



# Ombudsman Twinning Support Independent Review

*for the* Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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## Executive Summary

- The purpose of the Review is to assess the twinning relationship between the Australian Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) the Solomon Islands Office of the Ombudsman (OOSI) and the Leadership Code Commission (LCC).
- Since 2006 the OCO has provided a program of support to the OOSI and LCC. Australia has funded the support through a range of mechanisms including Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Most recently DFAT has funded the twinning relationship through a Record of Understanding (2018-19 and 2019-21).
- Since 2006 initial support for OOSI and LCC focused on strengthening the institutional capacity to carry out standard functions, strategic planning, and organisational reform.
- The 2019-21 Record of Understanding (ROU) shifted the focus to include a greater emphasis on having an impact on the Solomon Islands integrity environment.

## Findings

- Evidence presented by a range of stakeholders and from the literature, including annual reports and M&E reports, showed that the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership has improved the capacity and functioning of the OOSI and LCC.
- There was however less evidence that the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership had led to an improvement in the Solomon Islands integrity environment.
- The success achieved by the twinning arrangement was largely attributed to the value that all three parties placed on the relationship.
- The key challenges in achieving improved capacity have been the limited resources and the initial low level of capacity within OOSI and LCC.
- The June 2018 to May 2019 ROU appears to have achieved the objectives it set out to attain.
- It is less clear the December 2019 to June 2021 ROU achieved its objectives.
- The OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership is an important component of the overall Australia - Solomon Islands bilateral relationship and discontinuing it would come at significant cost.
- The twinning investment aligns with Australia's strategic objective if future investments in the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership were better designed to emphasise development outcomes.
- Supporting accountability agencies such as the OOSI and LCC also aligns with the Solomon Islands government priorities as set out in the country's National Development Strategy 2016 to 2035.

## Lessons learned

- Institution to institution twinning relationships tend to be highly valued by the recipient.
- The modality of twinning can benefit from complementing with other modalities and other resources.
- Institution to institution twinning relationship should be complemented by development outcomes objectives to achieve impact.
- Twinning arrangements are rarely structured using a development program design or DFAT's investment design requirements.
- Short term ROUs are not designed to deliver long term development outcomes.
- Improving political accountability and effective government service delivery often require engaging with civil society and private sector to build support for reforms.

- Broad based capacity development can benefit from combining it with a focus on problem-solving (e.g., Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach).

### Recommendations

1. The overall recommendation is to continue with the twinning relationship but seek to enhance the development impact of the investment.
2. The twinning relationship should form a sub-component of the next Solomon Islands DFAT funded governance program.
3. OCO should continue to manage the day-to-day aspect of the sub-component under the broader management of the governance program.
4. The next phase of the twinning support should be designed as a development investment that focuses both on the relationship and development outcomes and impact/goal.
5. The next phase should also be designed in incremental steps with long term outcomes and goal.
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 improve coordination.
7. The next phase should include support for OOSI and LCC to have greater engagement with civil society and the private sector.
8. The next phase should also include support for OOSI and LCC to have greater visibility in the nine provinces /rural areas.
9. The next phase should support LCC to develop a public profile (website, annual reports etc).
10. The next phase should support opportunities for greater face to face contact between OOSI/LCC and OCO staff or consultants working for OCO.
11. Future funding for the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership should include a more fit for purpose MERL framework.

## Introduction

The Australian Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) has been providing program support to the Solomon Islands Office of the Ombudsman (OOSI) and the Leadership Code Commission (LCC) since 2006, initially as part of a DFAT regionally funded initiative. Since 2013 this partnership has been supported under the Australian bilateral assistance program with the Solomon Islands.

The LCC is an integrity institution established under the Solomon Islands Leadership Code. In addition to enforcing the Leadership Code, the LCC supports Leaders to comply with their duties and promotes good governance, accountability, and transparency. The OOSI is an administrative watchdog of the Government, playing the oversight role of ensuring that the Government is fair when providing services to the people of the Solomon Islands.

The objective of the support under the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership is to strengthen the institutional capacity of integrity agencies in the Solomon Islands in carrying out standard functions, strategic planning, and organisational reform. The objectives are set out in the Record of Understanding (ROU) and are as follows:

- (a) Creation of a sustainable institutional strengthening and capacity building relationship between the two ombudsman offices; and
- (b) Development of a mutually beneficial relationship to enhance ombudsman functions, including strengthening corporate governance and information systems, staff technical skills, staff knowledge and other areas that may be identified during the course of the relationship.

Australia provided support to LCC and OOSI under RAMSI's accountability program (the Machinery of Government (MoG) pillar), which supported the revitalisation and strengthening of Solomon Islands' three accountability institutions: the LCC, the OOSI, and the Auditor General Office (AGO). A 2011-13 Accountability Program Implementation Strategy (APIS) was developed to guide Accountability Program (AP) activities and approaches through to June 2013. The APIS identified a range of jointly agreed institutional strengthening and capacity development initiatives for all three institutions, including support to strengthen data collection and case management, and the development of long-term institutional partnerships with national and regional accountability organisations.

With regards to OOSI, the APIS recommended immediately developing long-term institutional partnerships with appropriate Ombudsman offices in the region, to support sustainable institutional strengthening over the long-term. In March 2012, a pilot institutional twinning arrangement commenced between AusAID, RAMSI and the OCO, in support of OOSI, resulting in strong outcomes and the maturing of a mutually beneficial partnership between the institutions.

