

## **Opportunities for closer external coordination and collaboration**

4.1 This chapter considers evidence regarding opportunities for closer external coordination and collaboration between Defence, Australia's Pacific Island partners and other likeminded friends. In particular, the following themes will be examined:

- Integration with likeminded friends and allies;
- Strengthening security compacts;
- Intelligence fusion and sharing; and
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) responses.

### **Integration with likeminded allies and partners**

4.2 The Department of Defence gave evidence that cooperation and coordination with bilateral partners and allies forms a core component of the Pacific strategy:

Defence enjoys strong people-to-people links with our Pacific partners that have been created through training and exercising together during the conduct of the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP)... As part of the Pacific Step-up, Defence continues to look for additional opportunities to strengthen our people-to-people ties, to foster deep and personal relationships with Pacific leaders, present and emerging, and to enhance cultural linkages.<sup>1</sup>

4.3 Defence's work in integrating strategic defence planning, coordination and cooperation is reinforced by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute,

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.8.

who note Australia has an extensive history of working with other countries, including New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu, on defence programs in the Pacific, including peacekeeping missions.<sup>2</sup>

4.4 The Committee heard that Defence has commenced several future-focused initiatives under the Pacific Step-up. These include:

- Redevelopment of the Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Camp, Fiji;
- Redevelopment of Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea;
- New Pacific Guardian-class Patrol Boats;
- The Joint Heads of Pacific Security event (Inaugural event held in Brisbane 8-10 October 2019);
- Expansion of ADF sporting engagement with Pacific Island nations;
- Reinforcement of alumni security networks, to maintain personal connections and deepen relationships; and
- Expansion of health and medical diagnostic training.

4.5 These initiatives are in line with Australia's 2020 *Defence Strategic Update*, 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* and the 2016 *Defence White Paper* which cite the Pacific Step-up is one of Australia's highest foreign policy priorities and emphasise that further opportunities should be pursued.<sup>3</sup>

4.6 The Government of Japan also recognises Australia's presence and cooperation with partners in the region as important for promoting the shared vision of a free, open Indo-Pacific. It notes that Australia and Japan's longstanding bilateral friendship and cooperation will become particularly important as opportunities arise as Japan's regional defence posture increases.<sup>4</sup>

4.7 The Committee heard of Defence's collaboration with likeminded partners in the region via a respectful, diplomatic approach:

When we engage with our partners in the Pacific, we engage with them as they see themselves, which is not as small island countries but as large ocean states ... We very much try to ensure that our engagement with our Pacific partners is on the basis of understanding that and that it's not a donor-recipient relationship; it's a relationship between regional partners.<sup>5</sup>

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2 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 17*, p.2.

3 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.2.

4 Government of Japan, *Submission 11*, p.2.

5 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.19.

4.8 As key ally of Australia, New Zealand (NZ) recognises the importance of working with likeminded partners to enhance bilateral relationships and security architectures to positively contribute to regional security.<sup>6</sup> The NZ Government highlighted that:

Working with likeminded partners is critical to enhancing Pacific security, stability, and resilience. From different national vantage points, likeminded partners share our concern about intensifying complex disrupters and competition<sup>7</sup>...In the context of an increasingly complex strategic environment in the Pacific, enhancing defence relationships and resilience, and active engagement in support of regional security architecture will increase in importance.<sup>8</sup>

4.9 In recognising the importance of collaborating with likeminded partners, the NZ Government underlines the need for regional players including Australia to work together:

Alongside our work with Pacific partners, prioritising cooperation with likeminded partners is fundamental to the Advancing Pacific Partnerships approach. We can achieve more together than any of us could on our own. We must work in concert, bolstering our coordination efforts, to provide good partner options to Pacific countries, maximise contributions to regional security, and encourage transparency from all partners engaged in the region.<sup>9</sup>

4.10 Ms Leanne Smith, Director at the Whitlam Institute, Western Sydney University also gave evidence about the importance of Australia developing long-term, meaningful and multi-faceted partnerships:

We should work to deepen relationships beyond the capitals. Again, this goes to cultural, sporting, church and economic relationships that really could add a lot of weight to existing bilateral relations. Under the same area, the recommendation was to improve government, private sector and NGO partnerships...although there are some good relationships in these spaces with Australian counterparts, sometimes they're perceived as being extractive relationships or, certainly, unequal relationships. And people want more respect for local capacity and expertise.<sup>10</sup>

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6 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.9.

