

AFP-DFAT Management Response: Mid-Term Review of the Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program

Purpose:

The Government of Australia, through DFAT, commissioned a mid-term review (MTR) of the Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program Phase 2 (VAPJP) in mid-2023. The MTR served three key purposes:

1. provide stakeholders with an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's current contribution to the policing and justice sectors in Vanuatu.
2. identify lessons to improve implementation of the current investment.
3. inform decision-making on priorities, adjustments and the implementation modality for Australia's next phase of support to Vanuatu's policing and justice sector.

Phase 2 of VAPJP is a four-year program (2020-2024), implemented in partnership with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), that aims to support Vanuatu's police force, justice and community service agencies and targeted non-state actors to provide fair, equitable and quality services that meet the needs of the community. The MTR was delayed by twin Category-4 cyclones in 2023 and difficulties in procuring a team that could mobilise within the planned timeframe.

Summary of the review:

Overall, the MTR concluded that VAPJP had responded well to an extremely challenging and volatile context through flexible and adaptive program management. The program has been effective in responding to the evolving needs of the Vanuatu Government but has faced challenges in demonstrating long-term impact. The report provides some useful recommendations on how the program could improve effectiveness and visibility of outcomes, adjust implementation modalities to address issues identified in the review and consider priorities for Australia's next phase of support to Vanuatu's policing and justice sector.

Response to the review:

DFAT and AFP welcome the findings and recommendations made by the mid-term review. These findings will inform and guide DFAT and AFP's future support to the policing and justice sector in Vanuatu through a third phase of the Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program.

The MTR made 14 recommendations. DFAT and AFP agreed with 11 recommendations and partially agreed with three recommendations.

More detailed responses to each recommendation are included in the table below.

Detailed management response to the recommendations:

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
1	<p>The justice stream of VAPJP should strengthen effectiveness by focusing on the ‘core business’ expressed in EOPO1 of improving the quality and reach of justice services, particularly for vulnerable women, children, youth and people with disability. This will require a concerted effort to strengthen visibility around outcomes and quality of results.</p>	Agree	<p>VAPJP works closely with the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) to meet its priorities for justice services, within the agreed scope and towards the agreed EOPOs of the program. The justice sector in Vanuatu is diverse and priorities have evolved over the course of the program, necessitating an adaptive approach to achieving EOPOs.</p>	<p>DFAT and VAPJP will review the 2024 Annual Work Plan (AWP) to ensure that all remaining activities are aligned to EOPOs.</p> <p>DFAT will liaise with Vanuatu Government partners to ensure they are supportive of any changes to the AWP.</p> <p>DFAT will ensure the design of Phase 3 has a clear Theory of Change focused on aligning activities with EOPOs, while maintaining capacity for operational responsiveness.</p> <p>DFAT, AFP and VAPJP will use the existing reporting framework, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan and Communications Plan to strengthen visibility of outcomes in the final year of the program.</p> <p>DFAT will ensure that an effective reporting framework, MEL Plan and Communications Plan are developed early in Phase 3 to help ensure the full impact of activities is captured.</p>	Q3 – Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
2	<p>The policing stream does not need to significantly change its current focus, although it also requires a concerted effort to strengthen visibility around outcomes and quality of results. The policing stream should maintain its EOPO1 focus of improving the quality and reach of justice services, particularly for vulnerable women, children, youth and people with disability.</p>	Partially agree	<p>The policing stream is delivering strong outputs, evidenced by positive feedback from GoV counterparts. The policing stream should remain focused on core business, but also needs to maintain the capability to respond to emerging VPF priorities and challenges, such as cybercrime.</p>	<p>DFAT, in collaboration with AFP, will ensure the design of Phase 3 has a clear Theory of Change focused on aligning activities with EOPOs, while maintaining capacity for operational responsiveness.</p> <p>DFAT, AFP and VAPJP will use the existing reporting framework, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan and Communications Plan to strengthen visibility of outcomes in the final year of the program.</p> <p>DFAT, in collaboration with AFP, will ensure that an effective reporting framework, MEL Plan and Communications Plan are developed early in Phase 3 to help ensure the full impact of activities is captured.</p>	Q3 – Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
3	VAPJP should revisit earlier program approaches to capacity building and its measurement, modified to reflect current program circumstances. Consideration should also be given to developing a Theory of Change during the forthcoming design process that may also be of utility to the existing program.	Agree	VAPJP has faced challenges in demonstrating the long-term impact of its capacity building and behaviour change activities. This is in part due to the lack of a Theory of Change that would support a clear understanding of progress towards EOPOs.	VAPJP developed a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan in 2023 to support outcome reporting. DFAT will ensure the design of Phase 3 has a clear Theory of Change, and a MEL Plan that supports measurement of capacity building impact where appropriate. In considering approaches to capacity building and its measurement, DFAT will also ensure the design of Phase 3 integrates findings from the Program's training evaluation in Q2/Q3 2024.	Q3 – Q4 2024
4	Both the justice and policing streams of VAPJP should prioritise sustainability and exit planning for all activities, so that benefits outlast the program. With participation and input from counterparts across the program, VAPJP should develop a sustainability plan that reflects output and IO targets for the end of program, and identifies expected support required to maintain progress or protect changes already achieved.	Agree	Sustainability is particularly important as we approach the end of the current phase of the program, to ensure that the gains made in this phase are maintained.	VAPJP will develop a Sustainability Plan in the Completion Report that will inform the Phase 3 design.	Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
5	The policing stream should consider four key changes to make police training more sustainable and improve ownership. These are deploying an AFP adviser with a policing education background (rather than a community policing background), a greater emphasis on utilising a Train the Trainer approach, prioritising trainings and curriculum development in Bislama, and where possible decentralising training which will encourage more female officers to undertake training.	Agree	These four different recommendations relate to the principles of sustainability, relevance, and efficiency of training delivered under the program.	AFP will continue to seize opportunities to strengthen sustainability, relevance, and efficiency in program delivery, including building on existing efforts to deliver train the trainer courses, consider increased decentralised training, development of training in Bislama, and assessing the advisor footprint in consultation with the VPF as part of the Phase 3 design.	Q2 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
6	VAPJP reporting should be improved and rationalised to meet DFAT and AFP strategic requirements, as well as inform adaptive programming across VAPJP.	Agree	There is scope to streamline and improve VAPJP progress reporting. The absence of a Theory of Change or specific targets has caused challenges to demonstrating progress towards EOPOs.	<p>DFAT and AFP will explore opportunities to align reporting requirements and communicate to VAPJP.</p> <p>DFAT, AFP and VAPJP will agree to practicable reporting requirements for remaining program reports (including consideration of a PowerPoint rather than written six-monthly Progress Report, see also Recommendation 14).</p> <p>DFAT will ensure the design for Phase 3 has a clear Theory of Change, and a MEL Plan that supports targeted, fit-for-purpose reporting with clear templates and guidance.</p>	Q3 – Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
7	VAPJP, DFAT and AFP should support the transition to the new PC-P, with a view to maintaining and enhancing systems and processes for collaboration and joint outcomes across the Justice and Policing sector through strong communications, and recognition of shared goals and mutual accountability. Consideration could be given to engaging a Partnership Broker to assist with establishing this relationship from the outset.	Partially agree	<p>The MTR found that much of the success of the policing side of the program was attributed to the AFP Program Coordinator – Policing who completed their posting in January 2024. It was also found that the relationships between the PC-P, PC-J, DFAT and the managing contractor had supported strong delivery. A new PC-P commenced in late January 2024 and the transition so far has been smooth with a strong focus on partnership and collaboration.</p> <p>The PC-P/ PC-J/DFAT relationships are strong and effective; DFAT and AFP’s view is that a Partnership Broker is not required.</p>	<p>DFAT, AFP and VAPJP have recognised the importance of the PC-P position and prioritised a quick transition to the new PC-P with strong support and engagement with GoV.</p> <p>DFAT and VAPJP will review operational systems, resourcing and reporting alignment through the Phase 3 design process, identifying improvements and efficiencies where possible.</p>	Q2 – Q4 2024
8	Management and advisers from the justice stream of VAPJP should work collaboratively, to build a positive workplace environment that facilitates understanding and recognition of advisers’ contributions and challenges, and where possible increases connections between agencies.	Agree	DFAT agrees that the behaviours and principles outlined in this Recommendation should be integrated into the role requirements and expectations of advisers and the duty-of-care responsibilities of Managers.	<p>Deputised management support was put in place in Q3 2023 to add daily oversight and support to Justice Technical Advisers (two agency based and one cross sector).</p> <p>DFAT, AFP and VAPJP will work together to strengthen communication within and between agencies and enhance connections.</p>	2023 Q3 – Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
9	DFAT and VAPJP should review budget allocations to ensure sufficient funding for community-facing activities to strengthen prevention and responsive services to violence against women and children, and people with disabilities that align with best practice and Do No Harm principles. This applies to both the FPU in the policing stream and the CA2J activities in the justice stream.	Partially agree	The program design includes a community grants mechanism. However, this mechanism was deprioritised during implementation in favour of other program mechanisms responding to GoV priorities.	DFAT will ensure the design of Phase 3 considers the shape, scope and size of the community-facing component of the program aligned to the priorities of GoV.	Q3 – Q4 2024
10	VAPJP and the managing contractor, in close collaboration with the AFP, should increase efficiency by updating logistics and procurement procedures, and improving resourcing for administrative and reporting support for AFP advisers, that currently take time of technical specialists away from delivering expert support and services. Delegations of authority can be reviewed in the new design.	Agree	The MTR reported that policing advisers were spending considerable time on reporting, administration and logistics, diminishing their capacity to perform their core function. Currently 2.0 FTE LES are dedicated to finance and administration for policing with 3.0 cross-sector LES also supporting in ICT, infrastructure and logistics.	DFAT and AFP will review support requirements as part of the Phase 3 design, including the feasibility of centralised administrative support for both justice and policing advisers.	Q3 – Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
11	As infrastructure and provision of assets will remain a significant element of VAPJP, the program should continue to promote disability inclusion in designs, and planning for adequate utilisation, management and maintenance of assets and infrastructure developed.	Agree	DFAT supports the Recommendation and will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen social and disability inclusion in all program implementation and future design activities.	VAPJP is currently fully compliant with DFAT's disability accessibility standards for all VAPJP-supported new infrastructure. VAPJP will support the Vanuatu government's policing and justice infrastructure working groups to ensure that they adequately consult people with disability, and other groups such as women and children as appropriate, in their designs and buildings, in line with Vanuatu standards.	Ongoing
12	Given the stated strategic importance of the VAPJP program, DFAT should apply significantly more resourcing at Post to management and oversight of the Program.	Agree	At the time of the MTR in country mission, due to broader resourcing constraints across Post, 1.75 FTE LES were committed to managing the program, reporting directly to the High Commissioner.	VAPJP now falls under the oversight of the new Political Counsellor, supported by a new First Secretary (Development), which is providing improved oversight of the program. LES resourcing has also increased to 2 FTE. Appropriate levels of support will be considered in the design of Phase 3.	Completed.

