AP4D

Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue

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

Strategic Partner on Women, Peace and Security with the Pacific

Executive Summary

DISCLAIMER

A stable and peaceful Pacific region is a key strategic interest of both Australia and Pacific island countries. Key to this is inclusive security.

Security risks and threats in the Pacific disproportionately affect women and girls and are compounded by a lack of women's participation in decision-making. Low levels of women's political representation and entrenched gendered structures prevent women's meaningful participation in the security sector, which can hide their vital role in security more broadly.

Much of the peace work being done in the Pacific plays out at the community level, but women and men promoting peace and security at the grassroots levels are often not included in formal decision-making. Most Pacific island countries have small, often unarmed police services rather than military forces and instead rely heavily on the rule of law and cultural institutions such as traditional village systems and faith-based organisations. Within these traditional systems, women are key to preventing and responding to the spectrum of security threats. These contributions need to be understood, recognised, supported and resourced. Collaboration between formal and informal security actors could also be strengthened through more representation of women in security institutions.

Recognising that the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is not an add-on to the security agenda, but is intrinsic to it, there is scope for Australia to progress genuine partnership with the Pacific and support these efforts through greater collaboration. There is also a need to do more within Australian security organisations to promote the WPS agenda.

Australia and the Pacific are generally in alignment in framing security as human security. Australia and Pacific island countries can support each other to recognise, amplify and resource the important role women play in progressing and maintaining peace and security in the region both within and beyond formal security architecture.

Doing this requires greater coordination and policy coherence across the development, diplomacy and defence communities, with a WPS lens applied to all of Australia's investments and responses in the region.

PATHWAYS FOR BEING A STRATEGIC PARTNER ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY WITH THE PACIFIC:

Supporting Pacific agendas

- Australia supports the Pacific to apply a WPS lens to implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- Australia plays a facilitating, convening and coordinating role that brings key stakeholders together and encourages a genuine Pacific voice.

Working collaboratively with Pacific women

- Australia makes targeted, systematic, long-term investment in civil society organisations to promote opportunities for Pacific women to define and drive their own agendas for peace and security in the region.
- Australia prioritises a deep understanding of local contexts both within and outside the formal security architecture.
- Australia understands the diverse and significant peace work that is already being done in the region, amplifying, resourcing and incorporating this into security institutions and decision-making forums.

Implementing a coordinated approach across government

- Australia implements an interlinked domestic and international focus on WPS by providing complementarity and policy coherence across portfolios.
- Australia's institutions continue to improve on their operationalisation of WPS commitments, including ensuring security service personnel and those they interact with are safe from harassment, violence and discrimination.

Why it matters

A stable and peaceful Pacific region is at the heart of the security, prosperity and strategic interests of both Australia and Pacific island countries. Key to this is inclusive security.

Socially-inclusive peace agreements are more likely to endure[1] and enjoy popular support. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as set out in United National Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325[2] and subsequent related resolutions[3] provides an internationally mandated framework for gendered analysis of security and for action to create inclusive roles, processes and agreements.

In the Pacific, both the Boe Declaration[4] and 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent[5] recognise an expanded concept of security that includes a focus on human security, including addressing threats such as climate change, economic threats, cyber security and transnational crime. Both documents emphasise inclusive processes to do this, addressing exclusion of women, youth and other marginalised groups.

The 2012-2015 Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security[6] was co-created by civil society organisations, the UN, Pacific Islands Forum and Secretariat of the Pacific Community. It provided a framework at the regional level for Forum Members and Pacific Territories to enhance women's leadership in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, to mainstream gender in security policy-making and to ensure women and girls' human rights are protected. This Plan was not revised or renewed, but several countries and regions developed National Action Plans, notably Solomon Islands (2017), Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (2016) and Australia (2012-2018 and 2020-2029)[7].

Pacific women's advocates in local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and in government ministries related to women have proactively engaged with the WPS agenda. Such engagement has included reports, protests, awareness raising and networking to call on governments to practice equal participation in peace and security matters and advocating for greater attention to gender-based violence.[8]

Security risks and threats are compounded by a lack of participation of women in decision-making. The Pacific continues to have the lowest levels of women's political representation in the world with just 6% of seats held by women.[9] In the security sector, formal security organisations are highly masculinised with deeply entrenched gendered structures that can prevent women's meaningful participation.[10]

1   By 64% in one study: Desiree Nilsson, Anchoring the Peace : Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace. *International Interactions*, 2012, 38 (2), 243–266.

2   Adopted 31 October 2000: http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1325

3   For all WPS resolutions see: http://peacewomen.org/security-council/WPS-in-SC-Council

4   Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, September 2018, https://www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/ This expanded concept includes: "human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change".

5   Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, August 2022, https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/PIFS-2050-Strategy-Blue-Pacific-Continent-WEB-5Aug2022.pdf

6   https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/pacific_region_regional_action_plan_2012-2015.pdf

7   Jacqui True, *Women, Peace and Security in Asia Pacific 20 years on: Progress Achieved and Lessons Learned*, UN Women, 2020.

8   Sharon Bhagwan Rolls & Alisia Evans, *Feminist Peace and Security in the Pacific Islands*, September 2020.

9   Inter Parliamentary Union, *Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments*, 2022, https://data.ipu.org/womenaverages?month=5&year=2022

10   Gretchen Baldwin, *Considering the future of gender and peace operations: strategic debate and operational challenges*, Stockholm Institute Peace Research Institute, December 2022.

In the security sector, formal security organisations are highly masculinised with deeply entrenched gendered structures that can prevent women's meaningful participation.

The role of female correction officers within Correction Services of Solomon Islands (CSSI) highlights the positive influence women's inclusion and participation can have in highly masculinised environments.

An increase in female recruits with skills in communication, problem solving and conflict resolution has seen a reduction in physical action within prisons. For instance, the 2012 Gender Audit Report of CSSI stated: "Female Correctional officers in Solomon Islands are likened to 'cooling agents and panadol' by their male counterparts because of their ability to defuse tension and conflict within Correctional Centres."