7 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.11.

8 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.16.

9 New Zealand Government, *Submission 16*, p.9.

10 Ms Leanne Smith, Western Sydney University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.12.

- 4.11 The Australian Strategic Policy Institute further suggests considering whether scope exists for more strategic and comprehensive cooperation in the Pacific to support United Nations peacekeeping missions.<sup>11</sup> These missions are emphasised as a vehicle for meeting the needs and objectives of the Pacific countries themselves.
- 4.12 The Committee heard that Defence also recognises the need to investigate further opportunities by way of HADR:
- Defence is working with our Pacific partners and other countries – such as France, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States – to identify opportunities for collaboration on security-related engagement and approaches to HADR in the region.<sup>12</sup>
- 4.13 Defence is encouraged to continue to pursue new opportunities to collaborate and coordinate strategic initiatives with likeminded nations. This will benefit the region's peace, security and stability, but could also facilitate an expansion of bilateral and multilateral security compacts moving forward.

### **Recommendation 7**

**The Committee recommends the Government investigate further opportunities for defence cooperation in the Pacific region with likeminded nations, including New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Japan, France and the United Kingdom.**

## **Strengthening security compacts**

- 4.14 The Committee heard there exists a general understanding within Defence and Australian Government agencies that the Pacific region's security and economic interests are best addressed collectively rather than individually or through a collection of bilateral engagements.<sup>13</sup> The Committee understands that the majority of Defence's work is focused on building regional response capability, particularly through collaboration with Pacific partners via the Defence Cooperation Program and the Pacific Maritime Security Program (successor to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program):
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11 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 17*, p.5.

12 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.12.

13 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.20.

The Pacific...is our home, so it is understandable that the Australian agencies of state are deeply invested in engaging and working closely with our Pacific partners. That's reflected in the nature of Defence programs in the regions.<sup>14</sup>

- 4.15 The Committee heard that Defence's collaborative approach in the Pacific emphasises broadening and deepening security compacts to ensure all Pacific partners have necessary strategic, maritime surveillance and intelligence capabilities:

For us, it's about deepening the region's ability as a whole to respond to what they see as critical economic and security requirements. They are the areas that we want to grow in the future.<sup>15</sup>

- 4.16 Defence actively engages various security programs and compacts to support Pacific strategic cooperation and collaboration, while acknowledging the need to view each country's security requirements on a case-by-case basis to tailor Defence responses appropriately:

Defence has had longstanding engagement with our Pacific partners. All of that is underpinned by relationship-building that's taken place over decades...In terms of capability, each country has a different requirement. Some countries have military and some countries just have police forces. So we need to tailor those requirements individually.<sup>16</sup>

- 4.17 Other submissions raised the need for further efforts by Defence to bolster security compacts with the Pacific, specifically given evolving regional insecurities. In particular, Professor John Blaxland explicitly emphasised a need for more expansive compact arrangements:

It's about being generous. It's about being magnanimous in our approach to our neighbours, but also applying a degree of realpolitik to the equation. This is about responding to real changes. People who decry the grand compact proposal are offering no solutions to the major challenges...relating to great-power contestation, looming environmental catastrophe and the spectrum of governance challenges that Australia has been trying to respond to through the Pacific Step-up and other initiatives, particularly the Defence Cooperation Program and the Pacific Patrol Boat Program (presently Pacific Maritime Security

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14 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.20.

15 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.20.

