



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration and Citizenship**

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18 September 2008

Dr Kathleen Dermody  
Secretary  
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
PO Box 6100, Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Dr Dermody

**Inquiry into the main economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the southwest Pacific**

I have pleasure in attaching the Department's submission to the Senate Standing Committee's inquiry into the economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the southwest Pacific.

The submission seeks to address the key interests of the inquiry. It notes that the Department engages with priority countries in the Pacific and funds activities aimed at building the capacity of immigration agencies to facilitate and regulate legitimate travel and minimise non-bona fide and irregular people movements in the region. The submission covers the breadth of issues managed across various areas of the portfolio and focuses on the particularly comprehensive relationship between the Department and the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Service.

I wish to point out two statements in the submission that require correction due to unforeseen developments that took place after the report was submitted for Senator Evans' consideration. They are:

Page 8 – third paragraph: “Arrangements will be made for a meeting of the Australia-PNG Immigration Working Group following the September 2008 meeting of the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference, which PNG will chair.” *Erratum:* PNG did not chair the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Samoa and hosted by Australia.

Page 14 – second paragraph: “PNG will assume the chair of PIDC from Samoa at the next annual meeting in Madang in September 2008.” *Erratum:* PNG was unable to host the Madang meeting and did not assume the chair of the PIDC. The meeting was hosted by

**people** our business

Australia in Brisbane on 16-18 September 2008. Samoa will continue to chair on an interim basis.

I would be grateful if you could draw these matters to the Standing Committee's attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Kleiboer', written over a horizontal line.

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**Australian Government**

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**Department of Immigration  
and Citizenship**

SUBMISSION

BY

THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

TO THE

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
DEFENCE AND TRADE

IN RELATION TO THE INQUIRY INTO

**ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND THE  
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC**

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## Terms of Reference

- (a) The major economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the island states of the southwest Pacific;
  - (i) the implications for Australia;
  - (ii) how the Australian Government can, in practical and concrete ways, assist these countries to meet the challenges.
  
- (b) The inquiry to include an examination of the following:
  - (i) employment opportunities, labour mobility, education and skilling;
  - (ii) barriers to trade, foreign investment, economic infrastructure, land ownership and private sector development; and
  - (iii) current regional organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Secretariat of Pacific Community.

# **Department of Immigration and Citizenship's engagement with Papua New Guinea and the southwest Pacific**

## **Introduction**

This submission focuses on those aspects of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) role and activities in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the southwest Pacific that relate to the Inquiry's terms of reference.

DIAC's engagement with PNG and the southwest Pacific states operates within the Australian Government's broader framework for strategic engagement in the Pacific. Due to the region's geographical proximity to Australia and vulnerability to political disturbances, economic and security challenges in the region can directly impact on DIAC's outcomes.

DIAC aims to build the capacity of immigration agencies and regional organisations to facilitate and regulate legitimate travel and minimise non-bona fide and irregular people movements within the region. This contributes to the development of a stable security environment and sustainable economic growth.

DIAC works bilaterally and through regional cooperative mechanisms to prevent and deter people smuggling and human trafficking. In partnering with counterpart agencies in the region, primarily through capacity building programs for improved border management, the security of the region as a whole can be strengthened and public confidence in border management can be maintained. Immigration New Zealand, a component of the New Zealand Department of Labour, is a key partner in relation to cooperation on immigration matters and capacity building in the region. The Australia New Zealand Immigration Forum is an annual meeting between senior representatives from each agency and provides a platform for a coordinated approach to capacity building in the region.

While DIAC engages to a greater or lesser degree with most countries in the region, DIAC places highest priority on engagement with PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu given their geographical proximity, historical ties and the movement of people between our countries.

Fiji is also considered a priority country for DIAC, however bilateral engagement is currently on hold due to the political situation.

## DIAC representation in the Pacific region

DIAC is represented in PNG by a Principal Migration Officer (PMO) and Senior Migration Officer (SMO) at the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby and an Airline Liaison Officer (ALO) at Jackson's Airport Port Moresby. (The role of the ALO is to facilitate the travel of genuinely documented passengers and assist airlines to resolve issues presented by incorrectly documented passengers at key airports.) In Fiji DIAC is currently represented by a Regional Director, two PMO positions and two SMO positions.