Despite the positive influence women have within corrective facilities, they continue to face considerable challenges in the workplace. The CSSI Women's Network has been recognised for their work in lobbying for institutional change, promoting gender equality in the workplace and implementation of a Gender Action Plan.

From Anouk Ride & Wendy Gebe, Herstory: Women working in Corrections 1986-2018, Australian Aid/ Correctional Services of Solomon Islands.

This marginalisation from formal security institutions hides the vital role women have in security more broadly. For instance, women were leaders in peace movements during civil wars in Bougainville and Solomon Islands.[11] Women provide security of food markets in many countries, even in conflict and crisis settings.[12]

Women should be supported through gender inclusive institutional reforms and protected so that they can safely and meaningfully contribute to the Pacific region's peace and security.[13] Australia can support efforts to embed women's role in peace agreements, processes and in institutions such as police and prisons.[14]

This is happening to some extent: Australian Government and non-government networks have provided key support for Indigenous women's organisations and networks in the Pacific and these alliances are helping to shift the exclusion of women and girls from peace and security. If women's contributions – both within and outside of formal security architecture – are recognised, sustained and strengthened, they can make a significant impact in realising the Pacific leaders' vision of a prosperous, stable and peaceful Pacific region and contribute to preventing conflict and sustaining peace.[15]

The security threat that results in direct physical violence for the largest number of people in the Pacific is violence against women and girls. Of the 12 countries that have undertaken national research on intimate partner sexual and physical violence in the Pacific, high rates have been reported for Kiribati (68 per cent of female respondents), Fiji (64 per cent), Solomon Islands (64 per cent), Vanuatu (60 per cent), and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (51 per cent).[16] Women and children with disabilities are also more likely to experience such violence. Services for women and children experiencing violence often are run by women's networks and volunteers in the Pacific, while churches and chiefs also play an important role in responses. Responsiveness of police is often poor, for instance six out of ten women in Solomon Islands reporting violence to police received no help.[17] Studies indicate the gendered failings of both state and customary systems of justice need more attention, including privileging perspectives of women affected by violence in policy and practices.[18]

Other physical and sexual violence directed mainly at women and girls includes human trafficking and prostitution, often involving foreigners and industries such as fishing, logging and mining, with young women and girls particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Although reports and prosecution have proved difficult, various regional cooperation interventions such as the Pacific Regional Law Enforcement Conference[19] are highlighting options for prevention and response.

Other security risks may also disproportionately affect women and girls. For instance, in times of natural disasters, women and girls may face increased risks of sexual violence due to poverty and the loss of family and village structures. Many women also have work that is informal or low status, and their livelihoods are more vulnerable to shocks such as disasters, conflict and COVID-related restrictions.[20] Young women suffer from a double disadvantage of being young and female which means they are least likely to be represented in politics, and more likely to face gendered barriers to work.[21]

11   Nicole George. "Meaningful Participation: women and peacebuilding in the Pacific". The Interpreter. Lowy Institute, 2018 https://www.lowyinstitute.org/ the-interpreter/meaningful-participation-women-peacebuilding-pacific

12   Elizabeth Kopel, Meg Keen, Anouk Ride. "Why local markets matter for Pacific security", January 28 2021, Australian Pacific Security College.

13   *Summit Report, Women, Peace and Security Summit* Aug 2019, https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/ resource-files/2019-09/apo-nid259001.pdf

14   Nicole George. "Gender and post-conflict security sector reform: experiences from Bougainville and Solomon Islands" in Mapping security in the Pacific: a focus on context, gender and organisational culture. 2020 edited by Sara N. Amin, Danielle Watson and Christian Girard.

15   *Summit Report, Women, Peace and Security Summit* Aug 2019, https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/ resource-files/2019-09/apo-nid259001.pdf

16   Asian Development Bank, *Gender Statistics: the Pacific and Timor Leste*, 2016. Note: figures are based on national level reports on family health and safety surveys.

17   Anouk Ride and Pauline Soaki, *Women's experiences of family violence in Solomon Islands*, Australian Aid/Solomon Islands Government, 26 November 2019.

18   Melissa Bull and Nicole George, "Policing Gender Violence in Vanuatu", *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 2021, 10(4), pp. 239-261

19   Pita Ligaiaula, Pacific Regional Law Enforcement Conference discuss implications of drug trafficking in the region, August 3, 2022, Pacific Islands News Association https://pina.com.fj/2022/08/03/pacific-regional-law-enforcement-conference-discuss-implications-of-drug-trafficking-in-the-region/

20   Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, *Gender and COVID19 in the Pacific: Gendered Impacts and Recommendations for Response*, updated March 2021. https://pacificwomen.org/research/pacific-women-thematic-brief-gender-and-covid-19-in-the-pacific/

21   Secretariat of the Pacific Community, *The Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014-2023*. SPC, 2014.

Progress since the 2019 Pacific Summit on WPS

"The Pacific provides successful examples of the role of women in peacebuilding, participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery in both traditional and non-traditional security context. Regrettably these contributions are rarely recognised and are under-reported."

Extract from the Summit Report, Pacific Summit on Women, Peace and Security, 2019

In 2019, New Zealand and Samoa co-hosted a Pacific Summit on WPS (the Summit). The Summit was convened to support the promotion and implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and complementary resolutions, as well as actions under the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders the previous year.

The Summit brought together approximately 150 participants, representing 16 Pacific Island countries as well as leaders and experts from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The United Nations, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Pacific Community were also represented. The participants included political and community leaders; civilians; police and military personnel including air force, army and navy; civil society organisations; and youth representatives.