16 Mr Hugh Jeffery, Department of Defence, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 July 2020, p.19.

Program). My point is that they are not enough. We are being outplayed and outgunned.<sup>17</sup>

4.18 Professor Blaxland goes on to suggest that:

Australia should look to bolster ties and deepen reciprocal arrangements in the Pacific, particularly concerning policing and domestic governance issues...Australia should offer association with Pacific countries through sharing governance arrangements, similar to the treaty arrangements in place between the United States and the Pacific...Whilst the Australian public may balk at the potential cost of undertaking a collaborative defence scheme, in the long run the costs will be outweighed by the benefits.<sup>18</sup>

## Defence Cooperation Program

4.19 As noted in Chapter 2, the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) is one of Australia's most effective levers of influence in the Pacific region. The DCP has been shaped to meet what Pacific Island states identify as their needs in partnership with Australia, rather than those needs being determined for them.<sup>19</sup> However, critiques exist which warrant Defence's attention moving forward. Professor Wallis submitted to the Committee that some aspects of the DCP lack clear objectives, transparency on spending and managing projects, and links between the DCP and defence strategic guidance are often unclear.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, Professor Wallis urges Defence to address these concerns through the Pacific Step-up, in consultation with Pacific Islands states.<sup>21</sup>

4.20 The Committee heard that Defence (in 2019-20) committed over \$116 million (AUD) to the DCP to continue to address future security priorities, enhance people-to-people links, exercises and operations, sustainment and operation of existing assets, infrastructure, and capacity building.<sup>22</sup>

4.21 The NT Government also supported enhancement of the DCP. Specifically, the NT Government encourages further development of Darwin's maritime capabilities and the establishment of an Australian Defence Force Regional Force Surveillance Group Training and Education

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17 Professor John Blaxland, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.5.

18 Professor John Blaxland, *Submission 1*, p.2.

19 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.7.

20 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.3.

21 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.3.

22 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.4.

Centre which 'is likely to lead to greater links between Pacific Island nations and the NT.'<sup>23</sup>

4.22 Similarly, the Committee heard that the Australia-Philippines DCP compact provides invaluable intelligence, surveillance and informing sharing capacity. The Philippine Embassy highlighted its Government's desire to enhance the arrangement, noting the potential for extending AFP and ADF education and training initiatives by 'intensifying research collaborations on strengthening cooperation, forecasting emerging security threats in the Southeast Asian region, and innovations in training and doctrines'.<sup>24</sup>

4.23 While several submissions highlighted the need to expand the DCP, Mr Chris Gardiner gave evidence that:

Australia will need to tread cautiously in proposing any integration initiative that could appear to involve loss of sovereignty (a compact of association giving up defence and foreign policy) or economic absorption (labour and brain drain through migration programs).<sup>25</sup>

4.24 An alternative view was expressed by Professor Blaxland who encouraged Defence to investigate the potential for a grand security compact to strengthen Pacific security ties:

We need to do more. We need to be aiming towards the 'grand compact'. I believe that if we were to engage constructively and have a plan to engage constructively over the next couple of years to socialise the idea and explore with these ... states their appetite for this, what would be in it for them and how we could make it work for their benefit and for ours, we would probably get there.<sup>26</sup>

4.25 Professor Blaxland further suggests:

We can probably ramp-up the Pacific Patrol Boat Program. It looks like it's pretty generous but, in the grand scheme of things, it's actually quite a small scheme. We could also engage more constructively and further on a range of other related issues ... One is about making sure that the infrastructure facilitates greater connectivity between the Pacific states and Australia and that we look to streamline procedures.<sup>27</sup>

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23 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 14*, p.1.

24 Philippine Embassy, *Submission 7*, p.2.

25 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.2.

