

Chapter 1

Introduction and conduct of inquiry

Referral of inquiry

1.1 On 24 June 2008, the Senate referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade the matter of the economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the island states of the southwest Pacific. The committee was to inquire into and report on the reference by 30 May 2009. On 13 May 2009, the Senate resolved to restructure its committee system and as a result the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade was split into two separate committees—the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee and the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee.¹ Under standing order 25 (4), the References Committee assumed responsibility for the inquiry.

1.2 On 29 May 2009, the committee tabled an interim report notifying the Senate of its intention to consider recent developments of significance to the committee's inquiry, including the release of *Defence White Paper 2009*, the Prime Minister's announcement about a proposed Deployable Civilian Capacity and the 2009 Budget Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance. On 19 November 2009, the committee tabled Volume I which dealt with the economic challenges facing the island states of PNG and the southwest Pacific. At that time, the committee informed the Senate that it would subsequently table a second volume dealing with security challenges.

Terms of reference

1.3 Under the terms of reference, the committee was to inquire into the major economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the island states of the southwest Pacific:

- (i) the implications for Australia; and
- (ii) how the Australian Government could, in practical and concrete ways, assist these countries to meet the challenges.

1.4 The inquiry was to include in its examination:

- (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 the Pacific Community.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, no. 68, Wednesday, 13 May 2009, pp. 1942–1946. The change was to be effective from 14 May 2009.

Conduct of inquiry

1.5 The committee advertised its inquiry on its website and in *The Australian*, calling for submissions to be lodged by 30 August 2008. The committee also wrote directly to a range of people and organisations inviting written submissions. These included government departments and agencies, academics, research and strategic studies institutes, non-government organisations, and a number of embassies and high commissions of countries from the region.

1.6 The committee received 71 submissions which are listed at Appendix 1. During the inquiry, the committee also placed a number of questions on notice to witnesses. The answers are available on the committee's website.

1.7 The committee held seven public hearings in Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane. A list of the committee's public hearings, together with the names of witnesses who appeared, is at Appendix 2. The committee also took evidence from Australia's High Commissioners to Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Submissions and additional information cited in appendices were tabled with Volume I.

Relationship to Volume I

1.8 Volume I explored the complex range and interplay of forces affecting economic and human development in Pacific island states. It found that physical and geographical limitations—small populations and land mass, remoteness and susceptibility to natural disasters—inhibit the ability of Pacific Island states to develop their economies and provide for their people. The committee noted, however, that the adverse effects stemming from these disadvantages could be moderated and that, with the help of donor countries, Pacific island states could unlock their economic and human potential. It noted, in particular, a lack of capacity across all economic areas and concluded that improved research, education and training, infrastructure and governance would assist economies in the region to grow.

1.9 The committee does not re-examine these matters but builds on some of the committee's key findings. It recognises that an economy unable to provide adequately for the welfare of its people creates a breeding ground for social discontent and conflict. The committee also considers matters not covered in Volume I such as ethnic and gender relations. In this volume, the committee is concerned principally with how Pacific island states manage the security consequences that flow from economic and social factors. It looks at policing, law enforcement, the justice system, border control, and crisis management, especially emergencies following a natural disaster.

Terminology

1.10 When calling for submissions, the committee left open the definition of southwest Pacific islands to allow submitters the opportunity to consider islands in the general region that in their view warranted attention. Overall, most submissions focused on the member states of the Pacific Islands Forum and in particular, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Fiji, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga,

Tuvalu and Vanuatu. When using the term Pacific island states, the committee is primarily concerned with these countries.

Defining security

1.11 Today, our understanding of 'security' is significantly broader than it was twenty years ago. Classical or traditional forms of security—a nation's capacity to preserve its territorial integrity—coexist with a broader range of non-traditional forms. States have begun to consider issues of human security: employment; access to law and justice; security from climate change as critical to their overall security status. This report examines both types of security challenge while seeking to explore what Australia can do to help Pacific island states strengthen the conditions for a safe and stable environment across the Pacific.

Regional architecture

1.12 Under the terms of reference, the committee was to consider regional organisations. As discussed in the previous volume, the Pacific Islands Forum is the main regional organisation that is actively promoting cooperation and coordination across a range of activities including regional security. In April 2004, the Forum Leaders adopted a vision statement embracing greater regional cooperation and integration in their endeavours to secure a sustainable economic existence for all.²

1.13 Operating as the main instrument for promoting the Pacific Islands Forum's vision, the Pacific Plan proposes a new approach to confronting the challenges of Pacific island states. Endorsed by Forum leaders in 2005, the Plan nominates four 'pillars' or strategic objectives to help improve development and security outcomes across the Pacific: economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The Plan's fourth pillar—security—looks to strengthen the conditions for a safe and stable environment within which the benefits of its other pillars can be realised. Each pillar represents a key challenge faced by Pacific island states and is supported by a dedicated program within the Forum. The Security Program is mandated primarily through decisions made by Forum leaders and by the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC).³

1.14 Even though the Pacific Plan is committed to identifying regional solutions to security challenges, Mr Rick Nimmo, Director of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's Political and Security Program, explained that it does not seek to replace

2 The Auckland Declaration, Pacific Islands Forum, Special Leaders' Retreat, 6 April 2004, Auckland. See also, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Working Draft, The Pacific Plan for strengthening regional cooperation and integration*, p. 3; and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat', Auckland, 6 April 2004, http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/spacific/regional_orgs/spf_leaders_decisions.html (accessed 29 September 2008).

3 Pacific Islands Forum Security Program, <http://www.forumsec.org.fj/pages.cfm/security/> (accessed 4 September 2009).

national approaches, nor does it assume that all Pacific island states face the same security challenges for the region is simply too diverse to 'lend itself to categorising the challenges in any sort of priority order'.⁴

Previous inquiries

1.15 In 2008, the committee produced a report on Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations with particular reference to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). It provides a valuable source of background material for this current report.

Structure of volume

1.16 This volume analyses the nature and extent of the key security challenges facing Pacific island states and the measures they are taking to meet these challenges. It is divided into two sections. The first examines the main threats to security originating from within the borders of Pacific island countries. These domestic factors include: economic performance, particularly employment; ethnic divisions; land ownership; the status of women; and political systems. The committee looks at the capacity of Pacific island countries to manage internal security concerns from two perspectives—firstly, the daily policing and law enforcement requirements; and secondly, the response needed in cases of a serious breakdown in law and order. It also considers the contribution made by the region, and by Australia, to help Pacific island countries maintain law and order and provide access to justice.

1.17 In the second part of the report, the committee examines the major security risks that come from outside the borders of Pacific island countries with a focus on transnational crime and related illegal activity. It looks at the capacity of Pacific islands states to manage these external threats such as policing their vast exclusive economic zones (EEZs), controlling their borders, and tracking and deterring organised crime. Finally, the committee explores the link between the region's security and its vulnerability to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. The committee also looks at Australia's bilateral and regional endeavours to help these countries deal with external threats to their security.

Acknowledgments

1.18 The committee thanks all those who contributed to the inquiry by making submissions, providing additional information or appearing before it to give evidence.

4 *Committee Hansard*, 19 June 2009, pp. 7–8.