Permanent and temporary entry visa applications from PNG citizens (except for visa subclasses processed in Australia) are lodged and decided in Port Moresby. Applications from Solomon Islands citizens are lodged at the Australian High Commission in Honiara and processed in Port Moresby. Applications from citizens of Vanuatu are lodged at the Australian High Commission in Port Vila but migration applications are transferred to Suva for processing and decision. Applications from citizens of Fiji are lodged and processed in Suva.

### Visa statistics 2007-08

Passport held	Global visitor applications	Global student applications	Global skilled applications
Fiji	18 060	330	528
Papua New Guinea	6 451	933	62
Solomon Islands	1 417	83	12
Vanuatu	1 908	105	2

Source: Migration and Temporary Entry Reporting

## Economic and security challenges

Many countries of the Pacific suffer from systemic political and governance weaknesses. From a border management perspective border agencies are often under-resourced and many have a low standing within their overall government structures. Border management issues are often accorded a low priority. Many border agencies have a limited capacity to undertake anything other than basic operational tasks. Cross-agency cooperation is often also poor or ineffective. Other challenges to effective border management in the region include ineffective management within border agencies, a low standard of education and inadequate salaries, conditions of service packages and training.

Weak governance structures and poorly managed business processes – for example with visa fee collection and record keeping - are common. Immigration legislation is often inadequate, provides little support to decision makers and has not kept pace with developments in such areas as people smuggling, money laundering, drug trafficking and transnational organised crime. Weak border management risks other serious challenges to national governments'

ability to identify and control transnational crime and the movement of terrorists across international borders.

Between 2004 and the end of 2007 the region saw major challenges to security and economic prosperity arising from another military coup in Fiji and destructive riots in the capitals of the Solomon Islands and Tonga. Political instability in Fiji and the riots in Honiara and Nuku'alofa have contributed to setbacks in the promotion of economic development, good governance and security.

This environment provides challenges for DIAC in planning and delivering capacity building programs, with risk management a fundamental consideration.

A primary aim of DIAC's engagement in the region is to promote Australia as the key strategic partner for border management and related issues. DIAC aims to build the capacity of immigration agencies and regional organisations to facilitate and regulate legitimate travel and minimise non-bona fide and irregular people movements within the region. This contributes to the development of a stable security environment and sustainable economic growth.

DIAC's ongoing strategies include:

- support for capacity building initiatives, including technical assistance, to enhance the effectiveness of immigration agencies in priority countries
- assistance to strengthen border management and prevent and deter people smuggling, including in the context of our joint border management responsibilities with PNG under the *Torres Strait Treaty*
- participation in whole-of-government initiatives relating to increased labour mobility and the safe and secure international movement of business people in the region through the APEC Business Mobility Group
- support for the establishment of a capacity to detect irregular movements of people by providing immigration-related information and intelligence, including through the provision of specific training by the Offshore Compliance Officer network

and, on the multilateral level:

- support for the representation of Pacific island countries in international forums (Bali Process and the Pacific Immigration Director's Conference) to encourage information sharing, best practice and regional cooperation on immigration issues
- networking with like-minded government agencies and international organisations, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and
- liaison with other donor agencies to coordinate bilateral donor activities.



## **Bilateral engagement in the Pacific**

This section provides more detailed information on DIAC's bilateral engagement with its priority countries: PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. As is evident, DIAC's most comprehensive engagement is with PNG. This reflects the country's strategic importance to Australia in terms of border security stemming from its geographical proximity and the historically very close ties between both countries. Engagement with the Solomon Islands, on hold for 2007, has now recommenced with a significant program of capacity building activities being planned. Engagement with Vanuatu has focused to date on assistance with inter-agency workshops on a border alert system and an immigration legislation review project.

### **Papua New Guinea**

DIAC has pursued a comprehensive program of engagement both as part of whole-of-government initiatives and at the agency level with our nearest neighbour. DIAC's support aims to address PNG's main migration priorities, as identified in a 2004 report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) endorsed by the PNG Government:

- improved border control
- prevention of illegal migration
- facilitation of business and tourism
- improved data collection and data sharing
- analysis of data for law enforcement
- modernisation of equipment and supporting facilities

### **Strongim Gavman Program**

DIAC participates in the AusAid-administered "*Strongim Gavman Program*" (SGP), (formerly known as the Enhanced Cooperation Program), a partnership between the Governments of PNG and Australia. DIAC works closely with Customs and the Department of Infrastructure in efforts to strengthen the capacity of PNG's border management sector.