26 Professor John Blaxland, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.15.

27 Professor John Blaxland, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.15.

- 4.26 The Committee also heard, from Professor Wallis, of the importance of developing relationships and cooperation ties with Pacific partners to further strengthen the DCP:

The relationships and modes of cooperation developed in these spheres could be expanded to other areas to facilitate cooperation between Pacific Island states and their external partners. This may help to mitigate against concerns that Pacific Island states have about being overwhelmed by poorly coordinated, overlapping and ill-targeted assistance as Australia and other partners rapidly increase their presence in the region.<sup>28</sup>

- 4.27 Considering the evidence provided, Defence is encouraged to continue to evolve and enhance the DCP in response to regional security needs, while maintaining a position of partnership and respect for sovereignty. Given the DCP's historic value and success, and potential for expansion in ways which will benefit both Australia and its Pacific partners, it is essential that the compact's future success and effectiveness is maintained.

### **Further opportunities for compact strengthening**

- 4.28 Complementing Defence's DCP efforts, the Committee heard that alternate opportunities for strengthening security compacts between Australia and the Pacific may exist.
- 4.29 The concept of strengthening security ties via joint peacekeeping operations between Australia and Pacific Islands was a common theme in several submissions. Ms Leanne Smith said that:

Instead of a Pacific regiment, there could be an opportunity to work with the militaries of the region to think about offering regional military or police contributions to Australia's contributions to United Nations peacekeeping. This happens in many parts of the world – in Europe, Africa and the Americas. Countries of those regions join together with different assets, different capabilities and different training programs to provide regional contributions to multilateral efforts in peacekeeping. I think it might be one way that Australia could demonstrate real respect and co-operation with the countries of the region, rather than anything else.<sup>29</sup>

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28 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.15.

29 Ms Leanne Smith, Western Sydney University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.18.



- 4.30 The Committee heard that opportunities to strengthen Australia-Pacific Island security compacts as a means of complementing pre-existing DCP efforts should be considered to promote further external coordination and collaboration between Australia and key partners.

### **Pacific Islands Treaty Organisation**

- 4.31 Mr Chris Gardiner submitted to the Committee that a longer term goal of establishing a Pacific Islands Treaty Organisation (PITO) would offer assured commitment of Australian military forces to the defence of member states, in return for those states precluding the establishment of foreign military bases or programs in their countries; including the prevention of the use of businesses and commercial assets for intelligence, influence or 'immersion missions'.<sup>30</sup>

- 4.32 The proposed PITO members would:

...establish an integrated and jointly governed maritime and air operational command. Whilst Australia would contribute major assets and capabilities to the Command, the burden would be shared with other potential developed state members such as Japan, the US and France. The creation of a 21st century integrated command will also favour heavily the use of long-range UAVs, UUVs, drones and satellites to provide effective but lower cost ISR and interdiction... They would also establish a PITO Information, Intelligence and Communications Command focused on effective political and cyber warfare in the region. PITO headquarters and bases would be based within the region and not in Australia.<sup>31</sup>

### **Recommendation 8**

**The Committee recommends that the Government and Defence expand existing programs (including the Defence Cooperation Program and Pacific Maritime Security Program), considerate of the need to maintain Pacific Island states' sovereignty, with the aim of further deepening institutional and people-to-people links with Pacific partners.**

30 Mr Chris Gardiner, Submission 9, p.3.

31 Mr Chris Gardiner, Submission 9, p.3.

## Intelligence fusion and sharing

- 4.33 Complementing opportunities to strengthen Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Islands via enhanced security compacts, the fusion and sharing of intelligence provides further opportunities to deepen strategic ties.
- 4.34 The Defence Cooperation Program and the Pacific Maritime Security Program provide a cornerstone for Defence's engagement in the Pacific, and reflect an existing platform used to share intelligence and surveillance between Australia and Pacific partners.<sup>32</sup> In addition to these programs, Professor Wallis notes Australia continues to provide maritime support to the Pacific Islands via maritime surveillance mechanisms including *Operation Solania*.<sup>33</sup>
- 4.35 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submitted to the Committee that there exists a need to further develop processes and systems to enable Pacific Islands to collect, collate, process and share surveillance in a timely manner.<sup>34</sup> Northrop Grumman Australia also emphasised the importance of evolving and strengthening intelligence sharing to better equip Pacific decision makers with information to identify and effectively respond to security threats, including illegal fishing, people smuggling and narcotics trafficking.<sup>35</sup>
- 4.36 The Committee heard that safeguarding Pacific maritime resources through intelligence fusion and sharing is pivotal to protecting the Pacific Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and fisheries.<sup>36</sup> In particular, increasing maritime surveillance support to the Pacific EEZs would 'build considerable goodwill and influence for Australia in these small states for whom fishing is often the largest industry'.<sup>37</sup>
- 4.37 Professor Wallis supports his assertion:
- Given the importance of maritime resource protection, Australia is encouraged to extend its current maritime surveillance cooperation, including information-sharing, supporting regional multilateral maritime surveillance activities and coordinating surveillance support to Pacific Island states from Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States (US) through the

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32 Department of Defence, *Submission 10*, p.6.

33 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.5.

34 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.2.

35 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.11.

36 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.9.

37 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.9.

Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group, the FRANZ Arrangement between Australia, France and New Zealand and the 2012 Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership between Australia and France.<sup>38</sup>

- 4.38 The PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submission provided context regarding the scale of the Pacific EEZ's in question:

Patrolling the combined EEZs of some 27.5 million square kilometres presents its own challenges. Given the scale of the task, there is an immediate need to scale-up the contribution to aerial surveillance under the Pacific Maritime Security Program to widen the area covered.<sup>39</sup>

- 4.39 Northrop Grumman Australia gave evidence regarding the benefits of enhancing intelligence fusion and sharing to respond to regional security challenges:

The persistent nature of layered, coalition wide-area surveillance operations would provide a 'patterns of life' pictures for allies to discern regional changes that might be of concern.<sup>40</sup>

- 4.40 The evidence heard by the Committee suggests that better fusion and sharing of intelligence and increasing surveillance capacity in light of the sheer size of Pacific EEZ's are important to enhancing Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Island states.

## Recommendation 9

**The Committee recommends that Government offer to assist with increased intelligence capacity and sharing of and with Pacific Island countries to support a broader range of security objectives, including maritime domain awareness and maritime security operations.**

## Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance

- 4.41 The Committee understands that reliable and high-quality intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) is important to maintaining the rules-based global order.
- 4.42 The Department of Defence submitted that the provision of infrastructure and security capabilities has been a vital component of Defence's activities

38 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.6.

39 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.5.

40 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.9.

in the Pacific. As highlighted by Northrop Grumman Australia; however, this does not necessarily address the reality that:

In the near future Australia will likely find itself operating concurrently in several critical theatres of operation – conducting high-end ISR missions in the South China Sea, providing maritime security ISR support to PICs, responding to domestic natural disasters, conducting ISR support for border security operations and supporting allied sanctions-enforcement missions.<sup>41</sup>

4.43 The Committee heard that underlying challenges of insufficient maritime security capability in the Pacific necessitates Australia's defence engagement:

At present, Pacific maritime security agencies lack the equipment, maintenance and operational funds to develop an effective approach to long-term maritime security for their country, with air and maritime surveillance particularly inadequate.<sup>42</sup>

4.44 The Committee is aware of the expanse of adjoining EEZ's in the Pacific region requiring surveillance under the PMSP, and that the increasing allocation of surveillance assets in coming years will be critical to Australia and its Pacific partners' situational awareness of foreign activity in the Pacific.<sup>43</sup> It will also continue to be an increasingly important element of interconnectedness and co-dependence between Australia and participating Pacific Island states.

4.45 The PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submission echoes the Defence submission with respect to the need for improved information collection, sharing and analysis. It offers that contracted services could contribute to both aerial surveillance in the region as well as increasing capacity for Australia and Pacific Island countries to collate, process and share the actionable information that increased surveillance will provide. PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia submit that contract solutions of this nature would allow high-demand ADF assets to be employed elsewhere and for Australian businesses to actively contribute to the Pacific Step-up.<sup>44</sup>

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41 Northrop Grumman Australia, *Submission 3*, p.8.

