



**THE SENATE  
SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE  
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)  
Public Hearing –7 December 2018  
Questions Taken on Notice  
EAROPH Australia**

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**1 HANSARD, p. 13**

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**CHAIR:** Mr Moore, before you go, I think Senator Moore's main weakness is that she is overly polite; I'm just trying to dig down into the two comments you've got in your submission about what SDGs are currently being addressed by Australia's official development assistance program. Can you be specific in that area or is it not your organisation's responsibility?

**Mr Moore:** The question is?

**CHAIR:** Which ones are we doing really well? Are we doing any really well?

**Mr Moore:** Dr Stanley would have been a good one to answer that—

**CHAIR:** I noted that she is helping with the—

**Mr Moore:** given her work in the Pacific, with a focus on governance and supporting Pacific and South-East Asian nations to build improved governance. That is, of course, important.

**CHAIR:** Perhaps it would be better if you were inclined to take it on notice and ask Dr Stanley to respond. This committee has inquired into foreign aid to New Guinea, and we were thrashing around, really, trying to find some successful outcomes.

**Mr Moore:** I'm happy to take that on notice.

**Senator MOORE:** That would be really good. I particularly didn't ask you that question, because I knew it was Dr Stanley's area, but it would be really valuable to all of us to get some information from Dr Stanley about the work that she's been doing, particularly in PNG, and how some things work and some things don't. That would be very useful.

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**ANSWER FROM DR JANE STANLEY, PRESIDENT**

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I was intending to participate by telephone in the public hearing on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018. However unfortunately this was not possible as my allocated time slot was changed to a period when I was otherwise committed. I have subsequently been asked to clarify certain points which could not be addressed by EAROPH Vice President Clinton Moore in my absence.

I have been asked to comment on how the Australian development assistance program is addressing the Sustainable Development Goals, and how effective this is. I understand that the Senate Committee is particularly interested in my work in Papua New Guinea, but is also interested in the

issues facing the development assistance program elsewhere in the Pacific Region and South-East Asia. The following observations are based on the programs and interventions that I am aware of arising from my current work as a consultant and/or as President of EAROPH Australia.

### ***Papua New Guinea***

The national government has just launched its third five year Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP III) which is the overall strategic document that guides the activities of all government agencies including provincial and local level governments. This MTDP has been completely structured around the SDGs, with a reporting framework that will monitor progress in achieving them. MTDP III has an overall objective of “inclusive sustainable economic growth”, and so prioritises SDGs 1 (No Poverty) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) with all other SDGs being addressed in association with these. As I understand it, the PNG Government has itself chosen to frame its development plan in this way, arising out of its commitments made at Habitat III in Quito (at which it was represented).

As part of MTDP III all donor agencies are being asked to shift their own priorities within PNG, with a significant increase in funding being sought for infrastructure and activities which will contribute to inclusive sustainable economic growth. I presume that DFAT is engaged in considering how to make this shift.

My work in Papua New Guinea during 2018 has been to oversee a National Audit of the Informal Economy. This audit has been funded mainly by the PNG Government, with contributions from the EU and UN Women. My role has been to design the methodology, provide a training manual for interviewers, and analyse the findings. The total project has involved a team of around 80 people. I have attached a summary of the findings, which are currently being considered at a high level by government agencies and some of the donors. As far as I can determine, the audit is the first conducted at a national level by any government. It is vitally important that the informal economy be better understood as it contributes around 90% of the incomes received by Papua New Guinea citizens. The audit therefore provides much of the evidence base for policy and action driven by the MTDP.

I have been asked by UN Women and the PNG Government to continue my involvement into 2019 by developing an Action Plan that responds to the audit findings. While I was in-country in December 2018 I presented the findings to a wide range of agencies, including the Australian High Commission, and there was already some discussion about how they could contribute in addressing the findings, increasing the wellbeing and economic productivity of informal economy workers. In early February it is proposed that I should facilitate a series of interagency round table discussions around distinct themes, and I will invite the Australian High Commission to participate in these discussions. I would be pleased to brief DFAT officers in Australia as appropriate.

### ***Vanuatu***

My colleague Kerry McGovern, who is the previous President of EAROPH Australia and present Treasurer, has recently been working for DFAT in Vanuatu. She has informed me that Vanuatu has a National Sustainable Development Plan as an overarching policy framework for the Government, prepared in 2016 and embracing the SDGs. Her work has involved fiduciary risk assessment of the Australian aid investment made in the country through partner government systems. The aim of the aid program is to support the Vanuatu Government in achieving the objectives it has set. Australia is Vanuatu's largest bilateral donor and its aid programs align with the priorities identified in the National Sustainable Development Plan.

