



Parliament of Australia

Presiding Officers' Annual Statement on Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships

2013



PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY PARTNERSHIPS

Foreword

We are pleased to present to the Australian Parliament our first annual statement on the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program and the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships project.

These programs represent a significant commitment by Australia's federal, state and territory parliaments to the development of close and mutually beneficial relations with Pacific Island parliaments.

It is important for our parliament and the broader Australian community to understand the extent of the work being done in our region to support democratic development. We believe an annual statement will help to raise awareness and appreciation of this important work.

Funding for these programs is being provided primarily through the Australian aid program. The results achieved to date indicate that this investment has been extremely worthwhile. The programs are building capacity within the parliaments of the Pacific region and are also generating significant goodwill towards Australia among many of our closest neighbours.

Senator the Hon John Hogg
President of the Senate

The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives



1. Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships

Overview

1.1 The Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships program links 22 Australian and Pacific parliaments based on twinning arrangements first established in 2007. The aim of the program is to develop a thriving community of parliamentary democracies in the Pacific region through which parliamentarians and parliamentary staff can build effective relationships, enhance their understanding of the challenges and opportunities each parliament faces, and support each other in developing the capacity of parliaments to best serve their communities and contribute to the advancement of the region.

1.2 The program became known as Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships following successful applications to AusAID for funding to support direct parliament to parliament capacity building projects in the Pacific region. Without that funding the program could not have achieved the results that are evident to date.

1.3 The twinned parliaments under the program are:

- Australian Capital Territory with Kiribati
- New South Wales with Bougainville and Solomon Islands
- Northern Territory and Norfolk Island with Niue
- Queensland with Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu
- South Australia with Tonga
- Victoria with Nauru and Tuvalu
- Tasmania with Samoa
- Western Australia with Cook Islands

1.4 When the original twinning program was established it was agreed that the Australian and New Zealand Parliaments would not twin with any one Pacific parliament but would provide overall coordination for the twinning program. Under the initial program, funds from an Education Trust Fund established by Australian federal, state and territory parliaments were used for smaller scale capacity building projects for Pacific parliaments, including training programs and provision of equipment. That support is continuing through the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships Fund.

1.5 Under the twinning arrangements there are now three programs funded separately through the Australian aid program:

- a capacity building program coordinated by the New South Wales Parliament to support the parliaments of Bougainville and Solomon Islands;
- a parliamentary strengthening program coordinated by the Australian Parliament in association with the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly, the South Australian and Victorian Parliaments and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre to support the Parliaments of Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu; and
- a capacity building program coordinated by the Australian Parliament in association with the Queensland, Tasmanian and Western Australian Parliaments and the UNDP Pacific Centre for the Parliaments of Cook Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu.

1.6 The NSW program commenced in 2010 and is now in its second three year stage. The Australian Parliament coordinated program for Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu commenced in January 2011 and will end in December 2013, while the program for Cook Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu commenced in November 2011 and will conclude in June 2014.

1.7 The programs managed by the Australian Parliament are coordinated through the International and Community Relations Office (ICRO). Discussions are ongoing about longer term funding options for Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships once the initial three year funding ends.

Parliamentary strengthening

1.8 Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships is focused on three key areas:

- professional development of parliamentarians;
- capacity building of parliamentary secretariats; and
- community outreach for parliaments to better engage with the communities they serve.

1.9 Projects supported to date include:

- seminars and workshops on parliamentary procedures and committee work for parliamentarians;
- mentoring work with parliamentarians;
- development of parliamentary procedural tools;
- preparation of strategic plans for parliaments, including ICT, human resource and community outreach plans;
- preparation and updating of legislative needs assessments;
- provision of information technology infrastructure, including Hansard systems and community outreach equipment; and
- parliamentary staff attachments, mentoring and attendance at formal training courses and subject specific conferences.

1.10 Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Australia's federal, state and territory parliaments have supported the program, giving generously of their time to share their knowledge and experience. Specialists have also been engaged when required, although the overall focus of the program is to minimise the use of consultants and instead provide support on a direct parliament to parliament basis.

1.11 For Samoa, the commitment from Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships has been particularly significant, with the Australian and Tasmanian Parliaments and the University of Tasmania working together to provide technical assistance for the Samoa Parliamentary Support Project, funded by the Australian aid program and managed by the UNDP. The Australian Parliament has sent staff on a series of attachments to the Samoan Legislative Assembly to assist with the development of the parliament's human resource, ICT and community outreach strategies, its procedural systems and processes, and its committee and research capacity. Samoan parliamentary staff have also undertaken attachments to the Australian Parliament to enhance their skills in human resources management, parliamentary research and community outreach. A series of seminars and workshops has been held for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to enhance their professional development. Technical assistance has also been provided to support the Samoa parliamentary complex redevelopment.

Outcomes

1.12 Over the past three years Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships has gathered considerable momentum and is now highly regarded throughout the region for the relationships it is building and the parliamentary development it is supporting. As a result of this work many Pacific parliaments now have corporate and strategic plans to which they are working; better information technology systems; induction and ongoing professional development programs for parliamentarians; new and enhanced parliamentary committee processes; parliamentary education programs for students; community engagement initiatives such as websites, parliamentary open days and community publications; and opportunities for colleagues to seek advice from trusted sources on challenges that may arise in the day to day functioning of a parliament.

1.13 Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships has also proven to be an effective vehicle to assist donor collaboration in the region. One recent example was the conduct of a regional workshop for Pacific parliaments held in Tonga in November 2013 that brought together 13 Pacific parliaments to consider the requirements for operating in a modern parliament in the Pacific region, the engagement of parliamentarians with key regional issues such as oceans policy, and the measures needed to develop more gender-sensitive parliaments in the region. That workshop was supported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Australian aid program, UNDP and the Centre for Democratic Institutions. A 30 point outcomes statement from the workshop is available at www.pacificparliaments.net

1.14 The program is also attracting interest from other parliaments both within the region and further afield. Parliaments from the Marshall Islands and New Caledonia have recently joined in with activities and have expressed an interest in engaging with the program. Canada is modelling a twinning program with Caribbean countries on Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships and the United Kingdom is also looking at the way in which the program operates as part of its efforts to assist developing democracies with which it is engaging.

1.15 There is considerable opportunity to build on the achievements of the past three years and further funding of the program will help to realise its full potential. Further information on Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships is available at: www.pacificparliaments.net



PACIFIC WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY PARTNERSHIPS

2. Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships

Overview

2.1 The Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships project is one of the regional programs funded under the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Initiative (2012-2022). Over five years (2013-2017), the project aims to build the capacity of women parliamentarians in the Pacific, the institutions in which they work, and the staff who support them, so that gender equality issues are better addressed by parliaments.

2.2 More specifically, the project has three end-of-program objectives:

- i) Pacific women parliamentarians are supported in their parliamentary and representational work and are better able to use parliamentary mechanisms to raise gender equality issues;
- ii) Pacific parliaments have improved mechanisms to raise and effectively consider gender equality issues and engage their communities on those issues; and
- iii) Parliamentary staff have improved capacity to support the gender equality work of parliaments.

2.3 The project is implementing activities designed to meet each of these objectives, aimed at long-term institutional strengthening, particularly the institution of parliament. Change here would see the parliament's engagement with the community on gender equality issues improved, policy and legislative change for gender equality supported, as well as knowledge and understanding of gender equality strengthened.

2.4 Activities aim to be in line with the needs and demands identified by Pacific nations, and allocated as equitably as possible across the three cluster groupings of the Pacific: Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

2.5 The project seeks to link a number of organisations with subject matter expertise in the region, including Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, UN Women Pacific office, the UNDP Pacific Centre, the IPU, the Commonwealth of Learning and Australian and Pacific tertiary institutions.

Activities implemented in 2013

2.6 The inaugural Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum was held in February 2013, with women MPs from 19 parliaments across the region. Participants discussed their experience of being elected in their country. Project partners, CDI, UNDP, UN Women and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (AFPPD), presented their actions in the region to address gender equality through parliamentary strengthening. Professor Pippa Norris (Harvard University) outlined a six-step action plan to ensure women are better represented in parliaments in the Asia Pacific region. An outcomes statement listing 12 priority actions was unanimously agreed to.

2.7 Other implemented activities since the forum have included:

- an online networking platform, open to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, to facilitate discussion, requests for data and information;
- women parliamentarians' joint submission to the 2013 Pacific Plan Review to ensure that this process is inclusive of the views of Pacific women;
- three mentoring and peer exchanges between Pacific and Australian women MPs (Solomon Islands, Palau and Cook Islands);
- developing a learning program for Pacific women MPs to enhance parliamentary capacity;
- a research scholarship offered to a woman parliamentary officer from Tonga, placed in the Australian Parliamentary Library; and
- placements of Australian parliamentary staff to Cook Islands, Samoa, Palau and Vanuatu to produce a research product of benefit to women MPs (or former MPs).

2.8 The project also jointly supported a workshop on gender equality in Tonga on 7 to 8 November 2013 and facilitated the participation of Pacific young women and women MPs at the w.comm Young Women's Forum held in Sydney from 24 to 25 November 2013.

2.9 Further information on Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships is available at: www.pacificparliaments.net/pwpp

Further information

For more information contact the Australian Parliament's International and Community Relations Office at email icro@aph.gov.au or phone **+61 2 6277 4340**

Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships and
Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships are supported by



