



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY REPORT 2020

PACIFIC ISLANDS LAW OFFICERS' NETWORK
39th ANNUAL MEETING
5 NOVEMBER 2020

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This report focuses on Australian developments in PILON's three priority areas—namely, cybercrime, corruption and sexual and gender based violence—from October 2019 to September 2020. The report also considers significant issues relating to the law and justice sector, and technical assistance. Hyperlinks are provided to key legislation, reports and policy documents.

Australia has a federal constitutional system in which legislative, executive and judicial powers are distributed between the Australian Government, six state governments, and the governments of two self-governing territories. All references to 'the Government' are to the Australian Government, unless stated otherwise.

1. PILON and its strategic priorities

(a) Cybercrime

COVID-19 has seen a dramatic rise in malicious cyber actors actively targeting individuals and Australian organisations with COVID-19 related scams and phishing emails. Cybercrime actors are pivoting their online criminal methods to exploit people's concerns and desire for information about the pandemic by directing them towards websites designed to either install malicious software or steal personal information. Between March 2020 and the COVID-19 threat update provided by the [Australian Cyber Security Centre](#) (ACSC) on 20 April 2020, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Scamwatch received over 1,100 reports about COVID-19 scams, with almost \$130,000 in reported losses. The ACSC received over 115 cybercrime and cyber security incident reports from individuals and businesses. These are reported figures only, with the actual number expected to have been much higher.

Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020

On 6 August 2020, the Government released [Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020](#). Through this strategy the Government will invest \$1.67 billion over 10 years to create a more secure online world for Australians, their businesses and the essential services upon which we all depend. The Strategy will be delivered through action by: the Government to strengthen the protection of Australians, businesses and critical infrastructure from the most sophisticated threats; businesses to secure their products and services, and protect their customers from known cyber vulnerabilities; and the community to practice secure online behaviours and make informed purchasing decisions.

Joint Cyber Security Centre (JCSC) Program

The [JCSC Program](#) supports Australia's cyber security through collaboration and information sharing between government, industry, academia and the not-for-profit sector on best-practice ways to prepare for, and respond to, cyber security threats. JCSCs have been established in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth and play a major role in keeping Australia prepared for, and safe from, malicious cyber activity.

As a result of COVID-19, the JCSCs physically closed to ACSC partners and transitioned to the delivery of virtual events and information-sharing, using video conferencing and the collaboration platform 'Slack'. The JCSCs have delivered 62 virtual events in 2020, continuing collaboration between partners, including those working from home.

In April 2020, the Melbourne JCSC, in conjunction with NBN Co, established a monthly, virtual threat intelligence forum for partners with a large industry, critical infrastructure focus on threats relating to COVID-19 and Australia's large-scale shift to remote working. This forum aims to improve situational awareness of the threat landscape through organisational observations and intelligence.

Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSON)

[PaCSON](#) is a network of Pacific government-designated cyber security incident response officials, funded through DFAT's Cyber Cooperation Program, as part of Australia's [International Cyber Engagement Strategy](#). Its membership includes 16 countries: Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Its Executive Committee includes Samoa as Chair, Vanuatu as Deputy Chair, and Tonga as Incoming Chair.

PaCSON improves cyber security capabilities and readiness across the Pacific through cooperation and collaboration among those responsible for coordinating national responses to cyber security incidents. PaCSON works closely with Pacific stakeholders who share the objective of an open, free and secure internet:

- acting as a point of contact network should a cyber security incident affect the region
- empowering members and partners to share cyber security threat information
- providing opportunities for technical experts to share tools, techniques and ideas, and
- enabling cooperation and collaboration within the Pacific's cyber security community.

Most PaCSON activities are virtual, with members engaging regularly by virtual correspondence and video conference. Following COVID-19, PaCSON has increased its virtual engagements, including through its June 2020 launch of the PaCSON Remote Session series. The series allows PaCSON members and guests to engage with expert trainers and industry leaders on topics relevant to improving the Pacific's cyber security posture. As of September 2020, the series has been attended by 192 participants from 16 economies. Topics included: lessons learned on Engagement, led by CERT NZ; an Emotet Workshop with CERT Tonga, and Suricata Open Source Intrusion Detection System training with APINIC.

Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention

Australia supports, and is actively participating in negotiations of, the [Second Additional Protocol on Transborder Access to Data](#) (Second Additional Protocol), which aims to modernise the [Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime](#) (Budapest Convention) to respond to the changing communications environment and increasing global reliance on cloud computing, including to support international crime cooperation. Australia has advocated for the Pacific context to be considered in its development, and works with countries in the region (including through PILON) interested in acceding to the Budapest Convention by providing subject matter expertise to support the required legislative reform.

Telecommunications Sector Reforms

The [Telecommunications Legislation Amendment \(International Production Orders\) Bill 2020](#) was introduced into Parliament on 5 March 2020. Once passed, it will create a framework to facilitate streamlined access to electronic communications data for criminal law enforcement and national security purposes. The bill creates a new 'international production order' regime to support cross-border access to data between countries with which Australia has entered into a designated international agreement.

Australia is finalising negotiations on its first such agreement with the United States under the [Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act 2018 \(US\)](#) (Agreement). Once in force, the Agreement will allow Australian authorities to directly approach US-based communications service providers such as Facebook, Microsoft and Google for communications data, including content data held by those providers. The Agreement will also allow US authorities reciprocal access to data held by Australian based providers. This work strengthens Australia's bilateral relationship with an important international crime cooperation partner and enhances Australia's legal framework for international crime cooperation. Ultimately, the Agreement will contribute to criminals and suspected terrorists facing justice, making the Australian community safer.

(b) Corruption

Globally, the easing of compliance, oversight and accountability safeguards to facilitate rapid COVID-19 response mechanisms is creating opportunities for corruption to thrive. Corruption undermines the rule of law and has a profound impact on those most vulnerable in our societies, by diverting resources away from where they are needed the most. This has an even more significant impact when countries are facing economic crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Corruption can also undermine COVID-19 recovery efforts by skewing the fair pricing of essential goods and medical supplies and facilitating the sale of faulty products or treatments, producing direct threats to health.

At the Commonwealth level, Australia has a multi-agency approach to combatting corruption, under which a range of government institutions have specialised roles and responsibilities in deterring, detecting and responding to corruption. The Australian Attorney-General's Department (AGD) oversees and coordinates the implementation of domestic anti-corruption policies and programs across Government. It also leads Australia's engagement in these international anti-corruption fora: the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group, the APEC Anti-Corruption and Transparency Experts' Working Group, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions.

Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre (CFPC)

The CFPC strengthens whole-of-government counter-fraud activities, partnering with government, non-government and international experts to:

- identify and trial better-practice approaches to mitigate fraud vulnerabilities;
- reduce barriers to effective fraud prevention, including information sharing; and
- support agencies to design fraud resistant policies and programs.

The [CFPC's dedicated website on countering fraud](#) has tools, resources and guidance materials to support Commonwealth entities to identify, prevent and manage fraud.

Between March and June 2020, the CFPC and Australian Federal Police (AFP) established a temporary COVID-19 Counter Fraud Taskforce under Operation Ashiba to tackle fraud against COVID-19 economic stimulus measures through advice, guidance and information and intelligence sharing. The CFPC continues to support its Commonwealth partners to improve fraud prevention capability by undertaking fraud risk assessments, supporting pilot projects involving data sharing for integrity purposes, disseminating guidance and tools for policy designers and undertaking pressure testing to strengthen fraud controls.

Combatting bribery in international business transactions

The [Crimes Legislation Amendment \(Combatting Corporate Crime\) Bill 2019](#), currently before Parliament, contains measures to reform criminal offences for bribery of a foreign public official, implement a Commonwealth Deferred Prosecution Agreement scheme for corporate offences and update the definition of dishonesty in the Commonwealth Criminal Code. The bill will enhance the tools available to law enforcement and prosecutors to tackle corporate crime.

Australia submitted its follow-up [report](#) to the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions (WGB) in December 2019. The report outlined Australia's efforts to strengthen enforcement of the foreign bribery offence and implement the 13 recommendations identified during Australia's Phase 4 evaluation.

Australia's work to strengthen enforcement and address WGB recommendations demonstrates its commitment to multilateral cooperation in the fight against transnational economic crime and to accountability through peer monitoring and follow-up. The implementation of WGB recommendations promotes ethical business practices by bolstering Australia's efforts to combat bribery in international business transactions, and promotes good governance and economic development worldwide.

Enhancing Transparency and Countering Foreign Interference

Australia's [Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme](#) provides visibility of activities being undertaken in Australia, on behalf of foreign principals, to influence Government and political processes. The timely publication of registrations assists the public and decision-makers with visibility of such activities, at the time they are being undertaken. In 2019–20, the Government upgraded its [online register](#) and developed a portal through which all registration requests are received, with data to provide statistics on the timing for publication of registrations.

Public-sector whistleblowing

Australia's [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013](#) (PID Act) enables public officials to disclose suspected wrongdoing in the Commonwealth public sector. Disclosures can relate to a range of misconduct, including contraventions of laws, abuse of public trust, fraud and corruption. The Attorney-General is currently progressing the Government response to the 2016 independent statutory review of the PID Act ([The Moss Review](#)), which made recommendations to ensure the public sector whistleblower scheme is effective and supports public servants who identify wrongdoing and misconduct. Recommendations include strengthening the oversight functions of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, strengthening support for whistleblowers, and improving the capacity of agencies to deal with disclosures.

Commonwealth Integrity Commission

Work is underway to establish a [Commonwealth Integrity Commission](#) (CIC) to enhance integrity arrangements across the federal public sector. The CIC will be an independent statutory agency, led by a commissioner and two deputy commissioners with public sector integrity and law enforcement integrity divisions. The CIC will provide expert capability to investigate allegations of serious criminal corruption in the public sector. The Government is consulting widely to ensure the CIC's model strengthens federal integrity arrangements and avoids duplicating existing roles.

(c) Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

During the COVID-19 pandemic, data emerging from frontline services indicate a sharp increase worldwide in the incidence of all types of violence against women and girls, particularly family violence. This 'shadow pandemic' resulting from the billions of people across the world sheltering at home, often in crowded conditions and with families that are stressed by health, security and money concerns, is placing a strain on the already stretched frontline resources of government, police, health and the justice system.

It is not only violence within the home that has increased during COVID-19, the increased use of the internet for activities such as work, study and socialising has led to greater instances of online harassment, bullying, unwanted sexual advances and trolling. Data from law enforcement sources has also identified a sharp increase in the number of people seeking to access child sexual abuse material online. As children increasingly use online platforms to engage in study and social activity the risk of being exposed to exploitation and grooming behaviour also increases. The Government has committed additional funding to support frontline services for women and children experiencing family violence and mental health services for all to address the rise in these issues during the pandemic.

Women's Economic Security Package

The [2018 Women's Economic Security Package](#) expands legal and social support services to people experiencing family violence and provides services to help families resolve family law disputes. In January 2020, the Government commenced a \$10.3 million, two-year trial of legal aid commissions conducting lawyer-assisted mediation for clients with small property pools (up to \$500,000); and a \$5.9 million, two-year trial of simpler and faster court processes in four Federal Circuit Court locations to resolve family law property cases for small property pools.

In 2019–20, Australia implemented other measures to address the effects of family violence, including funding for specialist domestic violence units and health justice partnerships, and for integrated financial support services, such as financial counselling and financial literacy services. Financial support services in areas of high need across Australia support women in, or leaving, violent relationships with information and skills to achieve greater economic security. A new Women's Economic Security Statement is due to be announced in late 2020.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022

The Council of Australian Governments endorsed the [Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022](#), agreeing on five national priorities to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence. Under the Fourth Plan, the Government is providing funding to enhance information sharing between the family law, family violence and child protection systems to assist courts to receive timely and relevant information to identify and mitigate risks to family safety.

Family Law Reform

In 2019, the [Australian Law Reform Commission's review of the family law system](#) delivered 60 recommendations for family law reforms to meet the contemporary needs of families. The Government is carefully considering the recommendations, which largely focus on the legislation governing family law. On 17 September 2019, the Australian Parliament's [Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System](#) was formed with [these terms of reference](#). As of 10 September 2020, the Committee had received [over 1,600 submissions](#). It is due to report in February 2021.

The [National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems](#) is being developed for final consideration by ministers at the end of 2020. It seeks to facilitate the two-way exchange of information between family law courts and the state/territory courts, as well as the agencies and organisations responsible for, or holding, information relevant to responding to and managing family safety risk.

In late 2020, a pilot will commence in the Federal family law courts for a systematic approach to identify and manage family safety risks. The pilot will involve screening new parenting matters for family safety risks when filed in the court. Matters will be triaged to appropriate case management based on the identified level of risk. Additional support will be provided to at-risk parties. A specialist family violence list (the Evatt List) will be established to resolve high-risk matters quickly and safely.

Combatting child sexual abuse

Australia has strengthened its legislative response to child sexual abuse in 2020, The Commonwealth *Criminal Code* contains offences criminalising child sexual abuse and dealings with child abuse material, including offences committed in Australia, online and by Australians overseas. Commonwealth law also prohibits the import and export of child abuse material and restricts registered child sex offenders' ability to depart Australia without permission. In March 2020, new provisions introduced in the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) came into force which made it an offence for certain Commonwealth officers with responsibility for children to fail to take action to protect those children from sexual abuse or report a child sexual abuse offence.

On 22 June 2020, the [Crimes Legislation Amendment \(Sexual Crimes Against Children and Community Protection Measures\) Act 2020](#) also came into force, further strengthening Australia's response to child sexual abuse. The Act introduced new offences for: grooming a third party (such as parent or carer) to make it easier to procure a child for sexual activity; and for conduct to facilitate dealings with child abuse material through an electronic service, such as creating a website or chat forum. The Act also increases maximum penalties for more serious child sex offences and introduces mandatory minimum penalties for the most serious and repeated child sex offences. These reforms respond to recommendations from the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, trends in offending behaviour and challenges faced by law enforcement and prosecutors in securing sentences that are commensurate with the gravity of offending and harm to victims.

Child sexual abuse, including the sharing of child abuse material online, is a transnational crime that demands a collective response from government and non-government stakeholders. Australia continues to work with its international partners to strengthen the global response to child sexual abuse. On 5 March 2020, Ministers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America jointly launched the Five Country Ministerial [Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), developed by the Five Countries in collaboration with Facebook, Google, Snap, Roblox, Microsoft and Twitter to provide a framework for collective industry action to combat online child sexual abuse. The [WePROTECT Global Alliance](#) is promoting and supporting global adoption of the principles.

The [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse delivered 409 recommendations for reforms to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions](#). Progress has been made to address the recommendations and bring about the cultural change and awareness required in Australian society to keep all children safe. The Government will deliver five annual reports until December 2022 outlining progress on 206 recommendations directed wholly or partially at the Government. On 13 December 2019, it tabled the second [Annual Progress Report 2019: Implementation of recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#).

Forced marriage and human trafficking

Australian law recognises forced marriage as a slavery-like practice because it robs its victims of their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights and freedoms. Forced marriage is also a complex form of family and gender-based violence and disproportionately impacts women and girls. Reports of forced marriage to the AFP represent more than 40% of all reports of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices.

Since October 2019, the Government has strengthened its response to forced marriage by amending Australia's forced marriage offences through the [Combatting Child Sexual Exploitation Legislation Amendment Act 2019](#) to expand the definition of forced marriage to capture all marriages involving children under the age of 16, and establish an ongoing dedicated support stream for forced marriage victims under the [Government's Support for Trafficked People Program](#). The Government is also developing and will implement new initiatives to address forced marriage under [Australia's next five-year National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25](#), which will be finalised in late 2020.

2. Significant issues (including COVID-19) and recent law and justice sector initiatives

AGD Incident Management Team – Continuing operations during COVID-19

On 12 March 2020, AGD's Incident Management Team was stood up to manage the department's response to COVID-19. The Pandemic transformed AGD's operating environment and presented a series of complex and unique challenges. Over more than 50 meetings, the team managed a vast range of issues, from the impact of school and border closures, to the procurement of information technology equipment and face masks, and the rapid shift to home-based work. Recognising COVID-19's impact on staff wellbeing and mental health, the team facilitated tailored training, tools and resources for staff.

The team also guided AGD's contribution to the [Australian Public Service response to the pandemic through staff redeployments](#) following the increased demand for Government services during the pandemic. Staff are now gradually safely transitioning back to their usual workplaces under AGD's COVIDSafe Transition Plan.

Protecting data acquired by the COVIDSafe app to support contact tracing

AGD assisted the development of the [privacy-by-design protections and safeguards for the COVIDSafe app](#) to support health authorities' contact tracing processes and interim privacy protections and safeguards under a *Biosecurity Act 2015* determination. AGD later incorporated and enhanced these safeguards in primary legislation through amendments to the [Privacy Act 1988 which came into effect on 15 May 2020](#).

It is a criminal offence to collect, use or disclose COVIDSafe app data for a purpose that is not related to contact tracing. It is also a criminal offence to require a person to use the app, to store or transfer COVIDSafe app data to a country outside Australia and to decrypt app data on users' devices. A maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment or \$63,000 applies to breaches. In addition, the *Privacy Act 1988* amendments create a process outlining how the Government will satisfy its obligation to delete all COVIDSafe data from the National COVIDSafe Data Store once the pandemic is over, with oversight by the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#).

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

The [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#) released its [Interim Report on 31 October 2019](#). Commissioners found the aged care system fails to meet the needs of its older, vulnerable, citizens, and identified three areas for immediate action to reduce the waiting list for higher level care at home; respond to the significant over-reliance on chemical restraint, and stop the flow of younger people with a disability going into aged care, and speed up the process of removing young people already in aged care.

As at 15 September 2020, [604 Australians have died after contracting COVID-19 in aged care, with 574 of those deaths occurring in Victoria](#). The Royal Commission conducted hearings on the response to COVID-19 in aged care, and will provide a final report by 26 February 2021. The [Australian Senate has also established a Select Committee on COVID-19](#) to examine the Government's response to the pandemic, including its impact on those in aged care.

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

The [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#) reflects the Government's commitment to address violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability. The Royal Commission has published [two progress reports](#) and released a [Statement of Concern](#), calling on the Government to ensure its response to COVID-19 includes measures to protect people with disability. The Royal Commission will provide an interim report to Parliament by 30 October 2020 and a final report by 29 April 2022.

The Impacts of COVID-19 on Human Trafficking, Slavery and Slavery-like Practices

The health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are exposing new and heightened risks of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like-practices, increasing challenges for frontline responders to identify and support victims. In response, the Government is adapting its procedures and processes to ensure human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices continue to be investigated and prosecuted; working closely with community organisations, frontline officials and businesses to help them understand and respond to modern slavery risks arising from COVID-19; increasing funding to the [Government's Support for Trafficked People Program](#) for flexible and extended support to victims in Australia, and amending visa arrangements for foreign nationals unable to return home to remain lawfully in Australia.

3. Technical legal assistance

PILON

Following the onset of COVID-19, Australia has been mindful of respecting our Pacific partners' changing priorities while remaining ready to assist. COVID-19 caused the cancellation of workshops and in-country visits from March 2020 onwards. With a strong preference put forward by Pacific partners to undertake virtual meetings, AGD supported PILON to pivot its existing work plan to move to virtual delivery options in 2020-21. The Department also supported the creation of virtual resources to facilitate online learning, including the redevelopment of the [PILON website](#) to provide up-to-date resources for members. This work has supported continued collaboration, coordination and cooperation between Pacific law and justice agencies to progress regional law and justice priorities.

AGD also supported PILON's working groups on their respective priorities of cybercrime, corruption and sexual and gender-based violence, including the launch of two new resources: a [framework for prosecuting corruption in the Pacific](#) and [model provisions to incorporate special measures for enabling vulnerable witnesses to give evidence during the prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence offences](#). Two additional resources will be launched at the Annual Meeting: [AGD's Pacific Toolkit: From policy to legislation](#) and the [PILON Mutual Assistance Handbook: Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence](#).

Legal policy development and law reform capacity

In June 2020, AGD's Pacific Law and Justice Program adopted a revised overarching goal to strengthen legal systems, contributing to effective governance in a stable, prosperous, resilient Pacific in the wake of COVID-19. Work is underway to pilot the remote delivery of AGD's flagship legal policy program, the AGD Pacific Legal Policy Twinning Program in 2021.

Prior to COVID-19, in 2019–20, AGD trained and mentored 122 Pacific law and justice officials (75 female, 47 male) on legal policy, law reform and other legal capabilities (including planning for implementation) as well as substantive legal areas for reform. In October 2019, AGD held the Twinning Program and the Policy Champions Program, hosting Twinning participants from Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and PNG.

AGD also worked bilaterally with seven Pacific-region countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, PNG, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, and Solomon Islands) to strengthen policy and law reform and contribute to effective governance in a stable, prosperous and resilient Indo-Pacific region. This included legislative drafting training for Fiji's Office of the Attorney-General and core legal skills training for Solomon Island government lawyers. AGD assisted Niue, RMI, Samoa and Solomon Islands to progress reforms on illicit drugs, child abuse and cybercrime.

Australia-PNG institutional partnerships

Under the Australia-PNG Institutional Partnerships Program, Australian agencies including AGD work with PNG counterparts to help build a strong and durable economic and strategic partnership between Australia and PNG, contributing to a stable and prosperous region.

In 2019-20, AGD worked with the PNG Department of Justice and Attorney-General to progress PNG's extradition law reform and national drugs strategy, and supported two prosecution advisers embedded within their Office of the Public Prosecutor to improve the capacity of prosecutors on financial crime matters and family and sexual violence cases. AGD also worked with PNG stakeholders to finalise the legal framework for the Coral Sea Cable System. This is a submarine cable system to link Sydney to Port Moresby, which is expected to bring economic and development opportunities to PNG.

Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) pro bono work in the Pacific

While AGS provided pro bono assistance in the Pacific region including legal training to government lawyers in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in the 2019-20 financial year, COVID-19 displaced planned activities during the reporting period for this Country Report. AGS is exploring the virtual training format to continue its work in the Pacific in the context of the global pandemic.

Cyber Cooperation Program

Australia's [Cyber Cooperation Program](#) (\$34 million, 2016-23) continues to strengthen cyber resilience in the Pacific in support of Australia's broader international cyber engagement, which champions an open, free, safe and secure cyberspace. The Program is managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and works with a wide range of implementing partners in the Pacific, including government agencies, industry and civil society. Implementing partners have been agile, despite the COVID-19 context, and have continued to deliver activities virtually in order to maintain momentum of engagement across the region.

Activities in the Pacific – which focus on regional, sub-regional and bilateral engagement – support the following outcomes:

- an international cyber stability framework to promote responsible state behaviour in cyberspace – by deepening understanding of the application of international law, norms and confidence building measures in cyberspace
- stronger cybercrime prevention, prosecution and cooperation – including cyber awareness, online safety, cybercrime legislation and training for law enforcement
- enhanced cyber security capability for a strong and resilient cyber security posture – including building technical cyber security capability and strengthening operational response networks
- best practice use of technology to support economic growth and sustainable development – including through integrating cyber security by design
- advocating and protecting human rights and democracy online – including promoting respect for freedom of expression online, and
- mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment in cyber affairs.

Anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism financing

Home Affairs’ Anti-Money Laundering Assistance Team (AMLAT) continued its work with Pacific countries to provide technical assistance and training to better address transnational crime, corruption and terrorism to improve anti-money laundering and countering terrorism financing (AML/CTF) frameworks in the Pacific.

AMLAT and AUSTRAC continued to assist PNG to implement PNG’s 2015 AML/CTF reforms, and prepare for its Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) 3rd round Mutual Evaluation in 2021/22. AMLAT is supporting PNG to prioritise and progress key legislative reforms to address technical deficiencies on arms trafficking, terrorism financing, and AML/CTF preventive measures. AMLAT also assisted PNG to achieve a more effective proceeds of crime framework, including mechanisms to manage and dispose of confiscated criminal assets. AUSTRAC supported PNG’s Financial Intelligence Unit to track and combat money laundering and terrorism financing, through analyst exchange programs and mentoring on best practice in producing intelligence.

Following release of Solomon Islands’ FATF mutual evaluation report in October 2019, AMLAT officers travelled to Honiara in February 2020 to support delivery of the Solomon Islands AML/CTF Strategic Implementation Planning Workshop, hosted by APG. The Workshop assisted Solomon Islands officials to better understand the country’s AML/CTF risks, improve their awareness of international standards and technical assistance needs, and enhance their skills in planning and prioritising actions to address the deficiencies in Solomon Islands’ AML/CTF systems.

People smuggling and human trafficking

Home Affairs has delivered a range of peer-to-peer capacity building and technical assistance in the Pacific region to support strong law and justice responses to human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. In December 2019, the ABF participated in a workshop hosted by the Government of Fiji to review and strengthen Fiji’s national action plan to combat trafficking in persons. The ABF will continue to work with Fiji on its trafficking in persons’ priorities.

Australia worked bilaterally with partner countries and regionally through various forums including the [Bali Process on People Smuggling Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime \(TIPWG\), which Australia co-chairs with Indonesia](#), to help countries establish and implement strong law and policy frameworks to combat people smuggling, human trafficking and related transnational crime. The Bali Process has gained increased momentum in recent years, with a more comprehensive mandate, strengthened engagement interest, and increased stakeholder engagement and participation among member states.

Australia engages law and justice officials through the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (TIPWG), co-chaired by Australia (ABF) and Indonesia. The TIPWG promotes more effective and coordinated law and justice responses to combat human trafficking in the Asia-Pacific region. Through the TIPWG, Australia has led the development of a Compendium of Good Practice Examples to Combat Exploitation in Supply Chains, which will promote and aid government action to combat exploitation in supply chains or goods and services.

The Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO) provides practical support and assistance to Bali Process members. Australia funds the administration of the RSO, RSO Secondments and Co-Manages the Office with Indonesia. The RSO assisted Pacific Island members through a series of activities strengthening their ability to combat people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime. These include in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, training key officials to deliver the RSO Standardised Induction Programme for Frontline Border Officials, Interviewing and Identifying Victims of Trafficking, use of the Regional Strategic Roadmap as an online counter trafficking tool and sharing Policy Guides on Criminalising Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons.

COVID-19 creates new uncertainties regarding irregular migration and criminal network facilitators. Irregular migration by its most basic definition is unpredictable and requires adjustments to standard border controls. Countries are adjusting border management processes, with most introducing quarantine arrangements. Current border restrictions have created greater state vigilance on border movements and entry requirements, which in turn will likely mean less irregular migration. However, Australia expects this will change in the medium-term as the demand increases from those who want to move. COVID-19 will likely create new push factors, causing already vulnerable and displaced cohorts to escape outbreaks engaging smugglers to facilitate their movement across borders. This poses new and unknown risks for migrants and receiving communities and presents new opportunities for criminal syndicates to identify weaknesses they can exploit.

4. Contact information for key law and justice agencies

Agency	Key responsibilities	Contact area	Telephone +61 2
Attorney-General’s Department	Federal policies and legislation concerning international crime cooperation	International Cooperation Unit	6141 6666
Department of Home Affairs	National security, law enforcement and border protection	National Security and Law Enforcement Division	6264 1111
Australian Federal Police	Policing	International Operations	5126 0000
Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC)	Regulatory responsibility for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing	Domestic and International Relations	1300 021 037
Office of Parliamentary Counsel	Legislative drafting	First Parliamentary Counsel	6120 1400