### ***Melanesia Generally***

I have had intermittent involvement with UNIFEM and UN Women since 2009, looking at how fresh produce markets are key drivers of the economy, and how they are particularly important for the wellbeing of women who make up the majority of traders. This work included my consultancy company FOCUS Pty Ltd mapping the conditions found in around 60 different markets throughout Melanesia, and then working with selected local governments to improve the condition of markets

as they impact on women. Other consultants were also involved in this program, including Kerry McGovern who led the team identifying how to better manage the physical assets of markets within a business planning framework. This initiative eventually received significant funding from DFAT and other donors. In 2017 I was appointed to collate the findings from earlier work to provide an evidence-based foundation for future program delivery. The program that DFAT and others are supporting is particularly focused on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) but it has additional relevance for SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, and 16.

### ***Pacific Region Generally***

The Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI), which receives some DFAT funding, is supporting Pacific audit offices to identify gaps in national system preparedness and to provide national parliaments with practical recommendations to strengthen institutional arrangements to enable them to achieve the SDGs. Kerry McGovern has worked with this group.

In December 2018 I took part in a workshop convened by the Pacific Office of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) in the lead up to the Pacific Urban Forum which will be held in May 2019. This involves the ten Commonwealth member nations of CLGF as well as other countries participating in CLGF programs. The CLGF facilitated preparation of a Pacific New Urban Agenda in 2015, addressing the SDGs, but prior to the launch of the global New Urban Agenda in 2016. The workshop that has just been held was a review of the 2015 document in light of Agenda 2030 (ie the SDGs as articulated in the New Urban Agenda) as well as contemporary regional issues. A particular concern is SDG 13 (Climate Action) with additional priorities identified under SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities).

The workshop was attended by several UN agencies including UN Habitat. In discussion it was explained that the Pacific Region had one of the poorest levels of improvements against the Millennium Development Goals that preceded the SDGs. “Progress wheels” have been developed for each Pacific country to monitor progress against the SDGs and there are 132 customised indicators for this region, though it is recognised that some will be difficult to measure.

It is clear that the CLGF is playing an important role in building the capacity of Pacific nations to address the SDGs, and also supporting their aspiration to present a “Pacific Voice” to the rest of the world. There is currently a focus on working towards the Asia Pacific Urban Forum to be held in Penang later in 2019, which will be a lead-in event to WUF 10 in Abu Dhabi in February 2020. All nations will be expected to report on their progress in achieving the SDGs at WUF10.

Despite the importance of the CLGF work in strengthening urban governance, which I understand has been recognised in past performance reviews, the Australian Government removed its core funding for the organisation around 2011 (previously around \$500,000 pa). The CLGF now has no core funding and relies on ad hoc project funding, with a much reduced presence in the region. This appears to have been the result of a rationalisation of the AusAID budget at the time to focus on larger investment programs at the expense of smaller ones.

My particular role in the recent workshop was as a representative of the UN City Partnerships Program, in which EAROPH is a partner. This is a new global program with seed funding from the International Facility for Sustainable Urban Development (IFSUD) which has its Secretariat based within RMIT in Melbourne. EAROPH Australia has been working with the CLGF to develop a potential Pacific Partnership Program based around local government capacity building and mentoring in local economic development. This program will need matching contributions from other sources, and DFAT would be welcomed as a potential partner.

### ***Asia Pacific***

At the Asia Pacific level, EAROPH has developed a Capacity Building Framework that encourages sharing of skills and experience between countries. In this regard, EAROPH Australia is able to contribute particular skills in the areas of Local Economic Development, Systemic Asset Management, Public Financial Management, Housing and Urban Growth Management, with Waste Management a possible future area of contribution. EAROPH is currently considering whether to

seek funding through the City Partnerships Program for implementation of its Capacity Building Framework between selected local governments. Some initiatives are being pursued between particular countries, for example EAROPH Australia has an MoU with the Indonesian EAROPH members around a number of specific urban development issues, and the Malaysian Chapter of EAROPH has been giving professional support to the Government of Bhutan.

At present there is no Pacific Chapter of EAROPH, but EAROPH Australia has been asked by the international Secretariat to encourage this. We will work with the Commonwealth Association of Planners to re-establish a Pacific Island Planners Association which is much needed as a peer support network. The recent CLGF workshop also highlighted a need for structured professional training in urban planning as well as local government policy and administration, and we will engage with some of the Australian universities to see if appropriate accredited training modules can be delivered. This could also fall within the scope of a broader Asia Pacific Partnerships Project around local government capacity building.

EAROPH is currently considering whether it should hold its 2019 regional conference back to back with the Asia Pacific Forum in Penang, probably scheduled for October. The importance of the Forum is becoming clear, helping countries to prepare for their SDG reporting to WUF10 in 2020. In this regard it is noted that UN Habitat is urging that SDG reporting should start with input from grassroots communities and local governments, with reports then collated at the national level, and that this was intended for the Voluntary Reports that were submitted in an earlier reporting phase. It would appear that Australia has been slow to develop such a bottom-up process, as local governments (with a few notable exceptions such as Newcastle City, which EAROPH chose as the venue for its 2018 World Congress) have a low level of awareness about their SDG reporting responsibilities and the 2030 vision. This is why EAROPH Australia is urging that the Australian Government should do more to promote Agenda 2030 (the SDGs in the context of the New Urban Agenda) across the local government sector.