate information about risks and by promoting a sense of security and community spirit, particularly amongst the more vulnerable members of the community; To improve police/community liaison by providing effective communications through systems, such as warning of local crime trends and information exchange. See <http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com/> accessed 6 October 2007.
- 2 The term 'keep the peace' is being used generically as it relates to maintaining peaceful regional relations between nations, not in reference to 'peacekeeping' within the context of UN-mandated peacekeeping operations.

