



Addressed to:

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
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Submission to:

Parliamentary inquiry into Australia activating greater trade and investment with Pacific island countries

This submission addresses the following aspects of the underlying ToRs:

- 1) the nature of Australia's existing trade and investment relationships with Pacific island countries and the potential that is presented by the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus) for enhancing those relationships;
- 2) the opportunities to strengthen trade, investment, aid for trade and employment links between Australia and Pacific island countries and how they can be captured;
- 3) the barriers and impediments to trade and investment between Australia and Pacific island countries and how they can be mitigated;

The next paragraph gives an overview of recommendations with regards to Point 1):

- Invest in capacity building to explain/demonstrate the practical benefits/implications of the entry-into-force of PACER Plus agreement to public and private sector (beyond the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs)
- Implement trainings/workshops on the ground in Pacific countries to better understand the realities of the respective small island countries and learn from their challenges

- Take frequent fluctuation of key personnel as well as the restricted availability of human capital into account in all relationships/communication
- Involve Trade Facilitation Committees/ Customs/Quarantine and other relevant institutions for the collection/update of data and legislation into national trade portals (which can be reached via the following link: <https://pacific.tradeportal.org/>)
- Use existing functioning communication and organization structures (e.g. Trade Facilitation Committees) in each Pacific country to coordinate more efficiently
- Set up and train operational support staff to support the notification/publication obligations by official (high-level) PACER Plus contact points through the planned PACER Plus implementation unit
- Involve legislative offices (e.g. Office of Attorney General, Ministry of Justice) and legal officers from each government body in obtaining up-to-date, reliable and comprehensive laws, regulations, ruling, etc. and publishing them the legislation section of national trade portals in order to implement transparency obligations with respect to legal information.
- Update the legislation section of the respective national trade portals, taking into account publication cycles of parliamentary acts and subsidiary regulations, as well as time periods mentioned in the PACER Plus agreement.
- Involve women in the function and tasks of contact points
- Set-up mechanisms in the Pacific Islands for submitting enquiries and complains related to the functioning and implementation of Pacer Plus
- Strengthen the role and competencies of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and Oceanic Customs Organization (OCO)

The next section gives an overview of recommendations with regards to potential opportunities to further strengthen trade (Point 2):

- Simplify trade/imports for products that are specific to Pacific Islands (Taro, Kava, Red Toddy Sirup, Copra, Coconut Products, ...) for instance in reducing the processing quarantine processing time for the registration of new crops/agricultural products..)
- Awareness should be raised for national trade portals as well as the regional trade portal (<https://pacific.tradeportal.org/>) which links to the different national trade portals. The information should be shared widely among public agencies and private sector so that foreign investors/traders can benefit from the broad availability of relevant transparent information.
- Invest in the expansion of content of national trade portals (e.g. covering visa procedures, investment procedures, detailed explanation on legal documents,...)
- Support female traders/women businesses through the respective women business associations
- Design targeted policies that address the supply-side constraints that inhibit Pacific Islands women's participation in trade-related activities.

- Ensure a gender-responsive implementation and monitoring of Pacer Plus to ensure that women and men equally benefit from it.
- Invest in the expansion of internet infrastructure (speed/availability/coverage) to promote e-commerce and digitalization of business procedures based on the findings and recommendations of the eTrade Readiness Assessments, see a list of links below:
[Samoa](#), [Solomon Islands](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Kiribati](#), [Vanuatu](#)
- Provide training in digital literacy and ICT use that target Pacific Islands' women
- Support Kiribati's effort to design and implement pro-poor and gender inclusive trade-related policies in the fisheries sector
- Develop synergetic linkages between green trade policy and national sustainable development strategies in Pacific island countries

The last paragraph underlines potential barriers and impediments (Point 3)

- Reduce processing time for (Business/Tourist) Visas for Nationals from Pacific Islands and establish further embassies/high commissions to facilitate application procedures
- Recategorize risk profiles for Pacific Islanders with regards to the Visa procedures
- Improve limited possibilities for card payments/digital payments/eGovernment across the Pacific
- Support rule-based trading system in Pacific island countries by (1) enhancing the capacity of legislative offices (e.g. Office of Attorney General, Ministry of Justice) and legal officers in each government body and (2) improving the countries' repository system of laws and regulations to be more transparent, easily accessible and systematically organized.
- Make Australia's and Pacific island countries' export and import requirements written in various regulatory documents, more easily accessible and understandable by traders, through in-depth non-tariff measure analysis and tools
- Advise on better policy making to tackle trade barriers arising from the inconsistency or the lack of necessary non-tariff measures for, for example, safety and quality assurance
- Streamline regulatory requirements made by various ministries in order to avoid the restriction more than necessary level and increase administrative efficiency
- Diagnose regulatory requirements applied to key products exported by Pacific islands countries to Australia and measure their cost-effectiveness