42 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.4.

43 Northrop Grumman, *Submission 3*, p.7.

44 PAL Aerospace and Air Affairs Australia, *Submission 5*, p.3.

## Recommendation 10

**The Committee recommends the Department of Defence consider additional maritime surveillance initiatives in the Pacific region. This may include an increase in frequency and intensity of existing surveillance operations and the addition of new Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV).**

## Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief support

4.46 As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, the Committee heard that Pacific Islands humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) support presents an opportunity for Australia to further build relationships with Pacific Island states through 'disaster diplomacy'.<sup>45</sup> Mr Chris Gardiner reflected on Australia's HADR support to the region, stating:

Australia has an honourable and unequalled record of deploying the ADF to provide humanitarian and disaster relief to island states.<sup>46</sup>

4.47 Professor Wallis defines disaster diplomacy as Australia's HADR and joint civil-military efforts to assist the Pacific states respond to disasters and humanitarian crises by working together, building relationships and confronting challenges cooperatively.<sup>47</sup>

4.48 Similarly, the Committee heard from Professor Wallis that:

Humanitarian and disaster relief offers Australia an opportunity to conduct disaster diplomacy. This was particularly important in respect of Cyclone Winston in Fiji, which offered an important opportunity for Australia to rebuild its relationship with Fiji after the 2006 coup. The response provided the opportunity for Australian personnel to work with the Fijian military forces which was welcomed by both communities, as they shared a strong collective sense of purpose. Australia's assistance encouraged Fijian Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, to declare that Fijians will 'always be grateful' and that he wanted to 'reset the direction

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45 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.8.

46 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

47 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, *Submission 2*, p.7.

of our relationship and work together to confront our many challenges in the region and the world'.<sup>48</sup>

- 4.49 Given the mutual benefits HADR provides for Australia and Pacific states, it is worth considering opportunities to enhance and expand collaborative HADR planning and execution measures. The importance of this is reinforced by the Philippine Embassy which highlighted its national interest in enhancing cooperation with Australia on HADR:

The Philippines welcomes opportunities in which both countries could enhance its cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR). This could be explored under the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Program, which took effect on 01 December 2019.<sup>49</sup>

- 4.50 The Committee heard from Mr Gardiner that Australia should consider establishing a HADR command centre, through Australia's international aid program, with dedicated maritime and air assets.<sup>50</sup> This would further promote and shape Australia's soft-power as 'aid boat' rather than 'gun boat' diplomacy.<sup>51</sup>

- 4.51 The Committee heard that promoting collaborative HADR and peacekeeping missions is a valuable avenue for regional cooperation. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute urges Australia to consider strengthening humanitarian efforts through United Nations peacekeeping operations as an important apparatus to 'give back' to the international community and support multilateral efforts towards maintaining a rules-based order.<sup>52</sup> The Institute points to sentiments expressed by officials in the Solomon Islands during the deployment of the regional peacekeeping mission RAMSI as evidence of this opportunity.

- 4.52 Ms Lisa Sharland emphasises the value of peacekeeping operations to fostering Australia's defence relationships in the Pacific. She stated:

UN peacekeeping offers a vehicle to give back to the international community, particularly for those countries that have hosted peacekeeping missions in the past...deployments can offer financial incentives and benefits for individuals and the sending government. Finally, UN peacekeeping can also offer prestige and

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48 Associate Professor Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.2.

