



## Independent Evaluation of the Pacific Leadership Program Phase 3

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE – OCTOBER 2017

Since 2008, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has provided almost \$32 million for the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP), which aims to support leadership in the Pacific by providing resources to leaders and coalitions to build their capacity to achieve positive social change. PLP is managed by Cardno Emerging Markets (Australia) Pty Ltd (Cardno) and has supported developmental leadership initiatives in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and regionally. An Advisory Panel of eminent Pacific Islanders and DFAT provides strategic guidance to the program.

The third phase of PLP (PLP3) commenced on 1 July 2014 and will conclude on 31 December 2017, including a six-month extension. DFAT has provided almost \$15 million for PLP3. Underlying PLP3's objectives are four result streams:

1. High quality and ongoing knowledge of developmental leadership across the Pacific;
2. Collective action by Pacific Island leaders in pursuit of changes to promote stability, effective governance and economic growth at regional, national and sub-national levels;
3. Identifiable policy and institutional changes across the Pacific for the public good; and
4. High quality and influential communication across DFAT, the Pacific and globally on using developmental leadership in addressing development issues and challenges in the Pacific.

DFAT commissioned an independent evaluation of PLP3 in April 2017 to assess the program's relevance and effectiveness. The evaluation team conducted in-country research, interviews and an online survey with key stakeholders from government, civil society, regional organisations, the private sector and academia.

#### Management response summary

The independent evaluation found that PLP3's flexible, experimental and politically-informed approach remains highly relevant to Pacific partners and the Australian Government's foreign policy and development priorities. However, the evaluation noted that PLP3 is operating in a different environment than previous phases and to be highly effective, the investment needs to be reshaped. In terms of effectiveness and performance against result streams, the evaluation found that PLP3 had mixed results in achieving outcomes and delivering value for money.

The evaluation contains seven recommendations for consideration by DFAT. The recommendations are forward looking and intentionally focused on DFAT due to the limited time available before the conclusion of PLP3. DFAT agrees with five of these recommendations, including that PLP3 in its current form is not an effective option and that we should continue to look for opportunities to invest in developmental leadership. However, we do not see enough evidence to agree with the recommendation that we should retain a reshaped PLP. We note that PLP3 is operating in a tighter budget environment than previous phases with the current Pacific regional program reflecting new policy priorities flowing from the Australian Government's stepped-up engagement with the Pacific, including new leadership initiatives.

Based on the evaluation findings and our changed budget and policy context, DFAT has decided not to renew PLP3 following the conclusion of the current contract on 31 December 2017 and to seek other opportunities to realise certain PLP-related objectives. We acknowledge the positive contribution PLP has made over the last decade to supporting Pacific leaders and coalitions to promote social change and progress issues of national and regional importance. DFAT will continue to support leaders and leadership across the Pacific through existing and new programs and will seek opportunities to engage in developmental leadership.

The following table contains detailed responses to the seven evaluation recommendations.

### Responses to recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Comment	Action
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>DFAT to maintain an innovative investment in developmental leadership.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT remains committed to supporting leaders and leadership in the Pacific in a sustainable way, contextualised to the Pacific and in line with key regional (Sustainable Development Goals, SAMOA Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism) and national development priorities. DFAT is also committed to ongoing improvement, innovation and flexibility in its aid program to better support the Australian Government’s development priorities. We acknowledge PLP’s contribution to providing space for experimentation, learning and innovation in relation to Australia’s support for developmental leadership and coalitions for change in the Pacific. Future Pacific leadership initiatives will need to align with the Australian Government’s stepped-up engagement in the Pacific and DFAT’s Pacific Development Framework.</p>	<p>Where possible, DFAT will seek to incorporate experimentation in developmental leadership into new and existing Pacific leadership programs and continue certain effective PLP activities under other bilateral or regional programs. We will consider lessons learned from PLP in our future programming. We will also seek to engage DFAT’s Innovation Exchange in certain future leadership programs. DFAT plans to develop a Pacific regional governance strategy under our forthcoming Pacific Development Framework. A key issue for consideration will be innovation in our Pacific governance programs.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>DFAT to consider ways that it can better integrate any future innovative and experimental programs like PLP within its broader governance and/or research portfolios.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT is seeking to improve integration of its development activities through consolidating its aid program to focus on fewer, larger investments that increase the impact and effectiveness of our aid. We agree that there is further scope to better integrate, coordinate and improve communication between our programs, including any future experimental programs like PLP. Bilateral and regional programs are able to, where appropriate, contribute funding to other programs that meet their objectives and this has occurred under PLP. For example, the PLP-supported Samoa National Youth Council has also received funding from the bilateral Civil Society Support Program and both the Vanuatu bilateral and Pacific Women programs have contributed to the PLP Women in Shared Decision-Making Taskforce.</p>	<p>DFAT will seek to improve integration between its Pacific leadership-related programs, including any future innovative investment in developmental leadership like PLP. We are identifying links between programs like Pacific Connect, the Pacific Research Program and the Women’s Leadership Initiative and including integration between programs as a condition for many new programs. Integration of our governance programs is another key issue for consideration under DFAT’s planned Pacific regional governance strategy.</p>

<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>DFAT to consider key threshold issues in determining any future investment in this space.</p>	Agree	DFAT supports innovation in its aid program and recognises the value to Australia's long-term interests of experimental and learning programs like PLP.	DFAT will support future innovative investments in developmental leadership subject to funding and a determination that such a program best meets current Australian Government development priorities. DFAT will seek opportunities to incorporate elements of PLP into other programs where possible.
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>DFAT to reshape the program.</p>	Disagree	DFAT has decided not to renew PLP at the end of the current contract on 31 December 2017 and to seek other opportunities to deliver certain PLP activities and objectives.	DFAT has notified Cardno that the PLP contract will not be renewed and the program will conclude on 31 December 2017. DFAT and Cardno are working together to conclude the program and notify PLP partners and stakeholders. We are also exploring whether certain effective PLP activities can be continued under other DFAT bilateral or regional programs, where there is funding available and the activities are aligned with program objectives.
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>DFAT to further investigate what a reshaped PLP should look like.</p>	Disagree	PLP will conclude on 31 December 2017.	DFAT has notified Cardno that the PLP contract will not be renewed and the program will conclude on 31 December 2017.
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>DFAT to determine the future of PLP as a priority.</p>	Agree	PLP will conclude on 31 December 2017.	DFAT has notified Cardno that the PLP contract will not be renewed and the program will conclude on 31 December 2017.
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>If DFAT discontinues PLP, seek opportunities to incorporate valuable elements of PLP into other programming.</p>	Agree	DFAT acknowledges the contribution PLP has made since 2008 to supporting Pacific leadership and sees value in continuing certain effective PLP activities in other programs where possible.	DFAT is exploring whether certain effective PLP activities can be continued under other DFAT bilateral or regional programs, where there is funding available and the activities are aligned with program objectives. In exploring this, we are considering resourcing implications (both funding and staffing) for other programs and whether PLP activities can survive separated from the overall program logic of PLP.