The Summit was an opportunity for the region to respond with Pacific tailored solutions to the United Nations WPS agenda.[22] Discussions were structured around the four pillars of the WPS agenda – Prevention, Protection, Participation, and Relief and Recovery – within traditional, non-traditional and hybrid security systems and processes in the region. The Summit's themes highlighted unique features of the Pacific Islands region, rooted in culture and their position as islands in a Blue Pacific, that influence the WPS agenda and implementation, notably:

- the key role of traditional systems and institutions such as church, chief and tribal systems in security including women's role in these systems. Women in uniform, like men, may have multiple roles in formal and informal security

- the prominent, yet often unrecognised, role of women as responders to security incidents and challenges across a range of threats including violence, food insecurity, health, climate and environmental change

- the threat of climate change across the region and the need for better understanding of the intersection of climate change, gender and WPS

- the need for engagement of men around negative gender norms through mechanisms such as talanoa (dialogue and deliberation) to highlight and promote positive attitudes to women in security.

Since the Summit, the region has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and several major disasters and disruptions. Coordinated implementation of the recommendations arising from the summit has not eventuated. Despite this, the WPS agenda has been pursued in various ways. COVID-related travel restrictions accelerated and catalysed the localisation process in the humanitarian sector, which also brought women-led and local initiatives to more prominence.[23] Pacific women form 75% of the workforce of nurses and – as the Summit had articulated – were at the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic response in health services[24], as well as running essential local services and information exchanges through NGOs and networks.[25] Capturing this peace and security work in response to these broad range of threats and normalising local control as part of formal WPS agendas will be key going forward.

There has also been progress on the WPS agenda regarding participation within formal institutions since the Summit. For example, more Pacific Island women are deployed as part of UN missions. Engaging in UN peacekeeping offers opportunities for the region including for skills development, networking, experience-sharing and understanding of international approaches which may have longer-term benefits to the Pacific.[26] The Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, who have always been men, have a new Women's Advisory Network, the intent of which is to better network senior women in forces and feed into decision making at Chief of Police meetings. A Pacific Defence Gender Network was created in 2019 and has made progress on supporting Fiji with technical assistance on gender to strengthen its forces' ability to implement UNSC 1325.[27]

22   *Summit Report, Women, Peace and Security Summit* Aug 2019, https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-09/apo-nid259001.pdf

23   Kira Osborne, Meg Keen, David Sanderson, Roshika Deo , Janet Jack and Anouk Ride, *Localisation for who? Pacific resilience in the wake of COVID19 pandemic*. Australia Pacific Security College, June 10, 2021. https://pacificsecurity.net/localisation-for-who-pacific-resilience-in-the-wake-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/

24   Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). *Pacific Women in Health Care Campaign*, 2020 https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2020/10/pacific-women-in-health-care-campaign

25   Feminist Humanitarian Network, *Women-led responses to COVID19: Report from the Pacific Islands*. April 2020. https://www.feministhumanitariannetwork.org/blog/women-led-responses-to-covid-19-report-from-the-pacific-islands

26   Lisa Sharland and Geneive Feely, *Mapping Pacific Contributions to UN Peacekeeping*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Dec 2020, https://www.aspi.org.au/report/mapping-pacific-peacekeeping

27   New Zealand Defence Force, "Pacific Defence Gender Network plays key role in Gender Advisor's Course". November 27, 2019. https://nzdefenceforce.medium.com/nzdf-pacific-defence-gender-network-plays-key-role-in-gender-advisors-course-68a5f071aced

Australian and Pacific Views

"Australia prioritises security, stability, and prosperity, at home and abroad. Critical to progressing these priorities is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. This is because gender equality and human rights are essential for enduring peace and security, as well as sustainable development. Conversely, violence and conflict thrive where there is discrimination, exclusion, and exploitation".[28]

Secretary's Foreword, DFAT's Implementation Plan for NAP on WPS 2021-2031

Australia seeks to be a committed global champion of the WPS Agenda and, through its second National Action Plan 2021-2031, has a long-term, whole-of-government strategy that sets out how Australia plans to realise gender equality and human rights of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Appreciation and understanding of the positive role women play in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, rebuilding and stabilisation is reflected in numerous policy documents and plans. For example, the Defence Gender, Peace and Security Mandate details the Department of Defence's commitment to supporting inclusive conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace processes and post-conflict state reconstruction, and outlines how Australian military efforts will develop gender sensitive intervention in support of UNSCR 1325.[29]

Australia has a long-standing and enduring relationship with the Pacific. This has included providing finance, skills development, military and police cooperation and operational support and fostering regionalism via establishment of, and participation in, the Pacific Islands Forum.[30] Australian development assistance to the Pacific region is at an historic high with $1.9 billion allocated in the 2022/23 financial year. Further, the Australian Government has reintroduced an 80 per cent performance target to ensure Australia's development investments effectively address gender equality, including mandating that those over $3 million have a gender equality objective[31].

However, proponents of the WPS agenda believe that women's lack of participation in security in Australian and Pacific contexts has stymied greater collaboration. For instance, when Australia financed the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) from 2003 to 2017 only 12 per cent of Special Coordinators were women. The Solomon Islands Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan points out that RAMSI did not fulfil obligations under UNSC 1325 and was relatively late to have gender strategies and programs in the intervention.[32] Failing to actively implement WPS provisions in Australia's

engagement with the Pacific on security issues may be perceived as tacit support for exclusion of women from Pacific and Australian corridors of power.[33]

There has been concerted advocacy and networking by Pacific women to push for Australia to privilege Pacific women's decision making. Recent initiatives have had more Pacific women in leadership roles, including aid research and design, coordination and management, such as in Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development[34]. Other strategic interventions include Pacific Women Lead[35] and Balance of Power[36], as well as mainstreaming gender equality across development initiatives in the region. In relation to protection, Australia has funded many of the projects in the Pacific region on gender-based violence (an estimated $153 million AUD from 2007-8 to 2017-18 alone[37]). Australia also has preferential programs for women to seek education, leadership training and other key sources of support to overcome obstacles to work and participation in decision making.

