



# DFAT / NGO COMMITTEE FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

A Joint Committee of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Australian Non-Government Organisations

170th COMMITTEE FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION MEETING  
21 Nov 2023 – 11.30-13.30pm  
Meeting 255 London Cct, Civic – Hewitt Room & online via MS Teams

## Participants

- Ms Rhona McPhee (DFAT) - Chair
- Ms Mary James (DFAT)
- Ms Lauren Minson (DFAT)
- Mr John Morley (Plan International Australia)
- Mr Peter Keegan (UnitingWorld)
- Ms Sarah Hunt (ChildFund Australia)

## CDC Secretariat and Observers

- Ms Jocelyn Condon (ACFID)
- Ms Emily Moreton (ACFID)
- Ms Liz Nannelli (DFAT)
- Ms Tina Angel (DFAT), note taker

## Additional (joined 12:40)

- Ms Jo Thomson (Learning4Development and Refresh Team Lead)
- Ms Belinda Lucas (Learning4Development)
- Mr Geoff Simkiss (Peekay)
- Ms Sandra Martinovic (DFAT)

## Agenda

### 1. Welcome, Introduction, Apologies and conflict check- Chair

#### Acknowledgement of Country

- The Chair opened the meeting with the Acknowledgement of Country as follows “I would like to pay my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this meeting takes place, and also pay respect to Elders both past and present. I extend this respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people here today.”

#### Welcome

- The Chair welcomed everyone to 170th CDC meeting.
- The Chair acknowledged the passing of Ms Rhonda Chapman after a long illness, noting Rhonda had worked as an accreditation assessor for over twenty years.
  - In the joyful spirit of Rhonda, the Chair invited CDC members to reflect on their engagements with Rhonda.

#### Changes to CDC membership



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- The Chair advised Ms Catherine Gill had stepped down from her role as a DFAT CDC representative following her appointment as Assistant Secretary, Development Strategy Branch and the subsequent increased work demands.
  - Ms Gill had noted, while her time with the CDC has been brief, it has been interesting.

**Action:** DFAT agreed to draft a thank you letter to Ms Gill and circulate to CDC members to provide input.

- The Chair welcomed the new CDC DFAT representative, Ms Lauren Minson and invited Ms Minson to introduce herself.
- Ms Minson
  - Thanked the Chair for the warm welcome and acknowledged her bio had been circulated to members on 1 Nov 2023.
  - Joins the CDC with humanitarian, desk and post experience, with points of intersection with the ANCP/CDC through that time.
  - Looking forward to learning more about the ANCP, noting it is an important part of the broader development program.

### Apologies

- Ms Jessica Waite (International Women's Development Agency)
- Ms Selvi Vikan (DFAT)
- Mr Adrian Fleming (DFAT)

### Conflict Check

- The Chair asked meeting participants to declare any conflicts of interest.
  - Nil reported.

## 2. Endorsement of the 169th CDC Meeting Minutes (Chair)

- The Chair said the draft minutes of the 169th CDC meeting were circulated to Members on 14 Nov 2023.
  - Mr Morley moved to accept the minute and Ms Hunt seconded the motion.

## 3. Update on Action Items (Chair/ACFID)

- The Chair said the Action Log was also circulated to Members on 14 Nov 2023 and asked if there were any issues that required clarification.
- Mr Morley requested the Safeguards Policy continue to be included in the action log and be included on future CDC meeting agendas.
  - Ms James said there were no updates from the program area. Any updates were waiting on other strategy packages to be released, including Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI), LGBTQIA+ and Humanitarian. Ms James noted that safeguards were being included in the development of these strategies.
- Mr Morley said the intersection between safeguards and redline criteria in accreditation is why the CDC remains interested in the status of this policy.



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### 4. Updates

#### a. From DFAT/Chair

- The Chair provided an update on Government priorities:
  - the Israel-Gaza conflict is keeping DFAT busy and expects an ongoing surge for some time.
    - : DFAT is drawing people in from across the department to help in different ways such as consular support, humanitarian assistance and policy advice.
  - DFAT and other relevant portfolios are preparing for the upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP28) is scheduled to be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Dubai from 30 Nov – 20 Dec 2023.
  - There have been several Pacific meetings around the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in last few months.
  - The Europe division is now part of the DMG and there is greater visibility of European delegations and visits happening at the moment.
- Mr Morley said there was interest in DFAT's humanitarian strategy and recommendations to explore the humanitarian development nexus.
  - He requested DFAT invite someone from the Humanitarian division to present on the department's thinking on the new strategy.

**Action:** DFAT to check whether the humanitarian strategy is a final or draft and invite a representative to present to the CDC

#### Annual Reflections

- The Chair advised the ANCP Annual Reflections were scheduled to be held next week (27-28 Nov 2023).
  - Acknowledged and thanked Sarah Hunt for agreeing to present on behalf of the CDC as an NGO representative.

#### Accreditation Assessor's Annual Workshop

- Ms Nannelli advised the CDC that the workshop has been scheduled to be held 28-29 Feb 2024.
  - The agenda was being drafted with a focus on the Accreditation Refresh recommendations and implications for the accreditation review process.
  - Invited a CDC NGO representative to give a CDC update and invited an ACFID representative to give an update at the Annual Reflections Workshop.
    - : Mr Morley said he could give the update, pending any work travel commitments.
    - : Ms Moreton said she would be available to participate.

#### NPQ Section update

- The Chair advised:
  - Ms Sandra Martinovic was leaving ANCP team to join the Office of Southeast Asia (OSA) and it is a sad farewell.



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- : Thanked Ms Martinovic for her great service to the ANCP team and deserves to work in a new role and said NPQ would miss her but looked forward to her discussion input around the ANCP funding policy and accreditation refresh work and at the upcoming annual reflections.

### Accreditation Reviews Summary – Ms Nannelli

- From 11 applications started, four applications were submitted by the round closing date of 30 Sept 2023.
- All have had their eligibility checks completed, RDE checks are underway, and once those are completed by Financial Assessors, the DAs would be allocated to the respective reviewer teams.

### Upcoming Subject To's

- There is one upcoming subject to. Their review documentation was with the assessor for review.

#### b. Update from ACFID

- Ms Condon said
  - ACFID members had held their AGM and unanimously endorsed the proposed changes to their Code of Conduct (CoC).
  - These changes reflect the of strengthening of standards that members use, including in
    - : Locally led action in humanitarian and development work
    - : racial justice
    - : requirements around climate change.
  - ACFID would move quickly to implementation stage, meeting with ACFID Community of Practices' (CoP) to work through the tools and resources needed.
  - one area of further consideration would be the introduction of Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS) for ACFID members deploying personnel into humanitarian emergencies.
    - : It would become a requirement for those agencies and a best practice indicator for all members.
    - : Recent discussions with 20 members focused on how the sector can scale up. ACFID would be in touch with DFAT's safeguards team on the outcomes of that meeting.
    - : ACFID was working closely with managing contractors who were implementing the MDS to ensure a shared understanding of what the practice looked like in terms of disclosures and the evidence required that underpins the process.
  - Ms James said she looked forward to further conversations, that it was encouraging to see the MDS as a requirement for humanitarian deployments and broader good practice, and said it was good for people to understand the MDS which leads to changing the culture of the community we work in.
  - Ms Condon said there were interesting examples of bilateral partners who have been able to adopt the scheme and ACFID would share these with DFAT's safeguards team.
- Ms Moreton said ACFID had recently established a Locally Led Development (LLD) Community of Practice (CoP), with LLD a big focus for the sector. The CoP would
  - Engage in consultation around DFAT's localisation guidance as it was developed.
  - Provide a mechanism for conversations on LLD with ANCP going forward.



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- Ms Moreton said ACFID and DFAT had agreed to include a new TAB on the tracking spreadsheet to note excellent practices / strengths and encouraged CDC members to also identify and share areas of good practice when reading through the OR reports.
- Ms Condon said ACFID's Learning lead would present on upcoming initiatives and resources available at the ANCP reflections. She said
  - ACFID had released guidance and resources on good climate action in their resources hub.
  - Safeguarding e-learning was available in 10-11 languages and encouraged CDC members to share the links.

### 5. Organisation Review Reports – DFAT

- One organisation review report and three subject to reports were discussed.

### 6. Accreditation and Funding Policy Refresh – DFAT

The Chair & Ms Sandra Martinovic (DFAT), Ms Jo Thomson and Ms Belinda Lucas (L4D) and Mr Geoff Simkiss (Peekay) joined the meeting at 12:40

- Ms Martinovic said the review process was very thorough, and stated DFAT hasn't yet made any decisions on the proposed recommendations.
- Ms Thomson provided an overview of the principles of the Refresh, and the key findings from consultations, including:
  - Universal support to maintain the high standards of accreditation
    - : Accreditation also seen as valuable for self-reflection, improvement and learning.
  - Strong support for streamlining criteria and increase flexibility and risk informed approaches in the application of criteria
    - : Reflected a variety of opinions, but a trend that while many ANGOs are flexibly interpreting the criteria, others feel the criteria are too compliance driven / prescriptive.
  - Simplification of the application and assessment process
  - Leveraging the ACFID Code of Conduct
  - Improving the return for Base accreditation
- Ms Lucas provided an overview of the proposed recommendations, which are grounded and link directly back to the consultation findings, including
  - To maintain the high standards of accreditation, but remove duplication and streamline the criteria / indicators and administrative processes where possible
  - To work with ACFID on areas for streamlining, including administrative processes
  - To draw greater distinction between requirements for base and full
  - To improve clarity in the criteria and guidance for the diversity of approaches within the ANCP
  - Options for increasing flexibility and learning opportunities around the use of subject to
- Mr Morley asked about ACFID's reflections on proposed collaboration points.



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- Ms Condon said these are ideas that have been around for some time. ACFID put forward a proposal on aligning reporting systems a couple of years back which was scoped extensively at the time; ACFID also drafted a short paper about interaction between code and criteria and how this could work. While the details would need to be worked out, these recommendations seem reasonable, practical and reflective of some productive conversations.
- Mr Morley asked about timeframes for implementation, and further details on the distinction between base and full.
  - Ms Thomson said there has been a challenge between keeping high standards and creating greater distinction between base & full. The main proposed changes are around sub-criteria and reducing the number base agencies need to satisfy, balanced with the commensurate level of risk principle that's always been at play in accreditation. The intent is separate criteria for base and for full. And guidance would accompany these, for reviewers, NGOs and DFAT.
- Ms Condon asked how the draft proposed criteria were developed, with particular focus on the distinction between base and full as per recommendation 7.
  - Ms Thomson said the team drafted three versions:
    - : The first was a streamlined version for full using the old accreditation structure/framework, criteria and indicators
    - : The second developing a streamlined set for base
    - : The third was converted into how that could look by using code compliance indicators instead, alongside DFAT requirements. This was where there was an exact/close match, the previous accreditation criteria was swapped out for a code compliance indicator.
- Ms Hunt asked for further detail on the two proposed categories of subject to.
  - Ms Lucas said it require more thinking, but the intent is to retain the existing subject to focused on compliance, and the second would be used when there was not a major risk to DFAT but where there were parts of practice requiring improvement. It could be an indicator to the DFAT partner manager to monitor, mindful of not overburdening the ANCP team.
  - Mr Morley said this could be a tool around better practice / quality recommendations, rather than something their accreditation hinged on.
  - Ms Lucas said the language and status of this second subject to category would need to be crystal clear for all parties, and it would only be in place for reaccrediting organisations.
  - Ms Thomson said it was intended to promote the spirit of learning and continual improvement. She also said it was consistent with the DFAT due diligence assessment process against certain criteria, where funding can go ahead for an organisation rated as high risk, but with strengthening options in place.
  - Ms Condon said it sounded similar to the approach around HQAI audits and the minor corrective action requests, as opposed to major. The intent of the minor corrective action was that auditors take a closer look in the next round.
- Mr Simkiss provided an overview of the funding policy findings and recommendations. He said while the funding policy had the least number of recommendations, it had been complex to work through and remained a work in progress. He said



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- Consultation showed almost universal support around retention of RDE as the actual methodology & preferred approach for NGOs to continue their allocation of ANCP funding.
- Modifications to the RDE allocation approach were only possible through the two levers within RDE – that first lever is around the fixed / annual allocation for base & full NGOs and the second is reducing the fixed cap allocation. The modelling has focused on looking at the best balance across the board.
- There was a resounding no to questions about introducing an innovation fund out of the existing ANCP allocation.
- While multi-year programming could be looked at for implementation, funding would not be fixed, and would still vary based on RDE submissions on annual basis.
- The team looked at the match of 1:5, and at allowing greater flexibility as to where matching funds came from.
- There were a number of options around increasing the percentage for admin with a higher percentage for base and smaller for full that were still being worked through.
- Ms Martinovic said another important consideration is the impact of the current election commitment to increased ANCP funding, which runs for another two years. And the management response would need to be a whole of DFAT response, given that many ANCP partners work across the Department.
- The Chair thanked the CDC as sector representatives and stakeholders for their patience as DFAT works through the findings and review recommendations, noting the complexities that need to be balanced.
- Mr Morley asked what could be shared at Annual Reflections from the Refresh process to date.
  - The Chair said the Department would consult with Minister's Offices on the management response to the Refresh. DFAT anticipated it would be the new year before any formal advice could be shared with the sector and DFAT was conscious of any cut-over dates, for both accreditation and funding. The update at Annual Reflections would focus on overarching options / directions DFAT was thinking of going in.
- Ms Condon asked how DFAT would make a decision on funding, particularly how the issue around the fixed cap would be approached.
  - The Chair said DFAT was carefully considering all options.
- Ms Hunt said the sector has expressed a desire to have another say on specific recommendations, and asked whether there is any expectation that recommendations may go back to the sector for feedback / commentary, to help the CDC manage communications with the sector.
  - The Chair said the next stage would be DFAT's management response to the recommendations. There would be consultation with the CDC and any affected NGOs in finalising the management response, rather than reopening the review.

### 7. Other issues for NGO Representatives to table – Chair

- Ms James said the Australasian Aid Conference was coming and offered good luck to those presenting. She said her team would be talking to the IDCC about elevating the safeguarding issue across the sector.



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- Ms Condon said ACFID made a submission to present at the conference on safeguarding issues this year, but missed out due to so many submissions.

### **8. Next CDC Dates and Meeting close – Ms Nannelli**

- The Chair thanked the CDC for their engagement and looked forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming ANCP Reflections event. She advised she is Acting Assistant Secretary GPB until January 2024, and said it was anticipated there would be a substantive AS in the role by February 2024.
- Ms Nannelli advised CDC members that the next CDC is planned for February 2024.

**13.45pm Meeting closed.**