Subsequent arrangements were developed to align support within the broader architecture of the Solomon Islands Governance Program, with the aim of developing institutional partnerships with both national and regional accountability organisations over the longer term.

Following on from the OCO regional program, which ended on 30 June 2018, DFAT funded the June 2018 to May 2019 OCO-OOSI-LCC twinning partnership agreement which included OCO staff traveling to Solomon Islands to deliver training and technical assistance, LCC and OOSI staff

visiting the OCO, support to regional engagement, and various other activities with an accountability and anti-corruption focus.

A second phase of twinning support commenced in March 2020 (contract expires 31 December 2021) and has continued to contribute to enabling OOSI and LCC to reduce barriers to service delivery stemming from poor public financial management and public service capacity.

## Purpose and Scope

DFAT's Terms of Reference (ToR) (see Annex 1) sets out the purpose and scope of the review. It identifies four objectives that are used for this review. The objectives are:

1. assess the twinning approach,
2. identify the cumulative impact of support up to September 2021,
3. consider the value of continued support of this type, and
4. make recommendations for future programming.

In the ToR the four objectives are set out into a series of questions which have been used in this review to structure the findings, lessons learned and recommendations.

The review spans from the start of DFAT's support in 2006 to September 2021. As the partnership has evolved and changed over time, greater focus has been placed on later years in terms of providing answers to the four identified objectives and consideration of future programming.

The purpose of the review is to support DFAT in considering future, if any, programming, and approaches to support the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership. The review may also, in part or in its entirety, be of interest to the OCO-OOSI-LCC partners in considering future activities.

## Methodology

The methodology follows a simple process of triangulating data collected from interviews and relevant literature, and where necessary following up to confirm initial findings and recommendations with relevant stakeholders. The review uses the 6 OECD/DAC criteria to collect evidence.<sup>1</sup> The OECD /DAC criteria and the ToR's key evaluation questions align to enable the analysis to provide specific answers to questions.<sup>2</sup>

The literature initially provided by DFAT was supplemented by a search for relevant literature directly related to the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership twinning arrangement and more broadly to the topics of twinning, accountability, and governance mechanisms of relevance for the Solomon Islands. The literature review provided an initial understanding of the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership functioning, outputs, outcomes, and impact. Additional literature was gathered as key questions and emerging themes were developed.

All interviews were held by video conference with key stakeholders identified initially by DFAT and later by others during the process of gathering information (see Annex 2). Interviews

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<sup>1</sup> The six OECD/DAC criteria are: Impact, Relance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, and Sustainability. For a detailed explanation of the OECD/DAC criteria see: OECD, 2019. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use.

<sup>2</sup> The OECD /DAC criteria and the key evaluation questions align as follows: Criteria of relevance aligns with question 3c; criteria of coherence with question 3a and 3b; criteria of effectiveness with question 1; efficiency broadly aligns with question 3d; impact with question 2; and sustainability with question 3d. See Annex 1 for details of the ToR questions.

generally progressed in a similar pattern as follows: Stakeholders were contacted and provided with information related to the review, allowing them to prepare for the meeting. The interview included a brief introduction of the reviewer and the review process before allowing the interviewee an opportunity to make opening comments. Depending on the interviewee and the topics initially covered, the conversation was channelled to cover the objectives of the review and identify any gaps. Interviews were generally held as free-flowing conversations, allowing the interviewee the opportunity to raise any subject or issues related to the review.

## Main Findings

The main findings are structured around the key question as set out in the ToR. Several initial findings were tested with relevant stakeholders. This was done without making any commitment and on a speculative basis to test the validity of findings. This allowed stakeholders to confirm or disagree with the initial analysis presented to them. The key questions from the ToR are slightly modified and reordered as set out in bold below, making it easier for reading.

### **The initial question asked to what extent had the twinning approach adopted been effective?**

Evidence presented by a range of stakeholders and from the literature, including annual reports and M&E reports, showed that the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership has improved the capacity and functioning of the OOSI and to a lesser extent the LCC. The twinning arrangement has improved OOSI case management systems and processes. The OCO support also improved the investigative skills of the two Solomon Islands agencies. Evidence to demonstrate this included the OOSI clearing its backlog of cases. The OCO-OOSI-LCC twinning partnership also supported the strengthening of OOSI and LCC's ICT systems and processes.

While both OOSI and LCC benefited from improved efficiency of its processes and capacity to carry out their mandate, it was more difficult to assess the effectiveness of the support provided to the LCC. This was in part because of the lack of information available and the confidential nature of its operations. To a large degree LCC has benefited from its close relationship with the OOSI. The two agencies ICT systems are connected and both agencies' use similar investigative techniques, allowing OCO to pool resources and address constraints faced by the two agencies.

However, if we ask to what extent has the twinning arrangement been effective in bringing about change in the Solomon Islands integrity environment, there was less evidence that the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership had led to an improvement in the Solomon Islands integrity environment. Reasons for this include the twinning support was primarily designed to improve systems and capacity of the two agencies rather than designed to improve their impact. Other reasons included the under resourcing of the OOSI and LCC, and a lack of widespread political interest in supporting the agencies. Additionally, despite the close links between the OOSI and LCC, most Solomon Islands' government accountability agencies work in silos. Given the nascent nature of improving government accountability in the Solomon Islands, greater coordination and information sharing could strengthen the country's accountability framework.

**To what extent has the Ombudsman twinning program achieving impact?** As discussed, the impact achieved by the twinning arrangement was primarily confined to improving the efficiency of the two organisations' (OOSI and LCC) operations. The main outputs from the twinning arrangement were:

- Better trained staff.