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
13	Given the frequency and severity of natural disasters, VAPJP should continue to work with partner agencies on practical disaster risk reduction, and ‘chain-of-justice’ preparedness, including response and recovery, as well as responding to disasters in a coordinated fashion with the relevant GoV agencies.	Agree	Vanuatu experiences a high frequency of natural disasters which disrupt service delivery across government. In 2023 alone, Vanuatu experienced three Tropical Cyclones of Category 4 or above (Judy, Kevin and Lola). VAPJP supports GoV to recover from disasters and improve planning to ensure continued service delivery.	<p>DFAT and VAPJP will build on the recommendations of VAPJP supported research, conducted in partnership with Vanuatu’s Ministry of Justice and Community Services, to support improved disaster preparedness within the justice sector.</p> <p>DFAT will ensure that disaster preparedness across the policing and justice sector is a focus of the Phase 3 design to continue the good work completed to date.</p>	Q2 – Q4 2024

No.	Recommendation from the mid-term review	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
14	There are a number of areas that warrant further attention at the design stage, which will overlap with the final year of the program. These include the multi-agency work being carried out on Epi to determine its strengths and challenges, and to what extent it can be used as a model in the future. It also includes coordination with other donors, the best model for achieving joined-up outcomes for prevention and response to VAWC, the best mechanism for ensuring responsiveness to natural disasters, the suitability of including Corrections in a future iteration of the program, and whether a six-monthly PowerPoint, instead of written reporting would serve the interests of DFAT, AFP and VAPJP.	Agree	DFAT accepts the remaining program priorities identified in the Recommendation for consideration in the remainder of the program or in the design of Phase 3.	<p>DFAT will ensure that areas identified are included in Phase 3 design considerations.</p> <p>DFAT will document Australian Government investments (bilateral, regional and multilateral) across the justice sector in Vanuatu and support Program connections with these initiatives.</p> <p>DFAT and VAPJP will review operational systems, resourcing and reporting alignment to identify improvements and efficiencies where possible.</p>	Q3 – Q4 2024