

Solomon Islands: Independent Review of Australia’s twinning Support to Ombudsman: Management Response

The independent review found that the twinning arrangement with Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) has improved the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman Solomon Islands (OOSI) and the Leadership Code Commission (LCC), however there was little impact on political and public service behaviour, and it did not achieve well-defined development outcomes. Private sector stakeholders said that the two institutions were not the agency of choice for the private sector when faced with a problem. All three institutions in the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership value the relationship and said it helped with promoting engagement with a large Pacific network of Ombudsman offices. Moreover, the OOSI and LCC form part of the Solomon Islands government accountability framework, that together form an important part of government.

The Review supports the continuation of the valued relationship, but seeks to enhance the development impact of the investment. It provided the following recommendations.

No.	Recommendation	Management Response
1	Support the twinning arrangement but with specific and identified development outcomes, including a measurable results framework.	Agreed. DFAT recognises the long-standing partnership OCO and OOSI and LCC which has led to capacity improvements in both organisations. DFAT will work with the new Governance managing contractor and design team to inject development outcomes and development design into future assistance.
2	Integrate the twinning relationship as a sub-component of the next Solomon Islands DFAT funded governance program. This will provide a range of additional resources and modalities to support the identified development outcomes.	DFAT will discuss this with the stakeholders: OOSI, LCC, OCO and the new Governance contractor to arrive at a mutually satisfactory arrangement which will improve efficiency and effectiveness of this assistance going forward. DFAT is open to multi-year arrangements and assistance being managed through the managing contractor. However, DFAT will maintain active involvement to build and maintain these relationships in Solomon Islands.
3	Management of the twinning program should move from DFAT day to day management to DFAT’s Solomon Islands governance program. OCO would continue to manage the day-to-day aspect of the sub-component under the broader management of the governance program. DFAT would continue to have oversight but through the new governance program. OCO was amenable to the possibility of fitting within a wider program.	Refer to recommendation 2 response. The governance program will capture monitoring and evaluation of this assistance under the broader programs’ MEL framework.

No.	Recommendation	Management Response
4	Design the next phase of the twinning support as a development investment that focuses both on the relationship and development outcome/impact. The design team should include design specialists and representatives from OCO, OOSI and LCC.	Agreed. A design phase for the governance program is being undertaken in the first half of 2022. DFAT will engage the Governance Program to help design the next phase of the assistance during the program's design phase.
5	The next phase of the twinning support should be designed in incremental steps with long term outcomes and goal and a theory of change or log frame setting out how it will be achieved. The design can have stop-go points where reviews are carried out to determine the next phase and funding.	Agreed. DFAT will include this into the design and management parameters of the new program.
6	Either as part of the twinning arrangement or the broader governance program a platform or mechanism should be developed for the 5 accountability agencies (OOSI, LCC, AGO, anti-corruption commission, Public Service Commission) to share information and coordinate. The specific mechanism and the exact agencies to be included will need to be decided by the Agency's themselves.	Agreed that a greater holistic view of the integrity agencies should be undertaken and DFAT will include this is the new governance design work.
7	Support OOSI and LCC to include greater engagement with civil society and private sector. Greater awareness and support from civil society and the private sector will strengthen role of OOSI and LCC.	Consideration of this will be given during the governance design phase.
8	Support OOSI and LCC to include greater visibility in the nine provinces /rural areas. This recommendation is based on the poor knowledge of the organisation's outside of Honiara.	Consideration of this will be given during the governance design phase.
9	LCC to develop a public profile (website, annual reports etc). The LCC focus on confidentiality is somewhat misplaced and it can make greater use of public awareness of its functions.	Consideration of this will be given during the governance design phase.
10	To overcome Covid-19 restrictions and in the context of Solomon Islands culture, include in the new support for OOSI and LCC opportunities for greater face to face contact with OCO staff or consultants working for OCO	DFAT supports greater face-to-face contact where practical. Currently there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the Solomon Islands and non-essential travel is discouraged. There are government restrictions and conditions on in-coming passengers. Restrictions would need to be lifted.

No.	Recommendation	Management Response
11	Future funding for the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership to include a more fit for purpose MERL framework that includes: feedback loops and regular reporting on progress, including progress on achieving outcomes.	Agreed. DFAT will work with the Governance program managing contractor to ensure this assistance is captured into its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework.