



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

AUSTRALIA'S COUNTRY REPORT 2021

PACIFIC ISLANDS LAW OFFICERS' NETWORK
40th ANNUAL MEETING
5 NOVEMBER 2021

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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 2020 to September 2021. The report also considers significant issues relating to the law and justice sector, including technical assistance.

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

1. Major law and justice sector developments and achievements

Court reform and family law disputes

The Australian Attorney-General's Department's (AGD) supported the Government to enact legislation to structurally reform the federal law courts. The new Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia came into effect on 1 September 2021, bringing together the two separate federal courts hearing family law matters. The new court provides a single point of entry to the federal courts for families with family law disputes. These reforms will help families resolve disputes by improving the efficiency of the family law system, reducing the backlog of matters before the family law courts and driving faster, safer, more consistent and less costly dispute resolution.

Protecting victims of family violence

AGD developed draft legislation to provide stronger protections for victims of family violence in the family law system. The Family Law Amendment (Federal Family Violence Orders) Bill 2021 was introduced into Parliament on 24 March 2021. The Bill would amend the *Family Law Act 1975* to establish new Federal Family Violence Orders which, if breached, can be criminally enforced. Access to federal family violence orders would mean that persons before a family law court would not be required to initiate separate proceedings in a state or territory court for a criminally enforceable protection order, but could seek the protections they need in the court where their existing matter is already being heard. This would reduce the need for parties to interact with multiple courts across the federal family law and state and territory family violence systems to address their legal needs. Federal Family Violence Orders are intended to be an additional option for protection of victims of family violence at the federal level, complementing the protections afforded by state and territory family violence order schemes.

Cabinet Taskforce on Women's Safety and Economic Security and expanded Government ministry

In March 2021, the Government announced the establishment of a new Cabinet Taskforce on Women's Safety and Economic Security, and expanded the Government's Ministry to establish the new ministerial positions of Minister for Women's Safety, Minister for Women's Economic Security, and Assistant Minister for Women, in addition to the existing Minister for Women. In the 2021-22 Women's Budget Statement, the Government announced \$3.4 billion to improve outcomes for women's safety, economic security, health and wellbeing. This includes an additional \$1.1 billion to prevent and respond to violence against women and children as a 'down payment' for the successor to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

Access to superannuation information to support fairness in family law property settlements

An [Australian Senate Committee report](#) reveals that at the point of retirement, Australian women currently have 46.6 per cent less superannuation savings than Australian men. Further, [40 per cent of retired single Australian women live in poverty](#). The Government is taking steps to address the superannuation gender savings gap, among other areas of gender inequality. In September 2021, the Government passed legislation to amend the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* and the *Family Law Act 1975* to allow a party to a family law property proceeding to obtain the superannuation information of their former partner. Access to this information will better support separated couples to divide their property on a just and equitable basis, and will make it harder for parties to hide or under-disclose their superannuation assets in family law property proceedings. The changes will come into force from 1 April 2022.

Significant Issues - Continuing our response to the COVID-19 pandemic

AGD, through the Australian Government Solicitor (**AGS**), advised the Government on a broad range of legal issues central to the pandemic response. AGS lawyers provided practical advice on complex matters relating to public health measures, economic support and the vaccination rollout. AGD also worked closely with portfolio agencies such as Safe Work Australia and the Fair Work Ombudsman, and consulted with employer and employee groups, to address the pandemic's implications for workplaces.

AGD's Incident Management Team continued to meet since October 2020 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. The team has 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. It is now considering the impact of continued lockdowns on staff wellbeing, and developing clear communications about vaccinations and the eventual return to the office.

2. PILON strategic priorities

(a) Cybercrime

Individuals and Australian organisations continue to be targeted with COVID-19 related scams and phishing emails. Cybercrime actors are exploiting people's concerns and desire for information about the pandemic by directing them to websites designed to either install malicious software or steal personal information. In addition, technology facilitated abuse - such as cyber stalking, harassment and online threats or abuse has increased under the COVID-19 pandemic. The gendered nature of technology facilitated abuse is discussed more at Section 2(c): Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

From 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, the [Australian Cyber Security Centre \(ACSC\)](#) received over 1,500 cybercrime reports of malicious cyber activity related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 75 per cent of these relating to individual Australians reporting loss of finances or personal information to scams and online fraud. Since March 2021, the ACSC has removed over 7,700 websites that were hosting malicious content on the COVID-19 pandemic. The ACSC primarily focused on protecting the national vaccine supply, which resulted in more than 58 per cent of removals within 24 hours of identification.

World-first - online safety regulator partnership between Australia and Fiji

In February 2021, [Australia's eSafety Commission and the Fiji Online Safety Commission](#) announced a world-first online safety regulator partnership to share challenges and lessons to advance online safety in the Pacific region. The project will utilise best practice to deliver resources and tools to build online safety capabilities.

Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020 and cyber security reforms

The Government is currently reviewing options to strengthen cyber security regulations and incentives to support a growing digital economy and respond to a growing threat environment, particularly ransomware. This work forms part of [Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020](#) and complements the Government's [critical infrastructure reforms](#) and the [Review of the Privacy Act 1988](#) to ensure privacy settings empower consumers, protect their data and best serve the Australian economy.

ACSC Partnership Program

The ACSC Partnership 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. The Program is delivered through the ACSC's network of Joint Cyber Security Centres (**JCSCs**), physically located in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, along with outreach services virtually located in Darwin and Hobart. The JCSCs play a major role in keeping Australia prepared for, and safe from, malicious cyber activity.

The JCSCs engage with partners via a range of in-person and virtual activities and information-sharing sessions. The JCSCs have delivered over 250 events so far in 2021, continuing collaboration between partners, including those working from home.

In November 2020, the ACSC expanded the Program to better support the Australian economy with updates on relevant cyber security information. These tiers comprise: network partners (organisations with responsibility for networks, experts in cyber security such as academics and not-for-profit institutions); business partners (large and small); and home partners (for individuals and families).

Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSON)

[PaCSON](#) is a network of Pacific government-designated cyber security incident response officials, funded through DFAT's [Cyber and Critical Technology Cooperation Program](#), as part of Australia's [International Cyber and Critical Tech Engagement Strategy](#). Seventeen countries are currently participating in the network, including: Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (**RMI**), Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (**PNG**), Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the United States. The PaCSON Executive Committee includes Tonga (Chair), Vanuatu (Incoming Chair), and the Cook Islands (Deputy 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 by:

- 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.

The launch of the PaCSON website in December 2020 was a significant achievement. The website allows the Pacific and members of the public to connect with PaCSON, while creating awareness of safe cyber practices through the inaugural [Cyber Smart Pacific](#) campaign.

During 2020-21, all PaCSON activities were held virtually due to COVID-19, with members engaging regularly by virtual correspondence and video conference. In May 2021, PaCSON hosted its first [virtual Annual General Meeting](#). This successful three day event allowed PaCSON to reflect on what has been achieved and plan for where the cyber journey for the group is next headed.

PaCSON continued its flagship capacity building activity – the PaCSON Remote Session series. The series allows the PaCSON Community and invited guests to engage with expert trainers and industry leaders on topics relevant to improving the Pacific's cyber security posture. Topics explored include: learning about the impact of Solarwinds; a walkthrough analysis of a Compromised Linux Server; and understanding the process of developing a National Cybersecurity Strategy and advisory products.

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 increasing global reliance on cloud computing and the changing communications environment. The draft Additional Protocol also supports international crime cooperation.

Australia's representatives from the Department of Home Affairs participated in the *10th Cybercrime Convention Committee Protocol Drafting Plenary* virtually from 26 to 27 May 2021, following the publication of a complete draft of the Protocol on 12 April 2021. Australia has advocated for the Pacific context to be considered in the Protocol's 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 \(International Production Orders\) Act 2021](#) commenced on 24 July 2021. It amends the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979* to create a framework facilitating streamlined access to electronic communications data for criminal law enforcement and national security purposes. The legislation 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

Corruption is a corrosive global phenomenon with wide ranging impacts. It undermines democracy and the rule of law; discourages investment and distorts markets; diverts resources from important services like schools, hospitals and roads; and paves the way for organised crime and terrorism.

Australia has a solid record of global, regional and domestic action to prevent and expose corrupt activity. All Australian states have broad based anti-corruption agencies. At the Federal level, Australia's multi-agency approach to combatting corruption involves a range of Government institutions with specialised roles and responsibilities in deterring, detecting and responding to corruption. 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 (**UNCAC**), and the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions.

Pacific anti-corruption roadmap

On 5 February 2021, the Pacific Islands Forum (**PIFS**) Leaders' Meeting adopted Teieniwa Vision as the anti-corruption roadmap for PICs' engagement through PIFS processes. All 18 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders (including the 14 PICs working with UN-PRAC) adopted the Teieniwa Vision as the regional roadmap at the Leaders Forum. This is an important high-level political commitment against corruption in the region, calling for a whole-of-society approach to prevent and fight against corruption in the Pacific. This is in line with the UNCAC and the Agenda 2030 and, specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 16. The sustainability and ownership of the anti-corruption agenda by PIFS and Forum Member States has been a strategy of UN-PRAC over many years, which is considered to have had a profound impact on the topic in the region.

Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre

AGD's Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre helps Government entities deal with unseen and unchecked fraud by creating and embedding leading practice. In addition, the Centre helps entities to collaborate, create positive change, respond to emerging threats and address agency capability gaps. The Centre's mission is to support Government policies and programs to be designed and delivered with integrity by default. The [Centre's dedicated website on countering fraud](#) has tools, resources and guidance materials.

The Centre supports its Commonwealth partners to improve fraud prevention capability by providing advice on fraud risk assessments, running narrative workshops, supporting pilot projects involving data sharing for integrity purposes, disseminating guidance and tools for policy designers and undertaking pressure testing to strengthen fraud controls.

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 broad range of misconduct, including contraventions of laws, abuse of public trust, fraud and corruption. In December 2020, the Government responded to the Moss Review, and agreed to implement a range of measures designed to clarify the PID Act, enhance protections for disclosers and witnesses involved in an investigation, and strengthen the ability of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security to independently oversee how agencies handle disclosures. The reforms will also make it easier for disclosers and witnesses to obtain relief from any detriment suffered.

(c) Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women and girls was already one of the most widespread violations of human rights. Amid the pandemic, data from frontline services indicate a stark global increase in the incidence of all types of violence against women and girls, particularly family violence. The United Nations has called this the 'shadow pandemic', as billions of people across the world are sheltering at home, often in crowded conditions and with families that are stressed by health, security and money concerns. Frontline resources of government, police, health and the justice system are also under strain, particularly with the additional demand to address the increased violence. Meanwhile, exacerbated by conditions of the pandemic, women are often living with their abusers and isolated from the people and resources that can best help them.

In addition, there have been greater instances of online harassment, bullying, unwanted sexual advances and trolling as a result of the increased use of the internet for activities such as work, study and socialising. Data from law enforcement sources has identified a sharp increase in the number of people seeking to access child sexual abuse material online on both the clear and dark web. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) laid 2,753 charges for alleged child sexual abuse-related offences in 2020/21. As children increasingly use online platforms to engage in study and social activity the risk of being exposed to abuse 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; as well as the first phase of a new national strategy which will provide a whole-of-nation framework to establish a coordinated a consistent approach to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in Australia.

The Government has committed \$4.7 million over a two year period under the 2021-22 Federal Budget to lead a national conversation with state and territory governments on strengthening criminal justice responses to sexual assault, sexual harassment and coercive control. Commonwealth, state and territory officials are currently working together to develop a plan of work on criminal justice responses to sexual assault, and to co-design national principles to develop a common understanding of coercive control. Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour that family violence perpetrators use to assert emotional, psychological, physical and/or financial control over victim-survivors.

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

The [Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022](#) aims to achieve change and reduce domestic, family and sexual violence against women and their children across five priority areas. 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.

Women's economic security

In late 2020, the Government announced a new [Women's Economic Security Statement](#) focussing on five priority areas:

- (1) repairing and rebuilding women's workforce participation and further closing the gender pay gap
- (2) giving greater choice and flexibility for families to manage work and care
- (3) supporting women as leaders and positive role models
- (4) responding to the diverse needs of women, and
- (5) supporting women to be safe at work and home.

In May 2021, the Government announced the [Women's Workforce Participation and Economic Security Package](#), providing \$10.7 million over two years to extend two existing trials through to 30 June 2023:

- (1) a trial of legal aid commissions conducting lawyer-assisted mediation for clients with small property pools up to \$500,000, and
- (2) a trial of simpler and faster court processes in four Federal Circuit Court locations to resolve family law property cases for small property pools up to \$500,000.

The extension of these trials will ensure service continuity for many vulnerable separated women and will enable the Government to consider the Australian Institute of Family Studies' findings in their independent evaluations of each pilot. Final evaluation reports for each Pilot are expected in April 2022.

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. In March 2021, the Government released [its formal response](#) to this review, outlining its position on each recommendation, agreeing with 35, noting 19 and disagreeing with six. The Government is working to implement its response, including through the development of legislative amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth).

In March 2021, the [Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System](#) released its [second interim report](#) with [recommendations on the family law system](#). The Committee is due to deliver its final report by 29 October 2021. As of September 2021, the Committee has received [over 1,700 submissions](#).

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 2021. 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 program known as the Lighthouse Project commenced, seeking to identify and manage family safety risks in family law matters. The project involves screening new parenting matters for family safety risks when filed in the Federal Circuit and Family Court. Matters are triaged to appropriate case management based on the identified level of risk. Additional support is provided to at-risk parties. A specialist family violence list (the Evatt List) has been established to resolve high-risk matters quickly and safely.

Combatting child sexual abuse

Australia continues to strengthen its response to child sexual abuse in 2020-2021, including through a range of new initiatives under the upcoming *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030*. The National Strategy, being led by the National Office for Child Safety in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, focuses on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse in all settings, including by: changing culture and attitudes; education and awareness raising; supporting children who show harmful sexual behaviours; offender prevention interventions; and providing support to victims and survivors.

In the 2021-22 Federal Budget, the Government allocated \$146 million over four years for the first phase of a new National Strategy. This includes:

- \$7.8 million over four years for the Department of Home Affairs to work with Indo-Pacific partners on strengthening regional policy, legislative and operational responses to child sexual abuse
- \$11.9 million over four years to equip intelligence; research and border protection agencies to disrupt the cash flow behind child sexual abuse; prevent and disrupt livestreamed child sexual abuse; intercept material and offenders at the border; and, enhance the ability to identify offenders within the community, and
- \$2.9 million over four years to building relationships with digital industry to drive a coordinated and collaborative charge against offenders' exploitation of online platforms to engage in child sexual abuse.

In 2020-2021, Australia continued to work with its international partners to strengthen the global response to child sexual abuse. At the UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in March 2021, Australia negotiated inclusion of text on online child sexual abuse in the Political Declaration, co-hosted side events with the UK on online child sexual abuse, and presented on child sexual abuse as part of a panel of international experts. Australia is advocating for child sexual exploitation and abuse to be the topic of one of the thematic discussions by the CCPCJ on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration 2021-2024.

In March 2021, Australia and its Five Country partners (Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US) hosted an event to mark the one year anniversary of the Ministerial launch of the [Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) that were developed in close consultation with digital industry. Australia continues to partner with likeminded countries to lobby technology companies and peak bodies to sign up to the Voluntary Principles and transparently report their implementation. The [WePROTECT Global Alliance](#) is promoting and supporting global adoption of the principles. Australia is also working closely with G7 members to highlight the need for global efforts to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse. As an outcome of the September 2021 G7 Interior and Security Ministers meeting, a call was made to industry to endorse the Voluntary Principles and implement them in a meaningful and transparent way.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

On 14 December 2020, the Government tabled the third Annual Progress Report 2020: *Implementation of recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. The Government expects to table its fourth annual report by 15 December 2021. The Government has committed to deliver five annual reports until December 2022 outlining progress made on implementing 206 recommendations directed wholly or partially at the Government. All annual reports are available on the [Australian Government Response to the Royal Commission website](#).

3. Technical legal assistance

PILON

In our 40th year of engagement through PILON, AGD continued to support collaboration, coordination and cooperation between Pacific law and justice agencies to progress regional law and justice priorities through its online support for the PILON Secretariat and PILON's working groups on their respective priorities of cybercrime, corruption and sexual and gender-based violence. Over the reporting period, online engagement with our Pacific Island partners was very much a continuation of the 'new normal' since the onset of international travel bans.

AGD supported each of the PILON working groups to deliver webinars of topical interest to members, promoting understanding of key policy and operational issues, promoting policy and legal reform and facilitating ongoing networking opportunities.

AGD worked with the SGBV Working Group to finalise the explanatory text for the model provisions for amending legislation to incorporate special measures for vulnerable witnesses to sexual and gender based violence offences, which were endorsed at the 2020 PILON annual meeting.

AGD also supported a PILON cybercrime scholarship pilot program for 14 Pacific lawyers to complete an interactive, online course on digital forensics and electronic evidence, *Fundamentals of Digital Forensics for Lawyers and Judges* (developed by Insig2 and Zyber Global).

Legal policy development and law reform capacity

During 2020-21 under AGD's Pacific Law and Justice Program, AGD trained and mentored approximately 670 Pacific Island officials on legal policy, law reform and other legal capabilities through AGD's Twinning Program, participation in PILON webinars (including both live attendance and later views), bilateral law reform work and other workshops. This significant increase – up from 122 for the previous reporting period, was due to the use of technology in light of ongoing international travel bans.

AGD delivered its first remote Pacific Legal Policy Twinning Program from May to July 2021, successfully partnering with Solomon Islands and PNG officials on two sexual and gender based violence projects. Both countries identified the projects as high priorities for their respective governments, with COVID-19 driving a global spike in sexual and gender based violence. AGD developed the remote pilot in consultation with the PILON Executive Committee to ensure a Pacific appetite for online engagement and to continue our close collaboration on mutual criminal law and justice priorities.

On completing the program, the Solomon Islands ODPP launched guidelines for prosecutors and witness support officers to assist complainants throughout the prosecution of sexual offences and information brochures in English and Pidgin to help adults and young children give evidence in the Magistrates Court and the High Court of the Solomon Islands. PNG's project involved a review of the *Family Protection Act*

2013 and Family Protection Regulation 2017 to strengthen laws on family and domestic violence. PNG's official developed a comprehensive issues paper on proposed reforms, including options to increase the penalty for domestic violence, which was endorsed by the PNG Attorney-General and used in an extensive consultation process in PNG's provinces.

AGD's bilateral work

AGD worked bilaterally with two Pacific-region countries (Kiribati and RMI) to strengthen policy and law reform and contribute to effective governance in a stable, prosperous and resilient Indo-Pacific region. AGD supported Kiribati to develop a Cybercrime Bill, in partnership with the Council of Europe. The Bill received unanimous support from the Kiribati Parliament resulting in an Act that is well aligned with the Budapest Convention and international human rights standards, rendering Kiribati well-placed to accede to the Budapest Convention.

In collaboration with drafters from the United States, AGD supported RMI to develop amendments to its illicit drugs laws to broaden the range of prohibited substances, criminalise precursors and equipment to fix identified issues with the penalty regime.

AGD congratulates Vanuatu and Tuvalu on two significant law reform developments during the reporting period which follow AGD's assistance in past reporting periods: Vanuatu's passing of its *Cybercrime Act* in June 2021; and Tuvalu's introduction of a Parole Bill to Parliament in May 2021.

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 2020-21, AGD worked with the PNG Department of Justice and Attorney-General to progress reforms of PNG's Family Protection Act and Extradition Act. AGD also worked with PNG stakeholders to secure the supply of vaccines in response to COVID-19 and to facilitate evidence and information sharing on a major drug interdiction.

Pro bono legal training in the Pacific

In 2021, AGD supported AGS to deliver legal training remotely to the Solomon Islands as part of its contribution to the Solomon Islands Justice Program, in response to agency requests. In total, 31 participants from the Attorney-General's Chambers, the Public Solicitor's Office and the Law Reform Commission attended training in Statutory Interpretation and Legal Reasoning.

In September 2021, AGS remotely delivered legal reasoning training to 15 officers from the PNG Office of the State Solicitor, Office of the Solicitor General and Legal Policy and Governance Branch, Department of Justice and Attorney General. The training was requested by the relevant agency heads and well regarded by participants, who were pleased to take part after COVID-19 restrictions forced the postponement from its intended delivery in March 2021.

In September 2021, AGD in conjunction with the Australian Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions remotely delivered environmental crimes prosecution training to the Solomon Islands. Twenty six officers from six Solomon Islands government agencies attended the training, which was requested by the Solomon Islands Director of Public Prosecutions and received well by all participants.

Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program

Australia's [Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program](#) (\$74 million, 2016-25) continues to strengthen cyber resilience in the Pacific in support of Australia's broader international cyber and critical tech engagement, which champions a safe, secure and prosperous Australia, Indo-Pacific and world enabled by cyberspace and critical technology. 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 six key outcomes, including:

- an international cyber stability framework to promote responsible state behaviour in cyberspace
- stronger cybercrime prevention, prosecution and cooperation
- enhanced cyber security capability for a strong and resilient cyber security posture
- best practice use of technology to support economic growth and sustainable development
- advocating and protecting human rights and democracy online, and
- mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in cyber affairs.

AGD's assistance to a range of Pacific Island countries on cybercrime policy development and law reform has been partly funded by this DFAT-led program.

Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing

Despite the impacts of COVID-19, 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. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the delivery of AMLAT's technical assistance and training has adapted to a purely online methodology.

AMLAT, alongside AUSTRAC, continued to assist PNG to prepare for its Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (**APG**) 3rd round Mutual Evaluation in 2023/24. AMLAT continued to support PNG to prioritise and progress key legislative reforms on arms trafficking, terrorism financing, and AML/CTF preventive measures. AMLAT assisted PNG in its efforts 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 financial intelligence.

AMLAT, through the APG, also provided assistance to Nauru in response to identified technical deficiencies with its Proceeds of Crime legislation, and to develop asset management regulations.

Gender and Family Harm Strategy

Through the Pacific Community for Law Enforcement Cooperation, the AFP coordinated support for the implementation of the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police *Gender and Family Harm Strategy* including the identification of potential areas for legislative and policy reform to strengthen and enable police response to gender and family harm.

People smuggling, human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices

The health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are exposing new and heightened risks of modern slavery, and have increased challenges for frontline responders to identify and support victims. During the reporting period, the Government launched the *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–25 (National Action Plan)*, which provides the strategic framework for Australia's whole-of-government response to modern slavery from 2020 to 2025. Under the National Action Plan, Australia strives to be an international and regional leader and partner in deterring and combating modern slavery. The National Action Plan commits the Government to implementing 46 Action Items under five strategic priorities: Prevent; Disrupt, Investigate and Prosecute; Support and Protect; Partner; and Research.

In 2020-2021, the Australian Border Force (**ABF**) has worked on a range of initiatives to combat people smuggling, including:

- Delivering targeted, peer-to-peer technical assistance and capacity building to Indo-Pacific partner governments to strengthen and effectively implement legal and policy frameworks to combat modern slavery under the *Indo-Pacific Justice and Security Program*.
- Co-chairing, with Indonesia, the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (Working Group). During the reporting period, the ABF and Indonesia co-chaired two Annual Meetings of the Working Group, two regional workshops, and a regional webinar on *Combatting Trafficking in Persons in the COVID-19 Recovery Phase*. The ABF and Indonesia also coordinated the finalisation and endorsement of the [Compendium of Good Practice Examples to Combat Exploitation in Supply Chains](#) (available in 15 languages) and the Working Group's *Forward Work Plan 2021–23*.

Australia is engaging with partners of the Bali Process Working Group on the Disruption of Trafficking in Persons and People Smuggling Networks (**Disruption Working Group**), which is co-chaired by New Zealand and Vietnam. The AFP is a member in this working group and has been actively involved in the group since its inception, along with other law enforcement international partners. The Disruption Working Group is compiling a Compendium on cross-border people smuggling and trafficking in person's joint operations and prosecutions, with the first submission completed in July 2021. The Compendium seeks to enhance the sharing of information between working group members on people smuggling and trafficking in person networks, and to identify gaps and challenges at the national and regional level.

AFP International Command representatives within the Pacific region continue to deliver capability building and technical assistance to international law enforcement partners in direct response to transnational serious and organised crime (**TSOC**), which includes human trafficking and people smuggling. In addition to AFP Posts in Port Moresby and Suva, the AFP continues to engage Pacific policing counterparts to combat TSOC through the Pacific Police Development Program and the Pacific Transnational Crime Network (**PTCN**).

The PTCN enables Pacific Island Chief Police members and stakeholders such as the Pacific Immigration Development Community to share criminal intelligence between 28 Transnational Crime Units across the region. The AFP has a member seconded to the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre to assist the coordination and management of intelligence sharing.

Forced marriage

Australian law recognises forced marriage as a slavery-like practice and a complex form of family and gender-based violence. During the reporting period, the Government strengthened its response to forced marriage by launching and commencing implementation of the National Action Plan, under which the Government has committed to a range of measures to combat forced marriage as a form of modern slavery and support and protect victims and survivors.

The ABF is developing a model for enhanced civil protection and remedies for individuals in, or at risk of, forced marriage. Further, the ABF is undertaking awareness raising activities on modern slavery, which include social media posts on forced marriage, what it looks like in Australia and where to get help.

The Government established the *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25 Grant Program* to support community-based projects and research to combat modern slavery. Round One of the Grant Program included a specific stream for projects related to forced marriage.

The ABF continued to co-chair the [Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons](#), and supported the development of its [Forward Work Plan 2021–23](#) which identifies human trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage as a priority issue, to be considered through an action item led by Australia.

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 the civil justice system, some elements of the criminal justice system and international crime cooperation, and industrial relations (see www.ag.gov.au)	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