- Improved processes in place.
- Better investigation process in place
- Improved ICT system.

The OOSI and LCC also produced a manual titled: Good Decision Making-Manual. The manual was presented to the Prime Minister in October 2021. The manual covers the importance of good record-keeping, principles of good decision making, why, what, when and how of good record-keeping, good decision-making check lists, and communication of good decision making among others. While there is a lack of knowledge among public servants of essential administrative rules and regulations, the manual is likely to have little impact without widespread political support.

The twinning support has also contributed to the clearing of a backlog of cases in the Ombudsman's office and a more expedient processing of cases. The last available annual report on the OOSI website was for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. During that year (July 2018 to June 2019), the Ombudsman received a total of 202 complaints, of which 176 cases fell within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, and of those 132 were resolved and closed at the initial stage of receiving the complaint. The primary reason for "resolving" cases was because the complainant had not exhausted all other avenues of appeal and were directed to first do so.

**What have been the key drivers of success over the course of the partnership?** It is clear from discussion with stakeholders and from the wider literature on twinning relationships between similar institutions, that such relationships are usually highly valued, as was the case in this partnership. The value that all three parties placed on the relationship accounts largely for its success. The institutions speak the same "language" and have similar ethos. Moreover, the partnership provided tangible inputs and outcomes in terms of improvements in the functioning of the OOSI and LCC partners. The relationship also helped with regional networking. OCO has several similar relationships in the Pacific and OOSI belongs to the regional network of ombudsman. Credit should be given to the leadership of all three institutions, and especially the leadership of the two Solomon Islands organisations. In small, under resourced institutions, leadership is critical in determining priorities and focus. Both OOSI and LCC leaders have prioritised their institutions relationship with OCO, enabling their institutions to benefit.

**What have been the key challenges in achieving activities?** With a focus purely on the outcomes set out in the partnership's ROU, the key challenges in achieving improved capacity have been the limited resources and the initial low level of capacity within OOSI and LCC. Most recently, COVID-19 has also impacted the implementation of activities. A common challenge of twinning arrangement is often the more developed partners lack of dedicated resources or focus on supporting their less developed partners, given that in almost all cases, the twinning arrangement is not core business for the more developed partner. However, in the case of the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership twinning arrangement, the OCO showed an ongoing enthusiasm and commitment for the partnership.

**Have the objectives been met as set out in the ROU?** From the available documentation it is difficult to provide a definitive answer. The ROU's are funded by DFAT and intended to support OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership with a series of activities. The ROU from June 2018 to May 2019 and the second ROU from December 2019 to June 2021 consist of several documents over a five-year



period.<sup>3</sup> The documentation includes details of activities, reports on progress, outcomes, and achievement, including a series of amendments and variations to the ROU's.

The June 2018 to May 2019 ROU appears to have achieved the objectives it set out to attain. For the 2018 to 2019 ROU there are several progress reports available, and an end of program report produced by the OCO. The end of program report details activities carried out and expenditure of funds. The 2018-2019 ROU objectives are:

- To improve the capabilities of OOSI and LCC.
- Strengthen the relationship between OCO, OOSI and LCC, and
- Link OOSI and LCC with similar organisations in the Pacific.

For the December 2019 to June 2021 ROU less Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) information was available, and it is less clear the ROU achieved its objectives. The ROU includes a series of activities (Attachment A of the ROU) and a number of outcomes it aimed to achieve. The December 2019 to June 2021 ROU underwent a number of amendments to the initial agreement, including a time extension to December 2021. The 2019 to 2021 ROU included the following objectives:

- Building on the collaboration between key accountability/integrity and public service agencies (including the Ministries of Education and Health) to improve service delivery and enhance public awareness and education on avenues to seek redress or report wrongdoing.
- Sharing best practice approaches, ensuring areas for improvements are acted upon, and intake, assessment, investigations, and case management functions are strengthened.
- Delivering trainings (including train the trainer) to enhance technical ability in agency functions and improve corporate capability in relation to strategic planning, communications, project management and procurement.

Monitoring and evaluation was to be a joint exercise between the three agencies and feed into the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MEL) framework of DFAT's Solomon Islands Governance Program. This does not seem to have occurred and at the time of the review no MERL reports were available for the 2019-2021 ROU. An end of program report is not due until after December 2021. However, a cursory review indicates that the first of the three objectives has not yet been achieved. Interestingly, this objective unlike many of the other objectives, clearly seeks to move beyond capacity development and seeks to improve the accountability of other government agencies. The second objective achievement seems questionable, despite producing a Good Decision Making-Manual. The third objective appears to have been delivered.

#### Alignment with Australia's Aid Program

**In regard to strategic alignment, the question is asked if further investment aligns with the strategic objectives of Australia's aid program in the Solomon Islands in the COVID -context?**

The short answer is further investments can align with Australia's strategic objective, especially if future investments in the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership are better designed to incorporate development outcomes and more timely feedback and reporting mechanisms.

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<sup>3</sup> DFAT has funded activities under a series of Activity Schedules to the Record of Understanding 14433.

Pacific Step-up is Australia's key strategy for the region. The strategy was highlighted in Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper and 2016 Defence White Paper. The Step-up responds to and recognises the broad-ranging challenges identified by Pacific leaders and communities, including strengthening climate and disaster resilience; sustained economic growth; and support to promote healthy, educated, and inclusive populations. Australia has also developed a Solomon Islands COVID-19 Development Response Plan. Key features of the response plan are Australia partnering with the Solomon Islands to respond to COVID-19 and implement Solomon Islands' National Development Strategy (2016-2035). Consistent with the Pacific Step-up, Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan is taking a whole-of-government approach and in partnership with the Solomon Islands' government is focusing on health services, supporting stability and economic recovery.