Though many of these interventions support the WPS agenda, Australian investment has focussed primarily on the areas of protection and participation, rather than conflict prevention.[38] In relation to participation, under its own WPS National Action Plan Australia has made efforts to increase women's involvement in operationalising WPS in its own operations. For instance during COVID-19, gender advisors were included in military deployments by Australia and New Zealand.

Currently, women make up 19.7 per cent of Australian Defence personnel, a figure significantly higher than many other countries. 19.5 per cent of Indigenous people serving in the force are women, with 61.7 per cent of the Indigenous public service workers in defence being women. It is recognised that there is a need to do more within Australian security organisations[39] to promote the WPS agenda domestically, to ensure that women within these organisations are protected from violence and that security and other services respond to the needs of women. Australian women face gender-based discrimination and violence in families, workplaces and society. For instance, one Australian woman a week, on average, is killed by a partner, and Indigenous women are ten times more likely to die as a result of assault than non-Indigenous women.[40] These issues sit in contrast to Australia's aims on WPS and indicate its commonality with other countries requiring strategic and coordinated responses.

28   Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Implementation Plan, Australia's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security* (2021 - 2031) https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-national-action-plan-women-peace-security.pdf

29   Australian Defence Force, *Defence Gender Peace and Security Mandate 2020 - 2030*, https://www.defence.gov.au/programs-initiatives/gender-peace-security-defence

30   Asia Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue *What does it look like for Australia to be an Effective Partner for a Secure and Peaceful Pacific*, 2022, https://www.asiapacific4d.com/shared-future/pacific/a-secure-and-peaceful-pacific

31   Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Gender Equality Fact Sheet, October 2022, www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-cooperation-fact-sheet-gender-equality.pdf

32   Solomon Islands Government, *Solomon Islands Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-2021*. https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plan-2017-2020.pdf

33   Nicole George. *Where are the women? Gender Security and Australia's Pacific Step Up. Australian Outlook* 31 December 2019 https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/life-between-two-guns-gender-security-and-australias-pacific-pivot/

34   DFAT, *Pacific Women Shaping Development 6 Year Evaluation Report*, February 2020 https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/pacific-women-shaping-pacific-development-six-year-evaluation-report-and-management-response

35   See https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/pacific-women-lead-design-framework

36   See https://pacificwomen.org/resources/balance-of-power-brochure/

37   Lisa Cornish, "DFAT's decade tackling gender based violence", Devex, 5 March 2020 https://www.devex.com/news/dfat-s-decade-tackling-gender-based-violence-96469

38   An example of recent analysis indicating aid to defence spending ratio is 1:12 https://devpolicy.org/Events/2022/2022-aid-budget-breakfast_30Mar/SHowes-presentation-slides.pdf

39   Ben Smee, "Is this real rape?' female officers detail misogynistic culture within Queensland Police", *The Guardian* July 2022 https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jul/04/is-this-a-real-female-officers-detail-misogynistic-culture-within-queensland-police

40   See reports by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on Family Violence: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/behaviours-risk-factors/domestic-violence/overview

PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES

"We Pacific women need to shape our own destiny and strive for the enabling environment to do so. We must continue to rise and challenge the status quo. Much more can be achieved when women are supported with minds, hearts and actions, not just words. We need political will, action, engagement, diversity, justice and social support."

Former Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor

While Pacific leaders have incorporated elements of the WPS agenda into broadened conceptions of security under the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* and other key documents, there is also tension between women's needs and aspirations, and political and institutional roadblocks to change and equity. Women have been seen to be leading key regional institutions, including the Pacific Islands Forum, but are underrepresented in formal security institutions such as in police and military forces and their leadership. Women's networks and advocacy have achieved much change at both the regional[41] and institutional[42] level.

In the Pacific, security is enriched by the prominence of traditional mechanisms and culture, such as chief, church and local institutions. These can provide greater space for women's participation but can also impose greater restrictions on women's agency in relation to security. Unless cultural norms are understood, the effectiveness of any peace and security initiative will be limited. Because of this, Pacific leaders have called for traditional and cultural norms to be acknowledged and considered as an underpinning imperative of all security initiatives. [43]

The 2050 Strategy includes a thematic pillar on peace and security that recognises an expanded view of security and sets out key security issues and priorities for the Pacific. Climate change is viewed as the single greatest security threat to the region. Alongside climate change, issues of human security (including gender-based violence and non-communicable diseases), economic and environmental security, cyber security and transnational crime are identified as critical threats. There is a need to go beyond the formal security architecture, to link and complement formal and informal actors' contributions, to respond to these threats.

Within the Pacific, there is a recognition of the interconnectedness of human flourishing and environmental flourishing with deep cultural and spiritual attachments to both land and the ocean. Building from this, unless people have free and prior informed consent on what takes place on their sovereign land, there is no security and no real peace. From a Pacific perspective, Australia has significant work to do domestically with its own Indigenous peoples in this space.

41   Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls and Sian Rolls. "WPS and the Pacific Islands forum." *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, 2019: 402.

42   Anouk Ride & Wendy Gebe, *Herstory: Women working in Corrections 1986-2018*, Australian Aid/Correctional Services of Solomon Islands.

43   Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, *Forum Communique*, August 2019 https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/50th-Pacific-Islands-Forum-Communique.pdf

CASE STUDY:

Cultural, environmental and gender factors must be considered when promoting women's representation and participation in decision making forums.

Despite women's contributions to peacebuilding and conflict mediation being central to the durability of peace, women peace-leaders still face considerable constraints in their work. Building meaningful participation in ways that women are recognised and heard as negotiators with the capacity to make influential contributions remains challenging.

The importance of women's participation is a key pillar of UNSCR 1325. Follow-up resolution UNSCR 2122 takes the focus on gender and conflict transition further and lists methods for overcoming the obstacles that obstruct women's participation in peacebuilding. However, these statements of policy are rarely successful in increasing women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes in practical terms.

One promising way for women to realise their potential for meaningful participation, comes through talanoa or tok stori. Talanoa is described as a process that enables speakers to share personal stories, realities, aspirations and emotions, and speak from the heart. To build productive relationships through talanoa, participants have an obligation to show respect, humility, care, trust, empathy, protectiveness, and patience toward each other. When talanoa is conducted in line with these principles, it is said to be an approach to dialogue that can alter the power relationships that would otherwise inflect the way in which participants behave and speak to each other.

For women, talanoa can be both an enabling and a constraining institution depending upon the way in which the dialogue is constituted. A formal talanoa involving participants in positions of political authority and including both men and women may offer women only limited possibilities for participation; they may even be sanctioned if they try to make their voices heard. Therefore, instances of talanoa that only involve women may offer more possibilities for open and empathetic exchange. Yet here too the deliberative process might be shaped by the presence of hierarchies, and power relations between women reflecting differences in age, customary status, and ethnicity. This may be particularly so if external actors are also involved in the effort to facilitate a women-only talanoa.

UNSCR 1325 makes explicit mention of the importance of Indigenous practice in conflict mediation. Giving more weight to the words spoken about conflict-related grief, loss, and reconciliation may encourage shared deliberation on the different qualities of peace, the varied ways in which the cessation of conflict can be experienced, the importance of restorative peacebuilding, and the unfinished business of reparation. These types of women-only environments may offer a valuable alternative to the currently highly masculinised terrain of institutional decision making.

From Nicole George and Pauline Soaki. (2020). "Our struggle, our cry, our sweat": challenging the gendered logics of participation and conflict transition in Solomon Islands. International Feminist Journal of Politics. 22. 572-593. 10.1080/14616742.2020.1798798.

Barriers and Challenges

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALIGNMENT

> "We feel a profound sense of kinship with the Pacific, of wanting to connect with the Pacific as part of one family. We have longstanding bonds forged in times of crisis but sustained in peace and in prosperity."

Senator the Hon. Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Both Australia and Pacific leaders have long stressed the importance of strong and enduring relationships given the region's interdependence. Australia and the Pacific are generally in alignment in framing security as human security, with both sharing a vision of Pacific people living free from violence and the fear of violence, leading "free, healthy and productive lives".[44]

Australia's willingness to engage on climate change has been a positive step in Australia-Pacific relations, and with growing public interest there are opportunities for Australia to link domestic and international policies, further signalling its commitment to the Pacific. There is increased awareness of the nexus between natural disasters, displacement, resource and food insecurity and increased gender-based violence. There are opportunities for Australia and the Pacific to work together in ways that ensure that prevention, adaptation and response to disasters and climate change is inclusive across the range of security and development agencies involved. Valuing and learning from women's and Indigenous knowledge as early responders, especially in relation to disaster resilience and climate induced disaster risk reduction, is key to success in this area.

At the Pacific Summit on WPS, there were four areas where it was recognised that coordinated action, and support from Australia and other security partners was needed:

- partnership, networking and collaboration
- financial support and investment for implementation of national WPS plans and related policies
- data and statistics including gender disaggregated data to develop evidence based solutions
- capacity building through training and peer learning.

This work can progress at regional and national levels and include government and non-government actors. Given the importance of local cultural, environmental and gender factors in shaping security, such collaborations and partnerships must place Pacific Islanders in leadership, and this must include representation of women in security institutions and decision making forums.

Increased engagement with Pacific universities and research institutions provides opportunities for Australia to harness expertise and contextual knowledge to inform collaborations on WPS in the Pacific. Australian universities also have many high calibre Pacific academics who could be better utilised in the design and implementation of Australia's activities in the region. There are opportunities for shared learning exchanges where Australian personnel can learn from the peace work being done by Pacific women, be more accountable to Pacific women in their own operations and projects, and privilege the needs and aspirations of Pacific women in security and peacebuilding roles.

> "From a Pacific perspective while we continue to look at improving women's participation in formal mechanisms and representation in institutions for sustaining peace, we also need to acknowledge the traditional village systems and help identify some of the existing women community roles as key leadership roles that are just as critical in the peace and security agenda as our women in parliament."

Peseta Noumea Simi (CEO, MFAT Samoa, AP4D Dialogue 4 November 2022)

The 2012-2015 Pacific Regional Action Plan on WPS highlights how in many violent situations in the Pacific region, women and women's organisations have consistently demonstrated their capacity to meaningfully contribute to conflict resolution and stabilisation. Regionally, women's groups and women peace leaders have also demonstrated their peacebuilding capacities. Academic research has demonstrated both the importance of this work but also the many barriers women and girls face in the longer term processes of post-conflict transition.[45] Despite this, Pacific women's productive and often leading efforts in progressing peace and security across the region are not fully recognised.

A key barrier to WPS in the Pacific remains exclusion of women from decision-making, an exclusion that can be seen at national and regional levels. Much of the peace work being done in the Pacific plays out at the community level, but men and women promoting peace and security at the grassroots levels are often not included in formal decision-making. Most Pacific island countries have

small, often unarmed police services rather than military forces and instead rely heavily on the rule of law and cultural institutions such as traditional village systems and faith-based organisations. Within these traditional systems, women are key to preventing and responding to the spectrum of security threats. These contributions need to be understood, recognised, supported and resourced. Collaboration between formal and informal security actors could also be strengthened through more representation of women in security institutions.

In Australia, despite the significant efforts of individual departments and agencies in terms of participation of women, currently much of the valuable work being done in the WPS space is siloed. There is a need for greater coordination and policy coherence across the development, diplomacy and defence communities, with a WPS lens applied to all of Australia's investments and responses in the region. A genuine whole-of-government approach that includes clear leadership and embedded governance structures would maximise the use of resources, leverage synergies, reduce duplication and support accountability.

In addition to clear leadership, dedicated resourcing is required to implement a collaborative and cohesive approach that applies a WPS lens consistently and systematically across all stages of all interventions. Unless priority is given to resourcing coordination and integration, it is unlikely to be successful over the long term. Coordinated messaging and goals across diplomacy, defence and development is needed to ensure that women's role in peace and security remains at the centre of discussion.