49 Embassy of the Philippines, *Submission 7*, p.2.

50 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

51 Mr Chris Gardiner, *Submission 9*, p.5.

52 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 17*, p.3.

be a noble endeavour, particularly for those who serve in their home countries.<sup>53</sup>

- 4.53 Expanding on the benefits of peacekeeping missions, Ms Sharland also noted that:

Partnerships in peacekeeping training offer a two-way street to facilitate lessons learnt and training and engagement. Australia can also learn a lot from some of our Pacific counterparts in this regard as well. While Australia's Defence Cooperation Program can offer opportunities, it will also be important that Australia is mindful of the experience that Pacific countries can bring to these partnerships. In some instances, their deployment footprint is larger – and, again, I refer to Fiji here. In that regard, there is a need to be modest. We are not necessarily a big player when it comes to UN peacekeeping, particularly compared to some of our neighbours in the region.<sup>54</sup>

- 4.54 Beyond peacekeeping missions, Australia's HADR response in the Pacific could be strengthened through promoting the interconnection between women, peace and security. Ms Sharland highlighted this aspect as being of specific importance:

On women, peace and security, the short answer is that I think the more that we can engage on this the better... We are aware that the pandemic and COVID-19 are having a disproportionate impact on women... This is something that Australia, the ADF, has been quite focused on, as part of our women, peace and security engagement. ...For instance, one of the reasons the UN as an organisation has a Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy in place is that at the moment the contribution of women to UN peacekeeping from the military, as part of the 80,000-plus military personnel deployed abroad, is about four per cent, and a number of the major contributors have very few women deploying as part of their contingents.<sup>55</sup>

- 4.55 Dr Anuradha Mundkur, Head of Gender Equality at CARE Australia gave evidence that women, peace and security, must be closely interlocked with Australia's HADR response. Specifically, Dr Mundkur noted:

The women, peace and security agenda draws attention to the gendered nature of instability and the role that diverse women play in all aspects of peace-building and responding to and rebuilding after humanitarian crises. The agenda seeks to facilitate an inclusive approach to all aspects of crisis prevention, mitigation

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53 Ms Lisa Sharland, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.21.

54 Ms Lisa Sharland, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.21.

55 Ms Lisa Sharland, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 July 2020, p.27.

and resolution in ways that address the specific needs of the most marginalised group, particularly women and girls, and draws on their unique experiences to contribute to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as disaster reduction, response, relief and recovery.<sup>56</sup>

4.56 Outlining the potential for further actions in this space the Committee heard that:

...in considering Australia's defence relationship in the Pacific, it is vital that the voices and the particular needs of women and the implementation of the WPS agenda are deliberately included. The first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security contains five strategies and 24 actions that reflect five thematic areas of the women, peace and security agenda – namely prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery. Defence has responsibility for 17 of the 24 actions in the first national action plan.<sup>57</sup>

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### **Recommendation 11**

**The Committee recommends that the Australian Government pursue opportunities to strengthen Australia's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response in the Pacific to effectively build the capacities of regional militaries to respond to humanitarian crises in a manner which is considerate of the impacts on women and girls.**

### **Committee Comment**

4.57 The Committee is encouraged by the efforts of the Australian Government, in particular the Department of Defence, in fostering stronger defence partnerships and networks with Pacific Islands neighbours.

4.58 The Committee is cognisant of the availability of resources that can be directed towards supporting collaboration with Pacific Island partners and likeminded allies. Nevertheless, the Committee is also aware of growing regional instabilities, geopolitical competition, and Australia's desire to maintain the rules-based order. Consequently, the Committee

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56 Dr Anuradha Mundkur, CARE Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.1.

57 Dr Anuradha Mundkur, CARE Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 July 2020, p.1.



encourages the Australian Government and the Department of Defence to continue to deepen and strengthen existing initiatives that support defence ties in the region, while investigating alternate avenues for cooperation and coordination.

- 4.59 This could include, but is not limited to, strengthening the DCP through increased collaboration with likeminded partners, promoting greater intelligence fusion and sharing with Pacific neighbours, supporting and increasing maritime security activities through the Pacific Maritime Security Program, and investigating opportunities for enhanced HADR capability and capacity. The Committee believes that these efforts should be completed in direct consultation with Pacific Island partners, so as to place emphasis on promoting and supporting their values, sovereignty and national interests.
- 4.60 The Committee agrees that emphasising and supporting the women, peace and security agenda to comprehensively understand the gendered impacts of conflict and disasters in the Pacific is a critical component of the Pacific Step-up.

