



## Synthesis Report

# Australia and the Pacific: Shaping a Shared Future

### SUPPORTED BY



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Civil-Military Centre**



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



**Australian  
National  
University**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE**



Secretariat@asiapacific4d.com



[www.asiapacific4d.com](http://www.asiapacific4d.com)



@AsiaPacific4D



<https://au.linkedin.com/company/asia-pacific-development-diplomacy-defence-dialogue>

© Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue 2022.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons license.

You can reprint or republish with attribution.

You can cite this paper as: Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue, Australia and the Pacific: Shaping a Shared Future (Canberra 2022): [www.asiapacific4d.com](http://www.asiapacific4d.com)

First published June 2022

ISBN: 978-0-6454377-2-0 (online)

ISBN: 978-0-6454377-3-7 (print)

## DISCLAIMER

While every care has been taken in the preparation of the materials contained within this publication, AP4D will not be held liable or responsible for any loss, damage or other inconvenience caused as a result of any inaccuracy or error within the pages of this publication. This publication is not a substitute for independent professional advice and you should obtain any appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular circumstances. Views expressed cannot be attributed to any individuals or organisations involved in the process.

# Why it matters

Geopolitics have brought the Pacific to the forefront of Australia's foreign policy debate. However, viewing the region solely through the lens of geopolitical competition is detrimental to Australia's engagement with the Pacific and the mutual interests of both.

Australia's interest in the region, and the attention it pays to it, should remain clear, consistent and coherent, irrespective of whether there are crises or not.<sup>1</sup> Genuine, unfluctuating Australian engagement should address each Pacific island country's unique needs through both bilateral and regional Pacific-led initiatives.

A short-term and transactional approach would be counterproductive.

The Pacific will always be an area of great strategic significance for Australia. Peace and stability in Pacific island countries goes to the heart of Australia's security, prosperity and national interest.

There is insecurity in the Pacific at multiple levels:

- globally, as a warming planet presents ecological and civilisational threats;
- regionally, as players and relationships change;
- nationally, as countries respond to the effects of COVID-19, natural disasters, illegal fishing, transnational crime and other threats, compounded by gender inequality; and
- locally, where community leaders and security agencies struggle to control violence and subnational conflicts in several countries. In some areas, law and order challenges and the proliferation of firearms mean that risks to individual safety and tribal and political violence is extremely real.

These shared challenges and mutual threats require the long-term attention of Australia and Pacific island countries. Building a Pacific security community is an endeavour that will require strategic persistence and patience.<sup>2</sup> This

suggests the need for Australian policymakers to think big to achieve a significant reset in security cooperation.

We need to move beyond paying lipservice to each others' security concerns and develop a common framework for security that responds to the full set of peace and security challenges in the Pacific. This requires deepening relationships and making sure other shared concerns are not lost as geopolitics come to the fore.

There are strong foundations to work on in Australia-Pacific cooperation. Australia has security cooperation arrangements with most Pacific Island states, ranging from police-to-police cooperation, defence capacity-building and joint military exercises through to development programs designed to address drivers of fragility such as inequality and inclusive economic growth. Even in the area of climate change, there has been cooperation on climate science, on sustainable fisheries and on preserving maritime boundaries in the face of sea level rise. There is goodwill towards Australia in the region to draw on.

Australia needs to envisage Pacific island countries as a network of interaction, trade, exchange, communication and influence reaching across much of the Pacific Ocean. Strong relationships are not made up only of defence and security ties, and do not come into play only in situations of threat. They are the product of long-term, consistent and multi-faceted engagement, of genuine partnership with and respect for countries that are equally sovereign, and exchange that takes seriously the priorities, concerns and values of all the parties.

Australia should reset its expectations to accept that Pacific island countries will also engage with other countries and use the opportunity to recognise the gaps in its defence, development and diplomatic relationships.

1 Joanne Wallis, *Crowded and complex: The changing geopolitics of the South Pacific*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, April 2017, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/crowded-and-complex-changing-geopolitics-south-pacific>; Hugh White, *In denial*, Australian Foreign Affairs, January 2019, <https://www.australianforeignaffairs.com/articles/extract/2019/08/in-denial>.

2 James Batley, *Australia and security in the Pacific Islands*, Policy Forum, April 2021, <https://www.policyforum.net/australia-and-security-in-the-pacific-islands/>.



## RISKS:

- At a time of intensifying geostrategic competition there may be pressure for Australia to take a short-term and transactional approach towards the region. Such crisis thinking would be unnecessary and counterproductive.
- Where Australia privileges its own institutional requirements and solutions above local agency and local solutions this can feed negative perceptions about Australia's intent. There is a danger that a focus on China overtakes other priorities and dominates the relationship; this would undermine trust and lead to Australia's diplomatic intentions not always being well-received.
- Australia's lack of urgency and leadership on climate change has been disconnecting Australia from the region.<sup>3</sup> Australia needs to be seen to be taking climate action seriously, including in its domestic climate policies. Pacific island countries are dealing with the impact of climate change, including more regular severe cyclones, changing rainfall patterns, flooding, marine heatwaves, coastal erosion and inundation and coral bleaching. Australia's comprehension of what is at stake for Pacific island countries is critical to its own regional objectives.
- Australia's concerns about geopolitical change lead it to overstate differences with Pacific island countries. There will always be areas where Australian and Pacific views and interests align, and others where they do not.

<sup>3</sup> Cheryl Durrant, Simon Bradshaw and Alix Pearce, *Rising to The Challenge: Addressing Climate and Security in Our Region*, Climate Council, 2020, [https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CC\\_MVSA0274\\_Climate-Security\\_V8-FA\\_Low\\_Res\\_Single\\_Pages.pdf](https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CC_MVSA0274_Climate-Security_V8-FA_Low_Res_Single_Pages.pdf)

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- By contributing to building stronger, resilient and prosperous societies, Australia is investing in a more secure and stable immediate neighbourhood that will reap mutual benefits.
- Australia's scale in the region means its actions are consequential and it can have a positive impact on the trajectory of Pacific economies and societies.
- There is the opportunity for a rhetorical reset framed in terms of long-term, generational partnership, demonstrating responsiveness to the Pacific's priorities for development and with a clear eye on a shared, long-term future.
- A focus on problem-solving and genuine partnership can produce deeper and longer-lasting relationships founded on trust.
- Common interests and shared geography should attune parties to building respectful mutually beneficial relationships. Having different security perspectives need not preclude regional cooperation.
- A digitally connected Pacific will pay diplomatic dividends for Australia. The importance of digital connectivity goes beyond defence and security and is about building relationships.
- There is an opportunity for Australia's diplomacy and development assistance to the Pacific to have an increased profile for Indigenous people and practices. Engagement with the Pacific should be a key focus of Australia's First Nations Foreign Policy.
- There are opportunities to increase people-to-people engagement through Australia increasing its Pacific literacy through sustained investment.
- With Australian communities suffering major weather events, there is growing awareness of the shared experiences of Australians and their Pacific neighbours. There are shared interests and opportunities to work together on disaster response.

## AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC

- The overall vision is of an Australia-Pacific partnership of mutuality, respect and shared leadership.
  - Australia recognises the necessity of applying all arms of statecraft in engaging with the region, ensuring both sufficient investment across development, diplomacy and defence and the effective coordination of the activities of each in support of common strategic objectives.
  - Australia recognises the existential threat that climate change poses to Pacific island countries and reflects this in its domestic and international policies.
  - Australia frames its engagement with the Pacific as valuable in its own right, not through the lens of geostrategic competition. Australia de-emphasises the focus on the Pacific as a stage for great power contestation in its foreign policy approach.
  - Australia is an active and engaged partner in a mutually beneficial partnership where Australia leverages its expertise and experience to support local and regional priorities.
  - Australia anchors its Pacific development, diplomacy and defence engagement in a strategy of shared interests. Australia positions itself as an integral and invested part of the Pacific neighborhood and a genuine part of Pacific regionalism.
  - Australia focuses on being an effective partner by aligning with Pacific priorities. It is in Australia's interest to care about what Pacific island countries care about.
  - The Pacific agenda is a priority in Australia's broader global agenda and Pacific preferences are not overridden.
  - Australia is willing to invest in the necessary resources to maintain its status as a trusted and influential partner to governments, civil society and business in the region. It invests sufficient diplomatic and political resources to engage effectively with Pacific island countries.
- 

# The vision in practice

This report investigates four areas to illustrate what it looks like for Australia to shape a shared future with the Pacific.

What does it look like for Australia to be an...

effective  
climate ally

generational  
partner for  
economies and  
societies

effective partner  
for security and  
peace

partner  
on digital  
resilience and  
transformation

...with the Pacific

Australia becomes a **climate ally** with the Pacific. Recognising that climate change is an existential security issue for Pacific island countries, Australia revisits its own contribution to climate change as a major emitter and exporter and it transitions away from use of fossil fuels towards becoming a major exporter of renewable energy. Australia works with Pacific island countries through processes of multilateral diplomacy to drive global ambition to reduce emissions. It becomes a staunch advocate for global climate goals and uses its diplomatic capacity to promote greater climate action. As well as implementing preventative measures, Australia is well-placed to help strengthen regional climate mitigation and disaster response capacity in coordination with local organisations. Australia works with the Pacific on other forms of environmental degradation including over-fishing, waste disposal, deforestation and environmental rehabilitation.

Australia is a **generational partner for Pacific economies and societies**. Faced with a challenge to its profile and influence, Australia pursues a long-term approach focusing on economic integration, reciprocity and sustained commitment to generational progress. This will reap dividends far beyond transactionalism. As the single largest development partner in the region, Australia is well-positioned to take the relationship forward in a positive and sustainable way. Through tools including labour mobility, education and training, people-to-people relationships and long-term development partnerships it can build towards a vision of fighting poverty, increasing economic capacity, building governance, strengthening resilience and promoting more peaceful societies.

Australia is an **effective partner for a secure and peaceful Pacific**. Australia and Pacific island countries support each other to anticipate, prevent and respond to a broad range of security threats and coercive influences. These include climate change, human security, gender equality, environmental and resource security, transnational crime and cybersecurity. Australia and Pacific island countries develop a common sense of the threats to peace and security in the region. Australia supports Pacific regionalism and Pacific-led initiatives and aligns with regional priorities. National security strategies anchor how Australia and like-minded countries coordinate and deliver cross-sectoral efforts, ensuring that they follow security agendas set locally and regionally rather than being paternalistic providers. Australia can also invest in civil society, media and other socio-political institutions critical to good governance, democratic norms and countering external influence, as well as drawing on its peacebuilding and conflict mediation experience.

Australia is a **partner on digital resilience and transformation** in the Pacific. Technological change is one of the most critical issues facing the Pacific. Digital technology cuts across all sectors of society and government and is vital for how Pacific island countries function now and into the future. It is not a niche concern. Digital technology provides an immense opportunity for the Pacific, meeting the deep desire to be better globally connected in a region where logistics and connectivity has always been an issue.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, digital technology poses a major risk to state sovereignty and challenges the nature, viability and legitimacy of Pacific island countries as functioning states. Australia needs to partner with the Pacific both on digital resilience – the ability to withstand incidents and criminal and malicious attacks and still continue to operate – and on digital transformation – the ability to reap the benefits of technological change. Australia can leverage its knowledge and expertise to build digital capacity and capability (and embed sustainability) and strengthen national and regional responses. As well as the physical infrastructure required to build Pacific connectivity, Australia has a role in promoting online safety, digital literacy, online learning, digital marketplaces and training. The development sector should explore opportunities provided by digital technology and integrate these into development programs.

---

<sup>4</sup> Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *ICT For Development in the Pacific Islands*, February 2020: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/ict-development-pacific-islands>



# Case studies

It would be wrong to think that Australia is not active in its Pacific engagement. The region is currently receiving significant focus and attention.