Three DIAC officers are currently deployed to mentor and develop senior PNG counterparts in the areas of strategic policy development and implementation, project and program management, compliance, information technology, client service and process improvement. DIAC does not have deployees or advisors in any other country. A review of the (then) Enhanced Cooperation Program in March 2008 found that "the ECP deployees in the

Immigration and Citizenship Service have made a real and significant contribution to the work of an agency that is undergoing a fundamental restructuring at the present time.”<sup>1</sup>

## Agency cooperation

DIAC’s counterpart agency is the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Immigration and Citizenship Service (ICS). ICS is one of the smallest immigration agencies in the Pacific but it is undergoing a major change program including: bulk recruitment to boost its establishment from under 30 to 72 officers; the separation of functions from the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Immigration; and the establishment of its own budget. DIAC’s engagement with ICS aims to strengthen and support the capacity of the organisation at this key time in the organisation’s development. This includes engagement in whole-of-government initiatives such as the Strongim Gavman Program and strengthened agency-to-agency cooperation.

At the agency level DIAC sees bilateral and regional benefits arising from the strengthened capacity of ICS:

- Identifying and mitigating threats from transnational crime
- Facilitating inbound business, education and tourism travel to promote PNG’s economic development
- Encouraging cooperation and information sharing between Pacific island governments and immigration agencies in relation to the movement of people.

Since March 2008 there has been renewed contact at the Ministerial level and there is also renewed interest in strengthening contacts at senior officials’ level. Arrangements will be made for a meeting of the Australia-PNG Immigration Working Group following the September 2008 meeting of the Pacific Immigration Directors’ Conference (PIDC), which PNG will chair. The working group provides an opportunity for DIAC and ICS to engage on a range of issues at Deputy Secretary level.

The acting Chief Migration Officer of ICS, Mr Joseph Nobetau, visited Brisbane and Canberra in July 2008 to take part in a steering group on the Border Management System (see below) and met with DIAC Secretary, Mr Andrew Metcalfe.

A review conducted in 2008 focused on the need to foster commitment from senior executives to enable effective technical assistance, and to develop organisational effectiveness through improved governance and training. DIAC has funded the development and delivery of tailored and culturally appropriate executive leadership training to ICS senior officials. DIAC has also agreed to fund a number of items of equipment for ICS HQ and continues to fund

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<sup>1</sup> Dixon, G., Gene, M. and Walter, N. “*Joint Review of the Enhanced Cooperation Program*” Report prepared for the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia, March 2008 p. 49

some physical security services. Additionally, DIAC provides support to IOM to analyse training needs in the ICS and develop appropriate training modules for ICS staff.

DIAC believes that the next challenge will be to ensure that ICS is positioned to capitalise on its increased staffing levels. Legislative changes, improved infrastructure, including IT infrastructure, training and the formulation and documentation of procedures may be required as part of this process. DIAC looks forward to engaging more effectively to provide immigration analysis training and, over an 18-24 month period, assist in the development of an immigration analysis capacity.

## Assistance to strengthen border management and prevent and deter people smuggling

### Border Management System (BMS)

The BMS project is an example of a successful partnership between Australian and PNG immigration agencies to address a priority PNG need.

In 2006 DIAC agreed to fund the development of a border management IT system. An Australian company, Merit Technology Pty Ltd, was awarded the contract, jointly managed by DIAC and ICS. The BMS incorporates movements, alerts, visa processing and reporting functionality. It is being used in four locations: ICS headquarters at Waigani, Jackson's Airport in Port Moresby and PNG diplomatic missions in Brisbane and Canberra. The presence of DIAC officers in ICS deployed through SGP has assisted the project and illustrates the synergies that can be harnessed between whole of government and bilateral programs.

### Torres Strait issues

The *Torres Strait Treaty* 1985 (the Treaty) agreed to by Australia and PNG provides for the free movement of traditional inhabitants where travel is for the purposes of a traditional activity. Traditional activities include fishing, hunting, visiting family and some traditional barter trade.