Key to service delivery is an efficient government bureaucracy and politicians serving their constituency. Australia's strategic objective in the Pacific Step-up and COVID-19 response plan focuses on service delivery to the public that includes education, health, infrastructure, as well as an improved business environment. Underpinning the delivery of improved services is security and stability in the Solomon Islands. Australia is supporting this through a whole of government approach that includes support for the police force, border agencies and a range of government accountability agencies, including OOSI, LCC and the Auditor General Office and the newly formed anti-corruption agency. These accountability agencies are fundamental to improving service delivery.

#### Alignment with Solomon Islands Policy and Reform Agendas

**Does further investment also align with Solomon Islands Government's policy and reform agendas?** The key document setting out the Solomon Islands reform agenda is the Government's National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016 to 2035. Under the strategy, NDS Objective Five is a unified nation with stable and effective governance and public order. It states:

Politicisation, corruption and poor work standards and ethics have eroded professionalism and morale standards in the public sector. There is an ongoing need to build capacity of both government institutions and personnel to carry out their responsibilities in an effective manner. (Page 45)

Clearly, supporting accountability agencies aligns with the Solomon Islands government priorities. Further evidence is provided by the establishment in 2018 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to investigate and prosecute offenders in the public sector. The government's redirection policy in response to COVID-19 also endorses supporting the country's accountability agencies when it identifies good governance and streamlining government bureaucracy as underpinning the governments objectives (page 5-6). Given the government's accountability agencies, (including OOSI, LCC, AGO, the anti-corruption commission and the Public Service Commission) which all provide the framework for improving government serviced delivery, the question is how to improve the quality of investment in these agencies to achieve greater impact.

#### Lessons Learned

**Based on the findings presented above and from a wider reading of development outcomes, what relevant lessons can we identify?** Initial support since 2006 for OOSI and LCC focused on strengthening the institutional capacity to carry out standard functions, strategic planning, and

organisational reform. These objectives were sound as the institutions needed support to function properly. Since then, as the institutions capacity to carry out their functions improved, the shift towards having greater impact on the integrity environment, as reflected in the most recent ROU, have been less successful. In part, this can be explained by the continuing focus on the partnership and building capacity without applying more systematic development design processes. The following sets out a series of more specific lessons learned relevant to this review:

- Institution to institution twinning relationships tend to be highly valued by the recipient organisation and bring together institutions with similar mandates, functions, and outlook, making them effective modalities for sharing learning and building capacity.
- The modality of twinning can benefit from complementing with other modalities and other resources. By doing so, it can bring a range of resources and approaches/modalities to bear and make the investment more effective.
- Institution to institution twinning relationships should be complemented by development outcome objectives to achieve impact. That is, twinning arrangements should support institution building with a focus on achieving impact.
- Twinning arrangements are rarely structured in a development design context of using a log frame or theory of change that include inputs, outputs, intermediate outcomes, end of program outcomes, and an impact/goal.
- Australian government institutions are usually very good at what they do, but not necessarily the best at designing development investments with a focus on development outcomes for achieving impact.
- Short term ROUs are not designed to deliver long term development outcomes. Achieving long term improvements in political accountability and effective service delivery takes time.
- Improving political accountability and effective government service delivery often require engaging with civil society and private sector to build support for reforms.
- Broad based capacity development can benefit from combining it with a focus on problem-solving. Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach is an example of such an approach.
- For small poorly funded institutions effective leadership is especially critical for success.
- Videoconferencing can help overcome lack of in-person engagement, but remains second best solution, especially in a Pacific cultural context.

## Recommendations

**In terms of recommendation, the initial question to consider is: is their value in continuing the support of this type?** As has been set out in the section on Findings, the twinning arrangement has improved the capacity of the OOSI and LCC but with little impact on political and public service behaviour or achieving well-defined development outcomes. Private sector stakeholders stated that the two institutions were not the agency of choice for the private sector facing a problem. In contrast, all three institutions in the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership value the relationship and maintained 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 are an important part of government.

The question can be turned around by asking what is the alternative? Three options present themselves: First, discontinue support and shift the resources to funding community or local based accountability mechanisms either embedded in civil society or within specific government service delivery institutions (i.e., health, education etc.). The second option is to continue as before and support the twinning arrangement that is valued by all parties and forms part of Australia - Solomon Islands relationship. The third option is to continue supporting the twinning arrangement but shift the emphasis more towards achieving development outcomes.

The first option, i.e., shifting to other accountability mechanisms is a viable option. However, it would be at a cost to the broader Australia - Solomon Islands relationship, and at a specific cost to the relationship of all three institutions. Over a significant period of time, the OCO has built relationships with a network of ombudsman offices across the Pacific and the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership forms part of this. Australia's support for the integrity environment in the region, including in the Solomon Islands, reinforces the key strategy of Australia's Pacific Step-up. Discontinuing the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership would have direct consequences for Australia-Solomon Island relationships, but also affects the wider network of support for improving the integrity environment in the Pacific.

