



END-OF-FACILITY EVALUATION FOR THE AUSTRALIA-SOLOMON ISLANDS RESOURCE FACILITY (ASIRF)

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Australia's Solomon Islands Resource Facility (ASIRF) (January 2021 to June 2023) provided an operational platform for the delivery of Australia's development assistance in Solomon Islands. ASIRF continued functions provided by previous Australian-funded facilities in Solomon Islands, including the Solomon Islands Resource Facility (SIRF) (2015 to 2020). ASIRF was delivered by DT Global.

ASIRF's overarching goal was to support 'Effective and efficient delivery of the Australian Aid Program in Solomon Islands'. ASIRF primarily functioned as an enabling facility, with services including: recruitment, deployment and adviser support; procurement and grants management; and financial management. ASIRF also provided program management functions for some sector programs and delivered deployed support services for the Australian High Commission in Honiara.

An end-of-facility evaluation was undertaken in late 2022 to assess the performance of ASIRF and provide guidance on future programming. The objective of the evaluation was to assess "the extent to which ASIRF was an effective and efficient model to support DFAT's development portfolio and associated programs in Solomon Islands."

The evaluation found that ASIRF remained a highly relevant program that supported DFAT's engagement in Solomon Islands. The evaluation also found that ASIRF delivered economies of scale and had been effective in delivering its overall mandate and contributing to End-of-Facility Outcomes. The evaluation also made recommendations to enhance performance of the facility.

In June 2023, DT Global was selected to deliver ASIRF's replacement facility, the Australia-Solomon Islands Program Support (ASIPS) Facility. ASIPS began operation in July 2023 based on a draft design (which incorporated lessons from the evaluation). One of the early tasks for DT Global is to revise and finalise the design of the new facility. The ASIPS facility design is expected to be finalised by early 2024.

End-of-Facility Evaluation recommendations and DFAT responses

Recommendation	DFAT response
<p>1. DFAT to continue the process for the design and tender for the next phase of ASIRF implementation. Where possible, DFAT should engage with the current ASIRF team to employ a smooth transition and to discuss and confirm agreed priorities as part of a proposed new phase of implementation and management.</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>The ASIRF team was consulted during the initial design of the new ASIPS facility in early 2023. The tender for ASIPS was undertaken between February and June 2023, based on this draft design.</p> <p>The managing contractor for ASIPS, DT Global, will revise and finalise the new design for ASIPS in late 2023, to allow implementation of the new design in early 2024.</p>



Recommendation	DFAT response
2. As part of the new phase, DFAT to consider including a fourth pillar of support (MEL, GEDSI, Communications) to complement existing pillars of support (finance, recruitment, and procurement)	<p>Agree.</p> <p>The draft design specified that ASIPS should provide support across programs to strengthen M&E and performance on cross-cutting issues (including gender equality, disability/social inclusion, risk management and safeguards).</p> <p>The ASIPS Facility includes a Development Effectiveness Hub, which is a specialist support function to strengthen program quality and development effectiveness. The ongoing structure of this Hub will be determined in the final design in early 2024.</p>
3. ASIRF and DFAT to discuss and agree a slightly revised role for ASIRF that sees it take a more proactive and strategic role to support SOs. This includes a series of consultations around developing more standardised templates and formats to help with planning, forecasting, budgeting, and reporting. As part of the revised approach, DFAT and ASIRF to consider engaging a short-term strategic engagement adviser for the next phase of implementation to continue with the work.	<p>Partially Agree.</p> <p>As well as other systems, the SO Commissioning Guidelines will detail requirements to ensure all SOs contain consistent and required information that will assist ASIPs with planning, forecasting, budgeting, and reporting. DFAT does not commit to extra resourcing at this stage.</p>
4. ASIRF and DFAT to consider the separation of grants away from procurement and to establish a separate grant management unit under ASIRF that assumes responsibility for design, screening, contracting, and overall management reporting. This approach minimises exposure and risk.	<p>Partially Agree.</p> <p>While DFAT recognises the benefits of this recommended approach, the current workload or requirement for grant administration does not warrant separation or the establishment of a separate grant unit. If the use of grants as a delivery mechanism increases under ASIPS, this could be re-examined.</p>
5. ASIRF and DFAT to consider more broad approaches to M&E that move away from assessing operational metrics of ASIRF to consider and develop a broad MEL strategy that engages with SOs and looks to provide a more “whole of M&E facility” type approach that measures not only operational metrics but also broader considerations around engagement, partnership and technical support.	<p>Agree.</p> <p>The final ASIPS design will consider this recommendation.</p>



Recommendation	DFAT response
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6. DFAT and ASIRF to agree on a formalised transition strategy during the course of the next phase to ultimately transition DSS roles and responsibilities back under DFAT.

Disagree.
Under current resourcing arrangements in the Australian High Commission, DSS support will be required for the foreseeable future.