There are examples already in action that illustrate an approach based on partnership, shared interests and applying all arms of statecraft. It is important to recognise these and encourage further investment in similar activities.

Initiative	Description
SciTech4Climate	<p>Australia's Science and Technology for Climate Partnerships (SciTech4Climate) program is a \$5.5million science and technology partnership to support climate resilience in the Indo-Pacific. The program connects leading Australian scientists and climate specialists with development partners in the Indo-Pacific to ensure the region's response to climate change is supported by the best available science and technological advances.</p> <p><a href="https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/climate-change/supporting-indo-pacific-tackle-climate-change/scitech4climate-harnessing-science-and-technology-support-climate-resilience-indo-pacific">https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/climate-change/supporting-indo-pacific-tackle-climate-change/scitech4climate-harnessing-science-and-technology-support-climate-resilience-indo-pacific</a></p>
Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction	<p>In Brisbane in the second half of 2022, Australia will host a range of ministerial meetings, thematic sessions and partner-led public forums to promote coordination and cooperation and assess regional progress made in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the global blueprint to reduce disaster risk and losses.</p> <p><a href="http://www.undrr.org/event/asia-pacific-ministerial-conference-disaster-risk-reduction-apmcdrr-2022">www.undrr.org/event/asia-pacific-ministerial-conference-disaster-risk-reduction-apmcdrr-2022</a></p>
The Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security	<p>The Centre is the implementation body for the Australian Government's Vaccine Access and Health Security Initiative. It brings together global investments, collaboration with regional organisations and bilateral health cooperation to deliver both strategic direction and practical, timely assistance for regional government partners. Its mix of DFAT staff, secondees from six Departments and specialist contractors provides in-house expertise in areas including the veterinary sciences, regulation, immunology, microbiology, epidemiology and anthropology. A further five-year strategic investment has just been announced.</p> <p><a href="https://indopacifichealthsecurity.dfat.gov.au/">https://indopacifichealthsecurity.dfat.gov.au/</a></p>

Pacific Women Lead	<p>Pacific Women Lead is the Australian Government's new regional gender equality program for the Pacific. It aims to ensure that Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, are safe and equitably share resources, opportunities and decision-making with men and boys. It will focus on women's leadership and women's rights, including safety, health and economic empowerment. It builds on Australia's long-standing support for gender equality in the Pacific through the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program.</p> <p><a href="https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/business-opportunities/business-notifications/pacific-women-lead-atm-id-dfat-324">https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/business-opportunities/business-notifications/pacific-women-lead-atm-id-dfat-324</a></p>
Cardno Market Development Facility	<p>Cardno's Market Development Facility is an Australia-funded multi-country initiative working in five countries including Fiji, Timor-Leste and PNG. It uses a market systems development approach to promote sustainable economic development by connecting individuals, businesses, governments and NGOs with each other and with markets at home and abroad. It has leveraged US\$14.2 million in private sector investment since 2012 and a cumulative 170,200 women have benefitted since the start of the program.</p> <p><a href="https://marketdevelopmentfacility.org/what-we-do/">https://marketdevelopmentfacility.org/what-we-do/</a></p>
BRIDGE School Partnerships Program	<p>The Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement (BRIDGE) School Partnerships Program is a program of the Asia Education Foundation that has operated since 2008 and expanded into the Pacific in 2018. BRIDGE supports schools across Australia to establish a partnership with a sister school from the Pacific region. The program builds educators' professional knowledge, capabilities and skills while students collaborate on projects, practice language skills and develop friendships. A key focus is strengthening links between schools that offer education to students with a disability.</p> <p><a href="https://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/programmes/school-partnerships/participating-countries/pacific">https://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/programmes/school-partnerships/participating-countries/pacific</a></p>
Regional Maritime and Fisheries Operations	<p>Agencies across national jurisdictions cooperate to crack down on illegal and unregistered operations in the Pacific Ocean. An example is a recent Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) operation which covered an area of 18.4 million square kilometres. The regional team was supported by the Australian Defence Force (working remotely due to COVID) providing intelligence gathering and analysis. Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States provided support through aerial and surface surveillance.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ffa.int/node/2605">https://www.ffa.int/node/2605</a></p>