Traditional inhabitants from thirteen PNG coastal villages have been designated as having free movement privileges under the Treaty. Free movement privileges however only apply within a geographical area known as the Protected Zone. The Zone covers the majority of the islands in the Torres Strait but does not include the Thursday Island group of islands. Traditional inhabitants number around 6500 Torres Strait Islanders and 10 000 PNG nationals living in the border region. Each year, there are around 50 000 traditional movements of which more than 90 per cent are PNG citizens coming to Australia. Notwithstanding the strong cultural ties between the Australian Torres Strait Islanders and nearby PNG coastal

villagers, the free movement provisions place pressure on Australian health, housing, water and energy services in the Torres Strait.

## Border Management

DIAC is responsible for monitoring and managing the free movement provisions of the Treaty. DIAC has six full-time officers based on Thursday Island as part of its North Queensland region and a network of 27 Movement Monitoring Officers (MMOs) who work closely with island chairpersons and their community to manage the traditional flow of people and report on any other movements in the region. The rights of free movement create challenges for Australia's border agencies, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA), the Queensland Government, and local government. For DIAC the challenge is to facilitate the free movement of traditional inhabitants – thus supporting the economic and cultural benefits that flow as a result – while ensuring that the security of the Australian border is not compromised.

## Traditional visits

The duration of a traditional visit has no basis in law and, historically, each island council in the Torres Strait has determined the length of stay allowed for a traditional visit on their island.

DIAC works closely with island councils to encourage PNG traditional inhabitants who have “overstayed” to leave voluntarily or works with affected PNG citizens to identify pathways that may permit them to stay in Australia lawfully. In addition, DIAC participates in a series of DFAT-led Treaty Awareness Visits in PNG Treaty villages. These multi-agency visits which include DFAT, Customs, Fisheries, AQIS and Navy aim to increase understanding of the Treaty among traditional community leaders on both sides of the border.

For the most part these arrangements are effective and DIAC works closely with island representatives and DFAT's Treaty Liaison Officer to ensure they continue to operate within the spirit of the Treaty.

## Medical treatment

Because of the limited health services on the PNG side of the Torres Strait, each year a significant number of PNG citizens (some 800 in 2006-07) cross the border to access medical treatment in Australia.

From a border management perspective, medical treatment is not a traditional activity under the terms of the Torres Strait Treaty. PNG citizens, like any other foreign citizens wishing to travel to Australia to receive medical treatment, are required to apply for a medical treatment visa and must meet regulatory criteria including being able to demonstrate their medical

condition is not a public health risk. However, where a traditional visitor identifies a medical issue on arrival in the Torres Strait, or if the need for medical treatment arises during that person's stay in the Torres Strait, they may seek medical assessment. These assessments must be made by Queensland Health and Health Services Australia before the person is required to return to PNG.

DIAC participates in forums such as the Health Issues Committee, and the Torres Strait Inter-Departmental Committee to determine appropriate ways to manage these issues in collaboration with key agencies such as DOHA, DFAT, AusAid and Customs.

## **Solomon Islands**

The Solomon Islands is a key priority in the region due to its proximity to Australia, its shared border with PNG and the existence of direct flights to Australia from Honiara. In 2006 a short term mission to the Solomon Islands Immigration Division (SIID) identified four areas of border control and migration management that required detailed review and capacity building activity:

- reviewing and updating of the legislative framework governing the objectives and operations of the SIID, and clarifying its relationship to other (including more recent) Solomon Island Government (SIG) legislation
- strengthening the leadership, management and resources of the SIID to better deliver SIG policy priorities
- developing a coordinated approach to SIG border priorities and operations, through mechanisms such as a joint working group of SIG border agency heads, and
- conducting a Business Process Review with a view to identifying user requirements for a border management system.

The proposed work is currently on hold. In early 2008 DIAC travelled to the Solomon Islands to renew discussions with SIID and to review the on-going relevance of the capacity building activity. The visit confirmed that the findings and recommendations made in 2006 were still relevant and, critically, that the proposed activity continues to have the strong support of the Solomon Islands Government.

## **Vanuatu**

DIAC has established a cooperative relationship with Vanuatu Immigration (VI) authorities and has funded a program of work to support improved border security and identity management.

Following a request by VI, DIAC funded a Border Process Analysis and Review which took place in the first half of 2007. The review recommended and VI agreed to coordinate a series

of cross-agency workshops examining Vanuatu's immigration legislation and border alert listing processes.

In July 2007 VI were presented with the Immigration Legislation Review Report containing recommendations and options for consideration by the Vanuatu Government.

## **Document Examination and Immigration Trend and Data Analysis Training**

DIAC provides advanced documentation and analysis training on a bilateral (priority country) basis. Where donor support (e.g. through the Pacific Island Forum) is available DIAC contributes to regional basic training initiatives. DIAC also provides low-level document fraud and front-line border immigration training on a bilateral basis to Pacific Island countries through regular liaison visits.

DIAC stations specialist compliance officers at a number of overseas posts, including Port Moresby. These officers are specially trained to identify fraudulent documentation and irregular people movements. They develop cooperative working relationships with border management agencies through the provision of immigration-related information and intelligence. They also provide document examination and immigration trend and data analysis training to airline and airport staff.

## **Labour and Business Mobility**

### **Pacific seasonal worker pilot scheme**

The government understands the importance of labour mobility to many of the economies in the Pacific and the desire of Pacific Island countries for greater access to the Australian labour market for their unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry recently announced that Australia will introduce a pilot scheme for the horticultural sector involving the entry of up to 2500 seasonal workers over three years from Kiribati, PNG, Tonga and Vanuatu.

To support this scheme and to assist in developing appropriate visa mechanisms, DIAC has consulted closely with other government departments, industry and community stakeholders. DIAC has also carefully examined the New Zealand Government's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme.

## APEC Business Mobility Group and APEC Business Travel Card scheme

DIAC chairs the APEC Business Mobility Group (BMG) a sub-forum of the APEC Committee on Trade and Investment. This scheme involves 19 of the 21 APEC economies. The BMG is responsible for building the capacity of economies to facilitate the safe and secure movement of people in the APEC region.

On behalf of the BMG, Australia administers the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) scheme. The ABTC scheme facilitates the movement of business people by providing card holders with access to priority immigration processing lanes at international airports in participating economies, and visa pre-clearance so they do not need to apply separately for visas before each visit.

PNG is a member of the BMG and of the ABTC scheme. While PNG has only a very small number of ABTC card holders they have recently indicated they will start actively promoting the scheme to PNG business people. However, PNG encounters some challenges in carrying out their obligations to process ABTC visa pre-clearances. The reasons appear to be PNG's limited trained staff resources and an inferior internet connection through which to access and process on the ABTC system.

ABTC holders are generally high-level business people involved in trade and investment activity. Failure to provide PNG ABTC visa pre-clearances in a timely manner could discourage visits by legitimate business people who can bring trade and investment benefits to PNG.

DIAC has provided additional training for ABTC processing operators as well as technical advice aimed at helping PNG upgrade their internet connection so they can address processing backlogs.

## Work and Holiday Agreement

In February 2008 Senator Evans and PNG Foreign Minister Abal agreed to officials exploring the possibility of a reciprocal Work and Holiday arrangement. This arrangement would provide temporary visas with work rights for a limited number of young (18-30 years) PNG citizens.

DIAC provided PNG with a draft Memorandum of Understanding in June 2008 and is awaiting advice. DIAC understands that PNG may require assistance to draft legislative amendments permitting reciprocal work rights for Australians.

## Multilateral Engagement

DIAC engages in multilateral cooperation with PNG and the states of the southwest Pacific in three key forums: the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference, the Bali Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) and the Inter-governmental Asia Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC).

### Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference

The Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (PIDC), established in 1996 as an initiative of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, is a key regional forum for promoting consultation and cooperation among immigration agencies. PNG will assume the chair of PIDC from Samoa at the next annual meeting in Madang in September 2008. The Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are also members. The PIDC is supported by a secretariat and by a management board comprising representatives of immigration agencies from Australia, New Zealand and Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. DIAC is a major donor to the PIDC's operating budget and an active participant in the annual conference and management board.

Participation in the PIDC encourages discussion of issues surrounding border management. PIDC produces an annual report on People Smuggling, Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration in the Pacific. Representatives of PIDC will attend Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC) Board of Management meetings in an observer capacity in order to improve coordination of law enforcement issues in the region. The PIDC supports the operations of the Pacific Transnational Crime Network (PTCN) and contributes to the annual Pacific Transnational Crime Assessment. These are important components of the strategy to combat transnational organised crime, including immigration-related crime, in the region.