Moreover, given the relatively small size of the funding, moving the funding to other accountability mechanisms would have marginal impact on the recipient programs. The second option of continuing as usual is not a viable option given the findings of this Review. The third option, one supported by this Review, would continue the valued relationship, but seek to enhance the development impact of the investment. The following then are specific recommendations in support of the third option:

- **Recommendation 1:** Support the twinning arrangement but with specific and identified development outcomes, including a measurable results framework.
- **Recommendation 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.
- **Recommendation 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 channelled through the new governance program. OCO was amenable to the possibility of fitting within a wider program.
- **Recommendation 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 should maintain flexibility in its delivery modality and build in a MERL framework that is fit for purpose and ensures evidence-based decision making. The design team should also include design specialists and representatives from OCO, OOSI and LCC.
- **Recommendation 5:** The next phase of the twinning support should be designed, in line with a PDIA approach, to allow for 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.

- **Recommendation 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 Agencies themselves.
- **Recommendation 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.
- **Recommendation 8:** Support OOSI and LCC to include greater visibility in the nine provinces /rural areas. This recommendation is based on poor knowledge of the organisations influence outside of Honiara.
- **Recommendation 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.
- **Recommendation 10:** To overcome Covid-19 restrictions and in the context of Solomon Islands culture, the new phase should support opportunities for greater face to face contact between OOSI/LCC and OCO staff or consultants working for OCO.
- **Recommendation 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.

## COVID-19

**What has been the impacts to the program of remote-working in a post COVID-19 environment – can the objectives still be achieved?** The OCO has made significant effort to overcome the impact of COVID-19 on travel restrictions. It has supported the OOSI and LCC with teleconferencing equipment and redesigned its delivery to work remotely. The OCO should be commended, as should OOSI and LCC, for its willingness to adjust its program to meet the new challenge of COVID-19 restrictions.

However, the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 have significantly degraded the impact of support being delivered. If COVID-19 becomes widespread throughout the islands, the ability to deliver support will become even worse. Up to November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, there have been 20 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Solomons and no deaths.<sup>4</sup> And, as of 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021, no more than 24% of the population had received the COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>5</sup>

The Solomon Islands has so far avoided the worst of the pandemic. However, evidence from epidemiologist's and experience from other developing countries suggest the situation will worsen. Firstly, no country has completely avoided the pandemic and it is a race to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. Even then, evidence from Singapore, Israel and other countries tells us that even with high rates of vaccination the virus can spread and impact the health system and create havoc with the economy. Second, evidence from developing countries where the virus has spread, shows that public servants are most often required to work from

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO). See: <https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/sb>.

<sup>5</sup> Latest figure (27th October 2021) from the WHO for the Solomon Islands showed there had been 171,562 vaccine doses administered out of a 2021 population of 710,995. Assuming the 171,562 vaccine doses went to as many individuals (this is unlikely), then the maximum coverage possible is 24% of the population.

home with limited access to their office and usually poorer quality support, including poor access and quality of internet services. Third, international consultants, whether they are short term or long term in-country based consultants are also affected. It becomes more difficult, if not impossible, for short term international consultants to carry out in-country assignments. For long term embedded international consultants, evidence from other countries shows, that a significant number will move back, at least temporarily, to their home base to work remotely.

The question then, in a post COVID-19 environment is: can the objectives of a twinning arrangement still be achieved. The short and speculative answer is yes but with great difficulty. It will require more effort and flexible delivery modalities. Where exchanges of staff are still considered, it may mean longer term commitment. This is not unusual for some of Australia's large government agencies. For example, Treasury and Finance have long term placement in important partner countries in Asia. Embedding the Twinning arrangement in DFAT's larger Solomon Islands governance program will also help, as the program will have on the ground resources it can deploy. The bottom line is, in a post-COVID-19 environment, delivery will be more difficult, more expensive, require to be more flexible, and take longer to deliver inputs and achieve outcomes.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

**Regarding MERL, the ToR asks: is the current level of monitoring, evaluation and reporting appropriate and fit-for-purpose?** Some of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes have already been described under the Review's section on Findings, where the question as to whether the ROU objectives had been met was addressed. To summarise, what has been described already in the Review; the reporting monitoring and evaluations for the 2018-2019 ROU was deemed adequate. For the 2019-2021 ROU the reporting appeared to be less than adequate. The ROU 2019-2021 proposal for feeding of MERL activities into the DFAT's Solomon Islands Governance Program appears not to have taken place. Moreover, there appears to be few records available of actual monitoring of activities under the current ROU. Whether the lack of apparent records was due to a lack of corporate knowledge or actual deficiency remains unclear, however no documents were identified or mentioned in interviews with key stakeholders.

The only independent evaluations that were done, did not directly deal with the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership. There was an Independent Review of the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance (POA) done in 2013 which covered briefly OOSI and LCC. Similarly, there was a Solomon Islands Justice and Governance Programs Evaluation that included the OOSI and LCC. Neither evaluation focused exclusively on the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership.

The overall conclusion drawn from the evidence is that reporting was appropriate for contractual and legal requirements but provided little in the way of evaluation to be able to measure improvements in the government's accountability or guide future activities to improve impact. Therefore, the current level of monitoring, evaluation and reporting is not appropriate or fit-for-purpose if we wish to influence change in the integrity environment. Achieving improved government accountability is a long-term goal that requires an appropriate MERL systems in place that can inform decision making. The current monitoring, evaluation and reporting lacks elements for learning from outputs and outcomes to feed back into decision making of programming, an essential element for achieving impact. Such a feedback mechanism may well have existed as an

informal process, especially during the design of the new phase of the ROU but was not documented or shown to feed into decision making.