Pacific Fusion Centre	<p>The Pacific Fusion Centre is a newly established centre based in Vanuatu that intends to deliver training and strategic analysis against Pacific security priorities. Under the guidance of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Centre provides assessments and advice on Pacific regional security challenges, including climate security, human security, environmental and resource security, transnational crime and cyber security. It will host security analysts from across the Pacific for capacity-building, information-sharing and cooperation activities to enhance their analytical assessment skills.</p> <p><a href="https://www.pacificfusioncentre.org/">https://www.pacificfusioncentre.org/</a></p>
'I Am Digital' campaign	<p>Save the Children has partnered with Meta (Facebook) to deliver a digital literacy and safety initiative in the Pacific. The campaign has developed learning materials to help Pacific people stay safe on the internet with tip sheets, jingles and videos shared online, in person and via radio. They help empower children and their parents to have safer, more positive experiences online and safeguard themselves against abuse, bullying and exploitation. The campaign has been implemented in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.</p> <p><a href="https://www.savethechildren.org.au/media/media-releases/save-the-children-and-facebook-launch-the-first">https://www.savethechildren.org.au/media/media-releases/save-the-children-and-facebook-launch-the-first</a></p>
Catalpa: Pacific eLearning Program	<p>Development organisation Catalpa is using technology to deliver Pacific e-learning programs to improve science learning outcomes for students and professional development opportunities for teachers. The program uses engaging science content relevant to the Pacific context and delivers interactive online teacher professional development. The co-designed learning content is delivered via a custom e-learning platform and is designed for scaling across the region. The program is currently being implemented in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa and Cook Islands.</p> <p><a href="https://catalpa.io/projects/pacificlearning/">https://catalpa.io/projects/pacificlearning/</a></p>
Know Your Customer Program	<p>South Pacific Central Banks, including the Reserve Bank of Australia, are working together to bring down the cost of remittances through the regional 'Know Your Customer' facility. It aims to improve customer due diligence processes and compliance with anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism compliance. Reducing the complexities of sending money digitally from Australia and New Zealand to the Pacific is significant given that impact of remittances on individuals and communities across the region.</p> <p><a href="https://www.rba.gov.au/media-releases/2020/mr-20-31.html">https://www.rba.gov.au/media-releases/2020/mr-20-31.html</a></p>
With You With Me	<p>The Australian based media company With You With Me is an organisation that provides training for veterans to start a digital career. The program assists veterans to discover the right digital career pathway, and provides training as well as continuous learning through establishing a career plan for each candidate. The program is currently operating in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji and is an example that could be built on in other countries to support more digitally skilled Pacific workers.</p> <p><a href="https://www.withyouwithme.com/">https://www.withyouwithme.com/</a></p>

# Pathways

AP4D Options Papers have identified further pathways towards this vision including:

## FOCUS: CLIMATE ALLY

Need	Possible pathway
Demonstrate commitment	The Australian Government changes its declaratory policy on climate, reaffirming that climate change is the single greatest threat to the Pacific region.
International leadership and diplomacy	Australia undertakes meaningful collective diplomacy on climate change, working as an ally for climate action on the global stage. Australia and Pacific island countries co-host a Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting.
Energy policy	Australia announces an ambitious emissions target for 2030 and adopts an energy policy that sends a strong signal to the market that investment in renewables is viable and profitable. Australia establishes regional targets for decarbonisation as part of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific.
Dialogue and links	Australia builds on relationships between Australian and Pacific climate science organisations and establishes a new "1.5 Track Dialogue for 1.5 Degrees". Relationships with Pacific peoples are a key focus of Australia's First Nations Foreign Policy.
Disaster risk and response	Australia should conduct a national review of climate risks and collaborate with Pacific island countries and New Zealand on a regional climate risk assessment. Australia helps build local disaster response capacity for longer and larger disaster seasons, with development programs playing a role in planning for disaster resilience. Defence can promote greater civil-military cooperation and involvement of first responders including fire and emergency services.
Climate finance	Australia rejoins the Green Climate Fund and advocates for reform to support direct access pathways for Pacific island countries. It should support a range of financing modalities including the Pacific Islands Forum's Pacific Resilience Fund and the Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution Hub.
Migration	Australia should prepare for the future in its migration policies, tackling the problem of climate mobility as a serious issue given the need for people movement to major economies and within the region. Safe migration pathways need to be discussed and a new regional convention of refugees may be needed. The desire to maintain community bonds and culture may require a new model that allows Pacific communities to retain nationhood within Australia's political structure.
Loss and damage	Australia should continue to engage with Pacific island countries in the emerging debate calling for reparation for loss and damage caused by carbon emitters. There are likely to be continuing calls as a question of climate justice. With outstanding issues following the Glasgow Conference of the Parties (COP), there is an opportunity for Australia-Pacific collaboration to be part of this debate.

## FOCUS: ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES

Need	Possible pathway
Leadership on climate change	Australia should acknowledge the threat climate change poses to the region and overcome ambivalence and inconsistency around Australian climate and energy policy, sending a message that it truly wants to be part of the Pacific.
Labour mobility and migration pathways	Expand labour mobility by opening up the labour market to create new opportunities for Pacific islanders. Address flaws that create the risk of exploitation and introduce pathways to permanency into Australia's migration program. Labour mobility can be a focus of shared engagement to form the basis of the long-term economic relationship.
Reinvigorate relationships through literacy and cultural exchange	Enhancing Pacific literacy among both Australian policy makers and the Australian community is key to demonstrating Australia listens to and respects local needs and priorities. Future programs can build upon long-standing, people-to-people links and educational exchanges. There is potential for Australian First Nations and Pacific Islanders in shared problem solving, particularly around the Coral Sea.
Be a partner for education and skills	As an active leader in international education, Australia can support the Pacific by overcoming secondary education gaps, barriers to entry into technical training and complicated pathways for degrees, accreditation and visas.
Unlock opportunities through long-term civil society partnerships	Building on existing initiatives that exemplify strong collaborative partnerships, including the Australian NGO Cooperation Program. This should integrate diplomatic efforts with development cooperation to create sophisticated, modern, and respectful partnerships that are genuinely collaborative and long-term.
Trade pathways	Australia supports small-scale appropriate technology development that can be used by rural Pacific communities for undertaking small scale economic enterprises. Australian training institutions and industry establish partnerships to enable physically disconnected, informal and small-scale enterprises to become profitable and sustainable.
Change the conversation on infrastructure projects	Australia should continue to invest in infrastructure, which is important to pandemic recovery, with a focus on infrastructure which supports economic growth over the long term. Infrastructure financing should increasingly be about maintenance of existing infrastructure, small-scale capital works and climate adaptation, with a focus on appropriate technology, utilising renewables and making use of local materials. Casting a gender lens on infrastructure is an important element in making cost benefit analyses.

## FOCUS: SECURE AND PEACEFUL PACIFIC

Need	Possible pathway
Supporting Pacific-led regionalism	Australia supports regionalism in the Pacific as valuable in and of itself. This includes support for the Pacific Islands Forum and related regional agencies, particularly for services that can help member countries respond to security, technological and legal developments.
Responding to local security agendas	National security strategies should anchor how Australia and like-minded countries coordinate and deliver cross-sectoral efforts. This ensures partners follow security agendas set locally and regionally rather than acting as paternalistic providers.
Building inter-governmental cooperation	Australia should review existing intergovernmental instruments between Australia and Pacific island countries (including information-sharing, logistics, defence cooperation and visiting forces arrangements) to identify gaps and prioritise areas for further work. Australia can assist in reviewing gaps in the extent to which Pacific island countries are parties to key international treaties, including on topics such as corruption, transnational crime and money-laundering. Australia can support more Pacific candidates, particularly women, for roles in international organisations and can assist with capacity-building for smaller Pacific nations in legal and diplomatic tradecraft to strengthen the ability to participate in international forums.
Changing the climate conversation	Australia must indicate its seriousness to act and to support Pacific-led and Pacific-supported climate change initiatives. This should include continued engagement, through regionalism and technical support, to progress Pacific concerns regarding maritime boundaries.
Supporting good governance and open societies	Australia continues and expands its investments in civil society, media and other socio-political institutions critical to countering external influence, in a way that is respectful of Pacific sovereignty. Support to increase women's political participation and representation is critical to enabling good governance and democracy in the Pacific. Strengthening democratic norms and good governance is vital. Countries that have the pillars of peace – such as well-functioning governments, low corruption and strong connections between government and societal forms of governance – have higher resilience to counter threats. Australia can provide support for security vetting systems and provide technical assistance for telecommunications and infrastructure for Pacific island countries to set the terms for investment, including assessing offers and setting terms in line with Pacific needs.
People-centered approach	Australia invests in Pacific literacy, building cultural understanding, language, better appreciation of divisions and shared chapters in our history. It promotes education, civil society and peer-to-peer linkages to increase knowledge of the Pacific among Australians for more mutual relationships. It supports enhanced movement of Pacific people to and from Australia, and increased economic flows in both directions, including pathways to citizenship.
A focus on mediation and peacebuilding	Australia can create more capacity for conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding including restoring the Conflict and Fragility team or setting up a Peace and Conflict unit within DFAT. Such services may be particularly valuable in cases such as secessionism and independence movements. While it is a politically sensitive issue, Australia needs to look ahead strategically to plan for any potential transition by Pacific territories to new political status. This would focus on the building blocks required to support peaceful transition, including capacity-building programs such as scholarships, technical assistance, medical training, information-sharing, English language, politics and other initiatives.

## FOCUS: DIGITAL RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Need	Possible pathway
Cyber security	Australia enhances cooperation with regional networks to strengthen responses to cyber incidents including through the Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSON), Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST) and Pacific Islands Law Officers Network (PILON).
Sustainable infrastructure	The Australian Government has a clear role in financing the physical infrastructure required to build Pacific connectivity, as it did for the Coral Sea cable network. It should work collaboratively with other actors. Australian development cooperation should support infrastructure promoting digital connectivity that addresses the different levels of development across the region. This goes beyond just providing technology and requires affordability of access. Australia can provide practical assistance at the local level, for example simple solar technology to enable charging of phones.
Online safety and digital and media literacy	Australia's eSafety Commissioner should work collaboratively with Pacific governments to reduce online harm and protect the safety of citizens across the Pacific, including education for digital and media literacy. Australia can work with Pacific governments to strengthen their capabilities and capacity to manage misinformation through understanding and mapping the threat landscape.
Digital development	Australia should explore opportunities provided by digital technology and integrate them into development programs. This is particularly relevant in the education sector where there is significant scope to expand and improve online learning and teaching.
Governance and regulation	Australia should take an active role in regional forums and seek platforms for Pacific island countries in forums including the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) and the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Australia can strengthen regional forums to encourage Pacific-led dialogue on governance and the use of technologies. Australia should ensure human rights discussions are part of engaging with Pacific counterparts on cyber and digital policy and legislative development.
Digital transformation	The Australian Government should partner with platforms that support cultural and economic connectivity for communities to increase their reach, for example working with chambers of commerce to adopt digital marketplace platforms and funding research on markets for digital content and digital products. The Australian Government should support fast-tracking more digitally skilled Pacific people to support a safe and secure digital transformation. Australian development cooperation should focus on strengthening skills and knowledge through mentoring, training and upskilling to keep pace with the rapidly evolving digital technology.
Strengthened coordination	The Australian Government should invest resources in coordination of cyber security activities to maximise the benefits for all. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should be resourced to coordinate a whole-of-government effort in the Pacific. Australia should be open to learning and collaborating with other countries and should take the lead and proactively bring together different actors to encourage collaboration in the digital space. DFAT can play a convening role for government, academics and tech companies to work creatively to find ways to partner together.

# The AP4D approach

The Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue (AP4D) is a platform for collaboration between the development, diplomacy and defence communities that brings together individuals and organisations united by a mission to reimagine Australia's international relations.

Funded by the Australian Civil-Military Centre, AP4D's inaugural program commenced in mid-2021 with the aim of generating more effective approaches to advancing Australia's influence in Southeast Asia and the Pacific through the integrated application of development, diplomacy and defence perspectives.

The Pacific component began in December 2021 with a series of online diagnostics discussions in which experts surfaced problems and raised questions about Australia's approach to the Pacific. A compendium of research was prepared covering Australia's Pacific policy foundations as well as commentary and analysis from Australia and perspectives from the region.

A dialogue event was then held in February 2022 in which over 90 experts and practitioners from the development, diplomacy and defence communities determined priority areas of focus. The Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum delivered remarks on Pacific priorities to inform discussions. Two stand-alone Pacific Voices Consultations were also held in April in conjunction with the Griffith Asia Institute to further ensure Pacific voices were included.

These discussions formed the basis for the four topics selected for Options Papers. Working Groups comprising more than 50 experts from Australia and the Pacific collaborated on draft papers from March to May. Draft papers were presented for feedback to senior departmental representatives at a work-in-progress roundtable hosted by the Office of the Pacific in mid-May. Throughout the process AP4D also held private briefings and consultations with more than a dozen senior bureaucrats and political advisors.

The key findings and common themes from the Options Papers form the basis for this Synthesis Report, which in conjunction outline a vision for how Australia can put an integrated approach to foreign policy into practice in the Pacific.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AP4D acknowledges the Australian Civil-Military Centre for its generous support in funding this inaugural program. AP4D is extremely grateful to everyone involved in the Pacific Islands component. Thanks are due to Options Papers Working Group members, to all who attended diagnostic and dialogue sessions, to those who made time for consultations, to the editorial panel and staff, to the Griffith Asia Institute and to AP4D Advisory Group members for their feedback and oversight.

## ADVISORY GROUP

### **Professor Michael Wesley FAIA**

*Co-chair*

Deputy Vice Chancellor International,  
University of Melbourne

### **Marc Purcell**

*Co-chair*

CEO, Australian Council for International Development

### **Angela Fitzsimons**

*Funding Partner*

Acting Executive Director, Australia Civil-Military Centre

### **Richard Moore**

*Founding Co-convenor*

Partner and Principal Strategist, Positive Influence

### **Bridi Rice**

*Founding Co-convenor*

CEO, Development Intelligence Lab

### **James Batley PSM**

Distinguished Policy Fellow,  
Australian National University

### **Professor Caitlin Byrne FAIA**

Director, Griffith Asia Institute

### **Therese Faulkner**

Board Member, International Development  
Contractors Community

### **Chris Gardiner**

CEO, Institute for Regional Security

### **Allan Gyngell AO FAIA**

President, Australian Institute of International Affairs

### **Dr Huong Le Thu**

Principal Policy Fellow, Perth USAsia Centre

### **Richard Maude**

Inaugural Executive Director, Policy, The Asia Society

### **Professor Joanne Wallis**

Professor of International Security, University of Adelaide

## IN MEMORIAM:

### **Professor Brendan Sargeant**

**(1959-2022)**

*Founding member of the AP4D Advisory Group*

## AP4D STAFF

**Melissa Conley Tyler FAIA**

Program Lead

**Tom Barber**

Program Officer

## ACFID STAFF

**Jessica Mackenzie**

Director, Policy and Advocacy Team

**Brigid O'Farrell**

Policy and Advocacy Advisor

**Duncan Yip**

Policy and Advocacy Advisor

**Cameron Hill**

Former Policy and Advocacy Advisor

## EDITORIAL PANEL

**Kate Archer**

**Rebecca Hamilton**

**Anouk Ride**

**Grant Wyeth**