Meetings of the PIDC are opportunities to discuss complex issues such as the voluntary return to their home countries of persons with irregular status residing in Pacific Island countries. Immigration agencies in the region have drawn attention to financial and administrative costs and difficulties in obtaining travel documentation when attempting to repatriate persons with irregular status. In response to these concerns in 2007 DIAC assisted with the establishment of an IOM representative office in Port Moresby. In 2008 DIAC has also provided support to IOM to commence research and discussions with PIDC participants aimed at assisting the process of voluntary return in the region. IOM is an internationally reputable organisation with considerable experience in assisting persons with irregular migration status to return voluntarily to their countries of origin.

A promising avenue for strengthening immigration agencies lies in the prospective new strategic plan for 2009-12 for the PIDC. Pending adoption by the annual meeting of the PIDC in September 2008, the main focus of the new plan will be placed on strengthening the capacity of immigration agencies in the region to address the challenges they face.



Strategic objectives for the plan will include improving management of international people movements, strengthening border management and security, and working together to build capacity to deliver immigration services. Key activity areas will include policy and legislation reform; data and information exchange, research and analysis; advocacy, liaison and representation; and building knowledge and expertise.

The plan will also include new statements of commitment to regionalism as an approach to shared challenges in the Pacific and acknowledgement of individual members' commitment to international frameworks. While DIAC's bilateral activities broadly encourage the strengthening of immigration agencies in priority countries, it is anticipated that the new focus of the PIDC will support complementary action by other countries in the region.

## Bali Regional Ministerial Conference (Bali Process)

The Australian Government is committed to the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. The Bali Process is a voluntary, non-binding grouping that brings participants together to prevent and deter people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crimes in the Asia-Pacific region. Over 50 countries and international agencies participate.

Membership of the Bali Process Steering Group includes Australia and Indonesia as co-chairs and Thailand and New Zealand as co-ordinators, with UNHCR and IOM both providing expert input. A number of Pacific Island Forum countries are members of the Bali Process, including Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

The Bali Process has been very helpful in contributing to an environment which enables our bilateral and regional cooperation with other regional immigration services particularly in key areas such as law enforcement, managed migration and information sharing. The Australian Government is also considering ways in which to reinvigorate the Bali Process.

## Inter-governmental Asia Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC)

The APC was formed in Canberra in 1996 at the *Conference on Regional Approaches to Displaced Persons in Asia*. It is an informal, consultative arrangement between countries in the Asia Pacific Region. The APC aims to promote dialogue and explore opportunities for greater regional cooperation on matters relating to population movements, including refugees, displaced persons and migrants. The UNHCR and IOM are full participants in the APC. PNG and the southwest Pacific countries participate in APC meetings. The current chair is Samoa.

The APC is a key forum for discussion of protection issues and also provides an opportunity to promote managed migration. DIAC is the lead agency for the APC and provides the bulk of funding for APC activities - primarily to assist those countries requiring sponsored travel and accommodation. DIAC also provides the Secretariat for the APC.

## **Infrastructure - Former Offshore Processing Centre in Manus Province, PNG**

DIAC wishes to draw the Committee's attention to the assistance provided to the PNG Government as a consequence of the March 2008 closure of the Offshore Processing Centre (OPC) in Manus Province. (The OPC has been maintained in a mothballed-contingency state since the last resident departed in 2004.)

Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that established the OPC in 2001, it was agreed that Australia would return the site to the Government of PNG in a condition that would enable its use in future as a naval base (the former OPC is located on the site of the Lombrum naval base). In accordance with the terms of the MOU, DIAC agreed to remove excess demountable buildings and assist in relocating them elsewhere in Manus Province subject to a costing analysis. DIAC will assist in providing information on the cost of relocation once PNG's formal proposal has been received.

The site of the former OPC consists primarily of 170 demountable buildings ('dongas'). It is accepted that leaving all of them in their current location would not satisfy Australia's obligation to remediate the site. Therefore, it has been agreed that DIAC will assist to remove those dongas PNG considers surplus to its on-site requirements. DIAC and PNG officials have agreed that it would not be economical to relocate surplus dongas for use outside of Manus Province. Similarly, DIAC has not undertaken to refit or reconfigure dongas once they have been relocated.