In progressing a genuine partnership with the Pacific, there is a need for Australia to develop, and value, a much greater understanding of the local context and policy economy within the Pacific region and for more contextually-informed measures on WPS. Ensuring that understanding of context is not superficial requires investment at the front end of interventions that emphasises Pacific leadership, cultural literacy, building of

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44   Asia Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue *What does it look like for Australia to be an Effective Partner for a Secure and Peaceful Pacific*, 2022, https://www.asiapacific4d.com/shared-future/pacific/a-secure-and-peaceful-pacific

45   Nicole George (2018). Liberal–local peacebuilding in Solomon Islands and Bougainville: advancing a gender-just peace?. *International Affairs*, 94 (6), 1329-1348.

relationships as well as joint setting of priorities, outcomes and measures of success. This also requires a degree of humility on behalf of Australian networks and institutions and changes in power relations so Australia is not seen to be dictating what WPS looks like. Collaborative models such as the Shifting the Power Coalition and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Pacific, led by Pacific women peacebuilders, are needed.

The need to understand the work being done at the local level comes to the fore during humanitarian and disaster responses. Often Australia refers to its personnel as 'first responders' in recognition that Australia is a close neighbour with considerable resources who stands ready to help the Pacific in times of crisis. However, the reality is first responders are people at the local and village level who play a primary role in responding to security challenges, usually with limited resources and even less recognition. COVID-related travel restrictions of foreign personnel, notably in Tonga as it responded to natural disasters and COVID, have helped to put the spotlight on Pacific women as responders but more needs to be done to break down the neo-colonial power structures that can influence disaster assistance and lead to disempowerment of Pacific women.[46]

Outcomes, successes and challenges from existing interventions and initiatives are not always widely shared. More could be done to collect and share potential areas for up-scaling and lessons learned within and between countries, including Australia learning from its previous experiences and interactions, and for peer-to-peer sharing across the Pacific Islands. This is particularly relevant as many Pacific island nations consist of numerous small coastal communities spread over a vast geographical area. This makes connectivity difficult and costly, even within Pacific island countries. Learning from successful, grassroots initiatives and networks could be a way to shape contextually informed WPS initiatives across countries or regions.

Most security issues are caused by men and men have an important role in progressing the WPS agenda. Men and boys are often invisible in WPS policies, whilst concurrently being invoked as a baseline – for example in the aim that women should be included in peace processes to the same extent as men. Australia needs to consider how men and boys can be positively engaged in contributing to the achievement of the aims of the WPS agenda – framing WPS not as a 'women's agenda' but as an overarching peace and security agenda. Australia can learn from Pacific perspectives on engaging men and boys as part of Pacific understandings of gender and gender identity and its intersect with broader identity markers in order to support local initiatives for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Much of the peace work being done in the Pacific plays out at the community level.

"That is how we are dealing with WPS - not just at the police and defence level. We go right down to the personal level and know that we are addressing women, peace and security."

Sister Lorraine Garasu, Nazareth Centre of Rehabilitation Bougainville

Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation (NCfR) provides an excellent example of the significant peace work that is being done at the grassroots level by Pacific women. NCfR works in Bougainville to respond to gender-based violence through safe houses, counselling and referrals. They also run prevention programs and awareness raising among local communities, which are mainly located in rural areas. Their key focus is ending violence against women, girls and children. This includes engaging with men and boys to bring about social behaviour change.

NCfR has designed specific training that puts a Melanesian lens on human rights and the Beijing Platform for Action so it is understood and accepted by the community rather than being seen as a "foreign" concept. Women's Human Rights Defenders and Male Advocates are trained to work with their local village communities to share their learnings and promote gender equality and peace building.

Training focuses on '7 pillars of peace and security' - personal, economic, social, political, environment, food and health security: NCfR works with local villages through learning circles and workshops to support communities to better understand their own sources of insecurity, and identify ways of working within their existing village systems to build up security systems. This includes counselling and education to reduce violence, education on labour distribution within families, and support with crop planning and planting to improve food security.

NCfR is respected within communities who actively request support for peacebuilding and security. Through their various programs, NCfR is helping people unlearn violence and build safety and security within communities.

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46   'Ofakilevuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki, *Enough is enough: audaciously decolonising the development and humanitarian nexus*, Mitchell Oration 2022, Australian National University.

The Vision in Practice

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR AUSTRALIA TO BE A STRATEGIC PARTNER ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY WITH THE PACIFIC

Australia and Pacific island countries support each other to recognise, amplify and resource the important role women play in progressing and maintaining peace and security in the region both within and beyond formal security architecture. WPS is understood within the framework of human security, including key issues specific to the Pacific such as climate change, high risk of disasters, prominence of traditional or informal actors in security and specific barriers for gender equity that arise from local contexts. Australia demonstrates a deep understanding of Pacific cultures and supports Pacific island countries to lead on WPS in the region.

Pacific countries and Australia have significant numbers of women in leadership and influential roles in security, bureaucratic and political roles, with plans underway to continue to grow these numbers.

In the spirit of strategic humility, Australia understands that its role is to learn from Pacific island countries' experiences and perspectives to support informed and inclusive decision-making processes in the Pacific.[47] While support may come in different forms, priority is given to targeted, systemic, long-term investment that promotes opportunities for diverse Pacific women to define and drive their own agenda for peace and security in the region. Primacy is given to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in ways that resource and support the work of diverse women and their organisations.

Australian and Pacific policymakers recognise that WPS is not an add-on to the security agenda, but is intrinsic to it. WPS is prioritised because it leads to better security outcomes for communities, countries and the region. Australian and Pacific leaders prioritise WPS as a key security concern rather than a "women's issue" and value the role of women's advocacy and networks in elevating it. They see the value of applying a WPS lens across all interventions and initiatives as good policy built on extensive evidence-based research.