## Conclusion

This Review has listed the achievements and short comings with the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership twinning arrangement. It has recommended on balance that the partnership is worth continuing but with significant changes to focus more on achieving outcomes that have an impact on the accountability of politicians and senior public servants. Over several years, the partnership has contributed to improving the capacity and function of the OOSI and LCC. It is now time to move beyond capacity building and aim for impact in the integrity environment. Such an endeavour is not a short-term undertaking and has many risks associated with it. To discontinue the support to OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership would also entail risks. The Australia – Solomon Islands relationship would be affected.

## Annex 1: Terms of Reference

### OMBUDSMAN TWINNING SUPPORT INDEPENDENT REVIEW

#### 1. Background

The Australian Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) has been providing program support to the Solomon Islands Office of the Ombudsman (OOSI) and the Leadership Code Commission (LCC) since as early as 2006 as part of a DFAT regionally funded initiative. This relationship was initially developed through membership of the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance.

The LCC is an integrity institution established under the Solomon Islands Leadership Code. In addition to enforcing the Leadership Code, the LCC supports Leaders to comply with their duties and promotes good governance, accountability, and transparency. The OOSI is an administrative watchdog of the Government, playing the oversight role of ensuring that the Government is fair when providing services to the people of the Solomon Islands.

The objective of the activities undertaken under the OCO-OOSI-LCC partnership is to strengthen the institutional capacity of integrity agencies in the Solomon Islands in carrying out standard functions, strategic planning, and organisational reform. Activities are entered into under Record of Understanding 14433 with OCO, which was signed on 10 November 2005 and remains extant. Objectives as set out in the ROU are as follows:

- (c) Creation of a sustainable institutional strengthening and capacity building relationship between the two ombudsman offices; and
- (d) Development of a mutually beneficial relationship to enhance ombudsman functions, including strengthening corporate governance and information systems, staff technical skills, staff knowledge and other areas that may be identified during the course of the relationship.

Australia provided much support to LCC and OOSI under RAMSI's accountability program (the Machinery of Government (MoG) pillar), which supported the revitalisation and strengthening of Solomon Islands' three accountability institutions: the LCC, the OOSI, and the Office of the Auditor General. A 2011-13 Accountability Program Implementation Strategy (APIS) was developed to guide AP activities and approaches through to June 2013. The APIS identified a range of jointly agreed institutional strengthening and capacity development initiatives for all three institutions, including support to strengthen data collection and case management, and the development of long-term institutional partnerships with national and regional accountability organisations.

With regards to OOSI, the APIS recommended immediately developing long-term institutional partnerships with appropriate Ombudsman offices in the region, to support sustainable institutional strengthening over the long-term. In March 2012, a pilot institutional twinning arrangement commenced between AusAID, RAMSI and the OCO, in support of OOSI, resulting in strong outcomes and the maturing of a mutually beneficial partnership between the institutions.

Subsequent arrangements were developed to align support within the broader architecture of the Solomon Islands Governance Program, with the aim of developing institutional partnerships with both national and regional accountability organisations over the longer term.

The twinning partnership agreement June 2018 to May 2019 totalled \$344,370 comprising funding for OCO staff to travel to Solomon Islands to deliver training and technical assistance, LCC



and OOSI staff to visit OCO, support to regional engagement, and various other activities with an accountability and anti-corruption focus. This arrangement followed on from an OCO regional program funded by DFAT Canberra, which ended on 30 June 2018, when OOSI began requesting further funding for a bilateral arrangement with DFAT.

SIG official interest in more flexible modalities going forward (including short-term TA and twinning arrangements), led to the Governance program using regional twinning and/or support arrangements in a more targeted way from 2018-19 with the signing of a new bilateral partnership agreement, to:

- advance activities and develop institutional relationships between SIG agencies and counterpart agencies in the region.
- strengthen the relationship between OCO, LCC and OOSI as peer organisations working on common issues; and
- link LCC and OOSI with similar organisations to facilitate the sharing of lessons and methods of overcoming identified challenges.

Funding for the program is channelled directly from DFAT to OCO for project activities. The twinning program supports the Governance program objective that *Government agencies support economic growth and service delivery*. A December 2019 [independent evaluation of the Solomon Islands Governance and Justice programs](#) confirmed the importance of twinning programs in contributing to achievement of this objective.

A second phase of twinning support which commenced in March 2020 (contract expiry 31 December 2021) continues to contribute to enabling OOSI and LCC to reduce barriers to service delivery stemming from poor public financial management and public service capacity. The most recent twinning programs' focus is on:

- Building on the collaboration between key accountability/integrity and public service agencies (including the Ministries of Education and Health) to improve service delivery and enhance public awareness and education on avenues to seek redress or report wrongdoing.
- Sharing best practice approaches, ensuring areas for improvements are acted upon, and intake, assessment, investigations, and case management functions are strengthened.
- Delivering trainings (including train the trainer) to enhance technical ability in agency functions and improve corporate capability in relation to strategic planning, communications, project management and procurement.

The Solomon Islands political environment continues to present challenges to major reform (both in public financial management, and public service performance). That said, there does remain a healthy appetite for reforms among the senior levels of the public service and an incremental approach to reform is pursued through the wider Governance program. The current program, which commenced in July 2017 and runs to December 2021 includes four components encompassing fiscal and socially responsible budgeting, professionalising public financial management for improved service delivery, and the fourth component - a more accountable public service and strengthening coalitions for reform. It is under this latter component that support for the OOSI and LCC sits. Component four focuses on engagement with non-state actors, and with accountability institutions within SIG, to support potential coalitions for reform.

Australia's investment in governance in the Solomon Islands has a long history of improving accountability - between bureaucrats and ministers, bureaucrats and citizens, politicians to citizens, and the Executive to the legislature, as well as providing Australia with influence and visibility of emerging issues that may concern SIG and/or the Australian Government. A new governance program will be designed in early 2022, with 'accountability' as its central tenet. The new design will incorporate both SIG and Australian Government priorities, in accordance with Australia's Partnerships for Recovery development strategy, the Solomon Islands COVID-19 Development Response Plan, the SIG National Development Strategy (NDS) (2016-2035).

Activities will focus on public sector reform (including public financial management and work force professionalisation and increasing the efficiency and transparency of SIGs human resource management cycle); economic management; and political representation (including electoral reform and support). The overarching goal of the program will be to work with SIG to imbed inclusive and accountable governance across and within central SIG ministries, and provincial authorities. In doing so, we will be supporting the mitigation of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Solomon Islands' economy, in accordance with the Solomon Islands COVID-19 Development Response Plan.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of reviewing Australia's investment in the partnership between OCO, LCC and OOSI is to:

- a. assess the twinning approach,
- b. identify the cumulative impact of support up to September 2021,
- c. consider the value of continued support of this type, and
- d. make recommendations for future programming.

In analysing impact, and to determine what the future program of work should or could look like, clearly summarising lessons learnt and articulating realistic recommendations will be critical.

The following questions can be used as a guide to this intent. They are indicative only - additional questions may be added as the Review process progresses. The consultant will determine more specific Review questions with the Australian High Commission (AHC) when developing the review plan.

- a. To what extent has the twinning approach adopted been effective in bringing in change (intended, unintended, positive, and negative) to the Solomon Islands integrity environment?
- b. To what extent is the Ombudsman Twinning program achieving impact?
  - i. What have been the key drivers of success over the course of the partnership??
  - ii. What have been the key challenges in achieving activities?
  - iii. What are the lessons learnt?
  - iv. Are the objectives as set out in the ROU met?
- c. What are your recommendations for a future program of support?
  - i. Does further investment align with the strategic objectives of Australia's aid program in the Solomon Islands in the COVID -context?

- ii. Does further investment align with SIG’s policy and reform agendas?
- iii. Within the context of Solomon Islands’ political economy, are the program objectives realistic, measurable, and capable of producing sustainable results?
  - 1. If not, how can they be improved?
- iv. What has been the impacts to the program of remote-working in a post COVID-19 environment – can the objectives still be achieved?
- d. Is the current level of monitoring, evaluation and reporting appropriate and fit-for-purpose?

### 3. Methodology

The AHC will engage a consultant to undertake the review.

The review process is expected to commence by 18 October 2021 with final report to be submitted to the Australian High Commission by 29 November 2021. This review will include:

- i. A briefing with DFAT
- ii. Review of relevant documents
- iii. remote consultations with stakeholders and
- iv. A briefing for DFAT on early findings prior to drafting the report.

Activity	Indicative due date / number of days
Document review	18 - 21 October 2021
DFAT briefing	27 October 2021
Review plan	22 October 2021
Remote consultations	25 - 29 October 2021
Briefing to DFAT (approximately 8 November 2021)	8 November 2021
Draft Review Report Writing (due OOB 15 November 2021)	15 November 2021
Final Review Report Writing (due 2 November 2021)	29 November 2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 days</b>

### 4. Expected Outputs

The consultant is expected to deliver the outputs below. All documents must be delivered to DFAT in electronic word format.

- a. **Review Plan** (no more than 2 pages, excluding attachments)
  - i. The review plan should:
    - describe the list of questions developed from the list of examples above;
    - outline the proposed data collection and analysis process/es,
    - lay out the proposed implementation and deliverables timeline.

- ii. A brief presentation of initial findings will be required prior to preparation of the draft Report.
- b. **Draft Independent Review Report** by OOB 15 November 2021 (approximately 15-20 pages excluding attachments; length to be determined between DFAT and consultant following document review). The report should:
  2. meet DFAT M&E Standards relevant to the size and scope of the review, address the Review questions and be targeted to the needs of the intended users.
  3. have a succinct and clear executive summary, which can be read as a stand-alone document. Key challenges and achievements should be clearly present in the executive summary, throughout the report and should be evidence-based.
  4. Contain practical and strategic conclusions and recommendations aimed at specific users of information and/or decision-makers; judgements should be clear and unambiguous.
- c. **Final Independent Review Report** by 29 November 2021 (approximately 15-20 pages excluding attachments)
  - i. The final report must incorporate AHC comments on the draft report
  - ii. The final report will be published on the DFAT website in line with the Transparency Charter.

DFAT (Honiara Post) will be responsible for providing background reading and contextual information and advice on the program, DFAT's policies and the types of recommendations that are feasible for DFAT, and approval of the final report.

## 5. Selection Criteria

- a. Reliable knowledge and understanding of governance in a Melanesian context, and understanding of, or experience working in, the Solomon Islands or similar operating context.
- b. Impact assessment and monitoring and evaluation skills from relevant technical, social, economic, and financial perspectives.
- c. Strong critical thinking, evaluation, analytical and research skills.
- d. Sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of development effectiveness.

## 6. Documents and Stakeholders

These documents will be provided to the consultant for review; other documents required can be requested from the AHC that are relevant to the Review process.

Stakeholders are many and varied – and others may become apparent through the process. DFAT Honiara post will be available via email and phone, or by more formal meeting by arrangement via email throughout the contract period as needed.

### Overarching documents

- November 2005 Record of Understanding AusAID-OCO
- [Solomon Islands COVID-19 Development Response Plan](#)

- 2013 (?) Proposal for long-term institutional partnership with the Commonwealth, Queensland, and Solomon Islands Ombudsmen's Offices
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Solomon Islands Ombudsman
- Solomon Islands national Development Strategy 2016-2035

#### **Program Reports:**

- Feb 2013- July 2013 Activity Report
- 2018-19 OCO End of Program Report
- June 2018-Nov 2018 Mid Program Report
- OCO emailed update reports
- Overarching Strategy: Supporting Stability in Solomon Islands through Governance, Policing and Justice programs (August 2016)
- Solomon Islands Governance Program Document, July 2017 to June 2021
- Independent Review of DFAT's Solomon Islands Economic and Public Sector Governance Program (SIGOV) Full Report, October 22, 2014
- May 2018 LCC and OCO Capability Assessments

#### **Activity Schedules to RoU No. 14433**

- Activity Schedule 7 (November 2009 – June 2013)
- Activity Schedule 11 (March 2012- June 2012)
- Activity Schedule 18 (Feb 2013 – June 2013)
- Activity Schedule 19 (Feb 2014 – Dec 2015)
- Activity Schedule 22 (June 2018 - May 2019)
- Activity Schedule 27 (XXX – October 2019)
- Activity Schedule 28 (November 2019 - June 2021)
- Activity Schedule 33 (March 2020 – Dec 2021)

#### **SIG documents**

- Office of the Ombudsman of Solomon Islands Corporate Plan 2018-2022
- Chapter from SI Constitution setting out the mandate/functions of LCC

#### **Stakeholders**

- Australian Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) International, Indigenous & Internal Projects Team
- Solomon Islands Office of the Ombudsman (OOSI)
  - Fred Fakarii, Ombudsman
    - [ffakarii@ombudsman.gov.sb](mailto:ffakarii@ombudsman.gov.sb)
- Leadership Code Commission (LCC)
  - Solomon Kalu – LCC Chairman
    - +677 24860/21063
    - +677 7821667
    - [skalu@lcc.gov.sb](mailto:skalu@lcc.gov.sb); [skalumai@gmail.com](mailto:skalumai@gmail.com)
- OAG (Office of the Auditor General)
  - New Auditor General, David Dennis
    - [ddennis@oag.gov.sb](mailto:ddennis@oag.gov.sb)
  - Deputy Auditor General Rachel McKechnie
    - [rmckechnie@oag.gov.sb](mailto:rmckechnie@oag.gov.sb)
    - +677 28886; +677 7323301
- Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

- Philip Manakako, anti-corruption secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Manakako's role is focused on monitoring and supporting the establishment of the Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (SIICAC))
  - [pmanakako@siicac.gov.sb](mailto:pmanakako@siicac.gov.sb)
- Anti-Corruption Commission
- MASI (Media Association of Solomon Islands).
  - Including veteran local journalist Dorothy Wickham of Melanesian News Network, and other MASI executive members.
- SICCI (Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce)
  - Particularly Solbrew Corporate Affairs Manager, Qila Tuhanuku, as well as other SICCI board members
- Australia Solomon Islands Governance Program colleagues (ASIGP).
  - Particularly Governance Program Coordinator, Brian Lenga (long observer of the integrity institutions, both in his current role, and previous roles with RAMSI).
- CGGM (Community Governance and Grievance Management Project)
  - Contact Ali Tuhanuku, a consultant (funded through Australia Solomon Islands Justice Program ASIJP) currently assisting with oversight and implementation of the CGGM project as it transitions from World Bank to Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening.

## Annex 2: Schedule of Interviews

Name	Organization	Date
<b>Nalini Baker and Team</b>	Acting Director – Policy, Investigations, Projects and International Team, Australian Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO).	4/11/2021
<b>Fred Fakarii</b>	Ombudsman, Solomon Islands Office of the Ombudsman (OOSI).	27/10/2021
<b>Solomon Kalu</b>	Chairman, Leadership Code Commission (LCC).	27/10/2021
<b>David Dennis</b>	Auditor General, OAG (Office of the Auditor General).	29/10/2021
<b>Zabeta Moutafis</b>	First Secretary, Australian High Commission Honiara. Solomon Islands.	Several meetings
<b>Rebecca Hamilton</b>	Program Design, Australia Solomon Islands Governance and Justice Programs.	Several meetings
<b>Rachel McKechnie</b>	Deputy Auditor General, OAG (Office of the Auditor General).	29/10/2021
<b>Philip Manakako</b>	Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), Anti-corruption secretary focused on monitoring and supporting the establishment of the Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (SIICAC).	2/11/2021
<b>Dorothy Wickham</b>	MASI (Media Association of Solomon Islands).	1/11/2021
<b>Qila Tuhanku</b>	Solbrew Corporate Affairs Manager and Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce member.	29/10/2021
<b>Brian Lenga</b>	Australia Solomon Islands Governance Program (ASIGP).	4/11/2021
<b>Ali Tuhanku</b>	Community Governance and Grievance Management Project (CGGM).	2/11/2021

Name	Organization	Date
<b>Graham Teskey</b>	Team Leader for the Justice and Governance Programs Review.	28/10/2021
<b>Vardon Hoca</b>	UNDP Governance Program Manager.	1/11/2021
<b>Lisa Cleary</b>	Cardno Program manager for Solomon Islands Governance program.	4/11/2021