Past failures of leaders from Australia and the Pacific to acknowledge and incorporate women in peace and security is widely acknowledged as a causal factor in past conflicts in Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Fiji. The significant peace dividend that comes from gender equity – including better health, stronger economies and lower use of violence by armed forces[48] – is recognised. Gender-based violence organisations, security agencies and women's organisations are adequately resourced to prevent violence against women in all its forms.

Australia implements an interlinked domestic and international focus on WPS which includes addressing the barriers and needs women have in relation to participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery. The WPS agenda is consistently and systematically applied across all stages of all interventions. Coordination and integration of the WPS agenda across development, diplomacy, defence and civil society is seen as a priority and resourced accordingly across major investments. This includes sectors that have suffered from gender exclusions such as infrastructure, transport and technology.

Australia's assistance to the Pacific is underpinned by deep cultural and contextual understandings and is aligned to the priorities of WPS actors in the region. Australian diplomatic and security institutions have a clear, in-depth understanding of Pacific peace and security at the local, national and regional level and recognise the significant peace work done by Pacific women outside of formal security structures. There is greater recognition, understanding and resourcing of the significant peace work already done by Pacific women and civil society organisations.

Cultural and contextual knowledge is valued and sufficient time is allowed at the front-end of initiatives and interventions to undertake in-depth analysis of local norms, situations and systems. This analysis is led by Pacific researchers, experts and academic institutions which are able to re-examine previous practice, criticise and change power differentials that may lead to ineffective and unequal collaborations, and prioritise genuine relationship-building and impactful support.

Australia recognises the Pacific's definition of human security as set out in the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* and its support for Pacific leadership and networks allows for consideration of traditional, cultural and gender norms in the design of all security initiatives. Priorities, actions and timetables for actions are set by Pacific Islanders to enable consultation, consensus or agreement building, and conflict transformation over time.[49]

Measures of progress of the WPS agenda go beyond the number of women within security organisations to include all the dimensions of peace work. The significant contributions that women make as those who identify security challenges and as those who initiate mediation,

peacebuilding and humanitarian responses in local, national and broader regional contexts are recognised, supported and resourced. This leads to women in these roles having a greater sense of personal security, political and financial support and agency to engage with security actors. The social norms and power dynamics that work against the recognition and legitimacy of women's contributions are actively considered and challenged.

There is recognition of the differential impacts of insecurity on women and girls with differing personal characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age and disability. There is a commitment to ensuring increased representation in peace and security processes of diverse groups of women and girls.

Australia includes a WPS lens in its implementation of First Nations Foreign Policy. In line with the specific wording of UNSCR 1325, Indigenous women's knowledge is not just valued, but applied in practice.

Diverse and vibrant civil society spaces are promoted to enable robust engagement with policy-makers and formal security institutions. Young people are recognised as future leaders and drivers of the WPS agenda, along with women. The strengths of current youth networks in civil society is understood and tangibly supported.

Australia is prepared to play a supporting role, enabling the Pacific to lead in areas such as climate security and disaster response. Australia focuses on areas of legitimate expertise, such as technical aspects of policing, and understands that Pacific actors are better positioned to lead in other areas of socio-cultural complexity.

47   Asia Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue *What does it look like for Australia to be an Effective Partner for a Secure and Peaceful Pacific*, 2022, https://www.asiapacific4d.com/shared-future/pacific/a-secure-and-peaceful-pacific

48   See Catalina Crespo Sancho. "Can gender equality prevent violent conflict?" World Bank, March 28 2018 https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/can-gender-equality-prevent-violent-conflict

49   See Nicole George and Pauline Soaki,. "Our struggle, our cry, our sweat": challenging the gendered logics of participation and conflict transition in Solomon Islands. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2020, 22 (4), 572-593.

Pathways

SUPPORTING PACIFIC AGENDAS

2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

Australia supports the Pacific to apply a WPS lens to implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The Strategy sets the priorities for the Pacific region and recognises that the *"Blue Pacific is about Pacific peoples, their faiths, cultural values, and traditional knowledge. People who know their needs and potential; plan and own their development agenda; and act collectively for the good of all"*. Applying a WPS lens to implementation of the 2050 Strategy requires a human security approach that reaches out to sub-national and non-government groups, including women's groups and youth groups, to help create peaceful and cohesive societies.

In taking the Blue Pacific strategy forward, there are efforts to articulate how the WPS agenda can support the Pacific in realising its priorities. Rather than focussing on a second Regional Action Plan on WPS in the Pacific, Australia can work to support application of a WPS lens to the 2050 strategy.

Apart from Peace and Security, another thematic area of the Blue Pacific strategy is climate change. Australia could support more understanding of gendered impacts of climate change and its implications for climate related loss and damage. While climate change poses threats, adaptation can be gender sensitive and even transformative if adequate attention is paid to gender in analysis and planning.

Facilitating and coordinating Pacific WPS agendas

Building on the 2019 WPS Summit and in a spirit of authentic collaboration, Australia can bring key stakeholders together in a way that allows the Pacific to set the agenda and identify forward pathways. In supporting Pacific people to lead on their priorities, Australia plays a facilitating, convening and coordinating role that encourages a genuine voice from the Pacific. Australia seeks to amplify Pacific priorities, rather than lead or direct. Australian funding in the security sector is dedicated to the implementation of Pacific priorities.

In late 2022, the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat undertook consultations to update the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. Recommendations arising from this update have not yet been published but may provide additional opportunities for alignment between Australia and the Pacific on progressing the WPS agenda.

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH PACIFIC WOMEN

Investing in civil society

There are many civil society organisations and faith-based organisations that are doing significant work in the WPS space. There is a need to give primacy to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in ways that resource and amplify the work of diverse women and their organisations. Targeted, systematic, long-term investment can promote opportunities for Pacific women to define and drive their own agendas for peace and security in the region. Explicitly feminist funding models should be considered as a way to do this.

While Australia and Pacific Island countries agree on a human security approach, more attention is needed to put this approach into action, working to provide safety at the individual level through to the country level and across the wider region. Social inclusion programs, responding to the gendered drivers of insecurity and supporting Pacific women's leadership of peace and security initiatives (and beyond) can translate rhetoric into action.

In order to increase women's influence in peace and security, platforms for Pacific civil society organisations to share their knowledge and experiences with policymakers, security and law enforcement institutions in the region are supported, created and valued. For example, greater interaction between Pacific leaders, senior security and law enforcement personnel, and civil society experts working at the local level could be facilitated to build civil-military understanding, linkages and sharing of expertise. Networks of Pacific peacebuilders such as the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Pacific can be drawn on for such WPS processes.

Building understanding of traditional and cultural norms that underpin all security initiatives

By recognising and supporting Pacific priorities and ways of working there is a great opportunity for Australia to shift its national identity in how it engages with the Pacific and become a genuine ally to the region. In doing so Australia needs to prioritise a deep understanding of local contexts both within and outside the formal security architecture.

A distinctive feature of Pacific contexts is the predominance of informal actors such as chiefs, churches, women and youth leaders in prevention and resolution of conflict, and adaptation and recovery from disasters and the effects of climate change. Women's organisations, leaders and networks are the lifeblood of efforts to protect women and girls against violence. In light of this, Australian policymakers and practitioners need to genuinely understand the local contexts of Pacific island countries including the role traditional village systems and women play in promoting peace and security. This could be pursued through:

- greater engagement with Pacific universities and research institutes as well as Pacific island researchers within Australian universities
- facilitating learning exchanges where Australian personnel can learn from the peace work being done by Pacific women and other diverse actors
- greater upfront investment in contextual analysis and understanding of the political economy informed by local, place-based experts
- investment in Pacific literacy in Australia, building cultural understanding, language skills, and better appreciation of divisions and shared chapters in our history. This could include promotion and resourcing of peer-to-peer linkages to increase knowledge of the Pacific among Australians and vice-versa.
- greater focus on critical inquiry and Pacific feedback to create gender responsive programs and policies. This will include learning from Pacific successes to form an evidence base for future programming.

This work aligns with and complements the work being done by Australia to implement a First Nations Foreign Policy.

Mapping existing peace work

Australian and Pacific leaders should seek to understand the diverse and significant peace work that is already being done in the region. Much of the peace work being done by Pacific women may sit outside the formal security architecture, because the formal security architecture is male dominated, and because a focus on "traditional" or "hard" security may mask women's participation in other sectors, from community conflict resolution to climate change adaptation. Peace and security processes need to take a human security approach and be inclusive in order to activate WPS commitments in the Pacific context.

Australia could play a valuable support role in firstly understanding this work and then amplifying, resourcing and incorporating these ways of working into security institutions and decision-making forums. Mapping who the key organisations are, highlighting connections between organisations and understanding how Australian aid, personnel, operations and support can work with local actors would be valuable.

Effective cooperation and partnership is underpinned by a genuine understanding of current work both within the formal security and law enforcement architecture and informal sectors. As a first step in taking on a greater coordination and facilitation role, Australia can support Pacific actors to map who is doing what, where the gaps are and areas for building relationships over the short, medium and long term. This mapping is valuable in of itself and as a crucial pre-investment in future interventions. Through this mapping, relationships with place-based leaders, including emerging and youth leaders, could be forged and best practice examples identified, upscaled and shared between countries.

IMPLEMENTING A COORDINATED APPROACH ACROSS GOVERNMENT

Coherence

Australia should implement an interlinked domestic and international focus on WPS by providing complementarity and policy coherence across portfolios. Moving to a more cohesive approach to policy and practice, with dedicated leadership and resourcing, will help ensure that the WPS agenda is consistently and systematically applied to all interventions and the WPS agenda is integrated across development, diplomacy, defence and civil society.

Further efforts are needed to strengthen visibility, monitoring and evaluation of WPS activities across government and opportunities for increasing intra-government engagement need to be identified and pursued. This includes allocating targeted funding and resources to allow for joint planning, better coordination and increased collaboration.

Accountability

Australia's institutions continue to improve on their operationalisation of WPS commitments, including ensuring security service personnel and those they interact with are safe from harassment, violence, and discrimination. All Australian and regional staff sent to the Pacific for assistance in disaster relief and security incidents need to be trained in WPS principles and held accountable for the impact of their work on WPS. A key part of this accountability should be Pacific-led reviews of assistance that prioritise women's experiences. Australia can support national and regional reviews of security services, projects and interventions with a WPS approach, such as customised research and capacity building for Pacific countries to implement their security National Action Plans, gender-based violence plans, gender mainstreaming and related policies.

Contributions

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Alice Ridge
International Women's Development Agency

Agnes Titus
Nazareth Rehabilitation Centre Bougainville

Anna Gibert
International Development Expert

Anouk Ride
Australian National University and the University of Melbourne

Elizabeth Kopel
PNG National Research Institute

James Bhagwan
Pacific Conference of Churches

James Cox
Peacifica

Lautoa Faletau
Deloitte

Lisa Carson
University of Melbourne

Loletta Tevaga Hunt
Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police

Lorraine Garasu
Nazareth Rehabilitation Centre Bougainville

Ludmilla Kwitko
Australian Coalition for Women Peace and Security

Michael Crowe
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Nicola Parkes
Conciliation Resources

Nicole George
University of Queensland

Peseta Noumea Simi
CEO, Samoa Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Sala Tupou
Pacific Community

Sandra Kraushaar
The Asia Foundation

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls
Shifting the Power Coalition

Tevvi Bullock
Pacific Forum

Valery Wichman
Te Tiare Association Cook Islands

William Nainima
Pacific Community

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EDITORS

Heather Wrathall

Melissa Conley Tyler

AP4D

Asia-Pacific Development,
Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue