



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

AUSTRALIA'S COUNTRY REPORT 2024

PACIFIC ISLANDS LAW OFFICERS' NETWORK

43RD ANNUAL MEETING

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AUSTRALIA’S COUNTRY REPORT 2024 43rd PACIFIC ISLANDS LAW OFFICERS’ NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING

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Major law and justice sector developments and achievements

Criminalising the creation and non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit material online

The Australian Government is committed to keeping Australians safe online, including from technology-facilitated abuse such as deepfake sexual material. Technology-facilitated abuse is overwhelmingly targeted towards women and girls, perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes and contributing to gender-based violence.

On 21 August 2024, the Australian Parliament passed the [Criminal Code Amendment \(Deepfake Sexual Material\) Act 2024](#) (the Deepfake Sexual Material Act) to modernise and strengthen offences for the non-consensual creation and sharing of simulated and real sexual material online.¹ Digitally created and altered sexually explicit material that is shared without consent is a damaging and deeply distressing form of abuse that overwhelmingly targets women and girls. The Deepfake Sexual Material Act imposes serious criminal penalties for the transmission and sharing of adult sexual material without consent (maximum penalty of 6 years' imprisonment, or 7 years for aggravated offences). This includes material that is digitally created using artificial intelligence or other technology. The Deepfake Sexual Material Act came into force in September 2024. It will hold perpetrators to account for causing harm through non-consensual sharing of deepfakes, and help ensure Australia's criminal offences keep pace with new technology.

Justice responses to sexual violence and coercive control

The Australian Government continues to progress initiatives under the Standing Council of Attorneys-General's [Work Plan to Strengthen Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault 2022-2027](#). Under this plan, all Australian jurisdictions agreed to take collective and individual action to improve the experiences of victim-survivors of sexual assault in the criminal justice system.²

The Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) inquiry into [Justice Responses to Sexual Violence](#) in Australia commenced on 22 January 2024.³ An Expert Advisory Group was also established to ensure that victims' and survivors' views and lived experiences inform the ALRC inquiry, and Government, on justice responses to sexual violence that go beyond criminal law frameworks only.

As part of developing a national justice sector education and training package on the nature and impacts of sexual assault, the Australian Government funded a judicial conference 'Enhancing Safe Practice: A National Justice Forum on Sexual Assault' on 2–4 August 2024. Dedicated training sessions for national judicial officers who manage sexual assault hearings also commenced in 2024.

Coercive control involves perpetrators using patterns of abusive behaviour over time in a way that creates fear and denies liberty and autonomy. The Standing Council of Attorneys-General released the [National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence](#) in September 2023.⁴ The National Principles outline a shared understanding of coercive control and its impacts, to help victim-survivors, frontline professionals and the community identify and respond to coercive control as an underpinning dynamic of family and domestic violence.

¹[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_LEGislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=r7205#:~:text=Summary,to%20as%20'deepfakes'\)](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_LEGislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=r7205#:~:text=Summary,to%20as%20'deepfakes')).

² <https://www.ag.gov.au/system/files/2022-08/MAG-work-plan-strengthen-criminal-justice-responses-to-sexual-assault-2022-2027.pdf>.

³ <https://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiry/justice-responses-to-sexual-violence/>.

⁴ <https://www.ag.gov.au/system/files/2023-09/national-principles-to-address-coercive-control-family-and-domestic-violence.PDF>.

Progressing the Australian Government’s integrity agenda

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening and promoting integrity in government and building trust in public institutions, including by:

- establishing a new [Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework](#), which requires agencies to take all reasonable measures to manage corruption as well as fraud⁵
- improving protections for whistleblowers
- implementing recommendations from the Government Response to the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme (Robodebt Royal Commission – background explained below), including:
 - developing a consistent legislative framework for the use of automated-decision making in the delivery of government services, including safeguards, and
 - re-establishing an Administrative Review Council⁶
- progressing reforms to the *Privacy Act 1988*, which include reforms to give people more control and transparency over the use of their personal information
- supporting Australia’s commitment to the Open Government Partnership⁷ through Australia’s [Third National Action Plan 2023–25](#)⁸, which includes:
 - developing an Integrity Strategy for the Australian public sector
 - enhancing transparency of political advertising
 - strengthening integrity and accountability in procurement and grants
 - making progress towards beneficial ownership reform⁹, and
 - progressing reforms to secrecy provisions in Commonwealth laws.¹⁰

Robodebt Royal Commission and Government Response

In Australia, royal commissions are the highest form of inquiry on matters of public importance. A royal commission is a formal public inquiry into a defined issue that can recommend changes to policies and laws. A royal commission has broad powers to gather information.¹¹

On 18 August 2022, a Royal Commission was established to inquire into the establishment, design and implementation of the ‘Robodebt Scheme’, and measures needed to prevent similar failures in public administration from reoccurring. Robodebt was an Australian Government social security debt assessment and recovery scheme which operated between July 2015 and November 2019. Debts were raised using averaged income information from the Australian Taxation Office. The onus was placed on social security recipients to show that the debt raised through this process was incorrect.

⁵ <https://www.counterfraud.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-06/cfpc-framework-2024.pdf>.

⁶ The Administrative Review Council inquires into systemic challenges in administrative law, monitors the performance of the Australian Government’s systems of administrative review and support education and training for officials of the Australian Government.

⁷ The Open Government Partnership is a multilateral initiative aimed at securing commitments from national and sub-national governments to promote open government, combat corruption, and improve governance.

⁸ <https://www.ag.gov.au/integrity/australias-open-government-partnership/australias-third-national-action-plan>.

⁹ ‘Beneficial owner’ is the natural person or entity who ultimately owns or controls funds held in an account, or other property owned by a company such as real estate, business assets, vehicles and vessels, and/or the natural person on whose behalf a transaction is being conducted. It also includes those natural persons who exercise ultimate effective control over a legal person.

¹⁰ A secrecy provision is one that imposes secrecy or confidentiality obligations on individuals or entities in relation to information held by the Australian Government, including personal, commercially sensitive, public health, national security and law enforcement information.

¹¹ <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/about-royal-commissions>.

The Royal Commission handed down its [report](#) on 7 July 2023.¹² The Royal Commission found that the Robodebt Scheme was a failure of public policy and program implementation, and failed the public interest. The Royal Commission made 56 recommendations that have broad implications for the workings of government and the Australian Public Service (APS).

The Royal Commission recommended that as a guiding principle, transparency and oversight measures must feature in the social security system, including:

- human-led oversight mechanisms for any automated decision-making processes
- due consideration by government of decisions made by the administrative tribunals, and
- greater powers and resourcing for oversight bodies.

On 13 November 2023, the Australian Government released its [response](#) to the Royal Commission's report, accepting or accepting in principle all recommendations.¹³

A Robodebt Code of Conduct Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established with expert independent reviewers to inquire into the actions of public servants associated with the Robodebt Scheme. Sixteen current and former public servants were referred to the Taskforce.

On 13 September 2024, the Australian Public Service Commissioner issued a [statement](#) which included an apology to those affected by the Robodebt Scheme and to the Australian public.¹⁴ The Commissioner also published the final report of the Taskforce. Twelve current and former public servants, including former Agency Heads, were found to have breached the [APS Code of Conduct](#)¹⁵. While most of these individuals are no longer in the APS, sanctions have been imposed against four current APS employees, ranging from reprimands and fines to demotions.

Part B of the Taskforce's public report sets out insights and observations about individual behaviours and inter-agency actions, responsibilities and processes, notably on: leading and building healthy workplace culture; delegating functions while retaining accountability; behaving ethically and making ethical decisions; raising conduct and integrity concerns; providing advice to Government; managing workload and information flow; breaking down siloes within and between agencies; making and keeping records; supporting wellbeing and safety during conduct enquiries; and breach consequences for former public servants.¹⁶

Establishing the new Administrative Review Tribunal

The Australian Government has established a new, fit-for-purpose federal administrative review body: the Administrative Review Tribunal (Tribunal). The Tribunal commenced on 14 October 2024, replacing the former Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The Tribunal will review administrative decisions made under more than 248 Acts, ensuring the Australian Government and APS act fairly and within the bounds of the law. The Tribunal's features include:

- a greater focus on accessibility and responsiveness to diverse needs of users
- simpler and more standardised powers and procedures to assist with efficient reviews
- a guidance and appeals panel which can review systemic issues in administrative decision-making and re-consider Tribunal decisions that might be affected by error

¹² <https://robodebt.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/report>.

¹³ <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/gov-response-royal-commission-robodebt-scheme.pdf>.

¹⁴ <https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/integrity/robodebt-code-conduct-process/statement-commissioner-centralised-code-conduct-inquiry-final-report>.

¹⁵ <https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/integrity/integrity-resources/code-of-conduct>.

¹⁶ <https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/integrity/robodebt-code-conduct-process/inquiry-taskforce-final-report>.

- a transparent and merit-based appointment process for members (decision-makers), informed by the operational needs of the Tribunal
- a simple membership structure with clear qualification requirements and role descriptions for each level of membership
- powers for the Tribunal President to manage the performance, conduct and professional development of members, and
- ways for the Tribunal and government to identify and address systemic issues in administrative decision-making affecting large numbers of people.

PILON strategic priorities

(a) Cybercrime

Cybercrime is an increasing, persistent and pervasive threat to the Australian community, businesses and government services. Some of the biggest factors impacting the cybercrime landscape threatening Australians today include: data breaches; scams and fraud; malicious or illegal use of emerging technologies (such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) and deep fake technology) and anonymising technologies (such as end-to-end encryption and cryptocurrencies); and malicious software (such as ransomware). Technology-facilitated abuse such as online threats and harassment as well as the non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit material remain an ongoing challenge impacting the Australian community.

Australia's 2023-2030 Cyber Security Strategy

On 22 November 2023 the Australian Government launched the [2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy](#).¹⁷ The Strategy sets out the Australian Government's vision to be a world leader in cyber security by 2030. The Strategy was developed with Australian citizens and businesses at its core and takes a whole-of-nation approach to building cyber resilience. Through the Strategy, Australia will shift cyber security from a technical topic to whole of nation endeavour, focusing on providing better support to communities and industry. The Strategy also outlines Australia's commitment to strengthening the capacity of our region and shaping international efforts to meet the evolving challenges of cyberspace.

Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSON)

[PaCSON](#) is a network of Pacific government-designated cyber security incident response officials, partially funded by the Australian Government as part of [Australia's International Cyber and Critical Tech Engagement Strategy](#).¹⁸ PaCSON works collaboratively with its members to increase cyber capabilities with activities guided by three key pillars:

- increasing threat and information sharing
- supporting and developing incident response capability through training and awareness raising activities, and
- encouraging collaboration on best practice.

There are seventeen PaCSON member countries. The PaCSON Executive Committee includes the Cook Islands (Chair), Kiribati (Incoming Chair) and PNG (Deputy Chair). There are also six partner

¹⁷ <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/cyber-security/strategy/2023-2030-australian-cyber-security-strategy>.

¹⁸ <https://pacson.org/> and <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/international-cyber-critical-technology-engagement-strategy-2021.pdf>.

organisations: the cyber security agencies of France, Canada and the United States of America, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams and the Reserve Bank of Fiji. Friends of PaCSON include the Cyber Safety Pasifika Program, the Pacific Fusion Centre, Australia’s eSafety Commission and the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise.

In September 2024, PaCSON held its Annual General Meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The event was held alongside the Pacific Cyber Capacity Building and Coordination Conference. The [2023 PaCSON Annual Report](#) provides a firsthand account from PaCSON members, partners and friends of the state of their national cyber security posture.¹⁹ It informs stakeholders and the public about PaCSON’s achievements, performance and the impacts cyber security has on the Pacific.

United Nations Convention on Cybercrime

The United Nations Ad Hoc Committee to elaborate a comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes (Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime or AHC) has concluded negotiations on the UN Convention against Cybercrime (the Convention) with the adoption of the text by consensus on 8 August 2024. Australia welcomes the conclusion of negotiations and adoption of the text, following two and a half years of intense negotiations.

The Convention is the first-ever United Nations instrument addressing cybercrime and the collection of electronic evidence. It is largely based on the Council of Europe’s Convention on Cybercrime ([Budapest Convention](#)).²⁰ The Convention has the objective of criminalising a range of cybercrime and creating a robust framework to enhance international crime cooperation and sharing of electronic evidence. The Convention will lift global standards in combatting cybercrime while maintaining respect for the rule of law, international human rights and civil liberties. For the first time, the Convention also establishes criminal offences against child sexual abuse material, online grooming, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. This is a significant achievement in combating technology-facilitated abuse online and tackling the serious harms caused by such abuse.

Cyber Safety Pasifika Program (CSP)

[Cyber Safety Pasifika](#) is a program of the PICP sponsored and delivered by the AFP and strategic partners across the Pacific region.²¹ CSP delivers initiatives to support cybercrime investigations capability development, community awareness and education, and the implementation of cybercrime legislation. In 2023-24, CSP delivered regional cybercrime training in Tonga, New Caledonia, Palau and Australia to 298 officers from 19 Pacific nations. Through partnership between CSP and the Australian AGD, support is being provided to Pacific police to implement cybercrime legislation. Recent examples of support include a project to develop a cybercrime legislation fact sheet for use by the Kiribati Police Service and opportunities for Pacific island lawyers and prosecutors to deliver in country training on cybercrime legislation during CSP’s face-to-face training programs.

¹⁹ https://pacson.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/pacson-annual-report-2023_online_1.pdf.

²⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/the-budapest-convention>.

²¹ <https://pacson.org/friends/cyber-safety-pasifika#:~:text=The%20delivery%20of%20CSP%20Awareness,messages%20with%20school%20groups%2C%20parents%2C>

Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program

Australia's [Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program](#) (CCTCP) aims to improve cyber resilience across the Indo-Pacific.²² CCTCP plays a key role in supporting Australia's international engagement on cyber, forming a practical contribution to the goal of a safe, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region and world enabled by cyberspace and critical technology. CCTCP also plays a key role in supporting Australia's commitment to deliver on the United Nations' Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognises the vital role of digital technologies to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Under CCTCP, projects in 21 countries across the Indo-Pacific have been implemented. Of these projects, 70 have directly supported Pacific island countries or operated across Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

(b) Corruption, including foreign bribery

Corruption is a corrosive global phenomenon which 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.

Australia has enacted new legislation that significantly strengthens Australia's criminal offences on foreign bribery. The [Crimes Legislation Amendment \(Combatting Foreign Bribery\) Act 2024](#) legislated a new corporate offence of failing to prevent foreign bribery, which came into effect on 8 September 2024.²³ This offence will make corporations directly liable for the foreign bribery activities of their employees, external contractors, agents and subsidiaries, unless the corporation can demonstrate it had 'adequate procedures' in place. The Australian Attorney-General has published [Guidance on adequate procedures to prevent the commission of foreign bribery](#) to assist corporations in addressing foreign bribery risk in a proportionate and effective way.²⁴

National Anti-Corruption Commission

The Commission promotes Australia's commitment to combatting corruption as a transnational phenomenon, through engagement with anti-corruption institutions, worldwide and especially in our region. The Commission deters, detects and prevents corrupt conduct involving Commonwealth public officials, through education, monitoring, investigation, reporting and referral. Internationally, the Commission seeks to establish Memoranda of Understanding with Pacific island anti-corruption agencies to support staff exchanges, knowledge sharing and information exchange.

The Commission has partnered with the other Australian Government agencies to deliver engagement activities for Pacific island countries, including for delegations visiting Canberra and hosting delegates from 12 Pacific island countries at the Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference 2024 in Darwin in July 2024, supported by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific).

Strengthening protections for public sector whistleblowers

The Australian Government is strengthening protections for public sector whistleblowers through staged reform of the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013](#) (PID Act).²⁵ Following a consultation process, the Government received 56 submissions, including from government agencies, individuals and

²² <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/business-opportunities/business-notifications/cyber-and-critical-tech-cooperation-program-standing-open-call-proposals>

²³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2024A00005/asmade/text>

²⁴ <https://www.ag.gov.au/crime/foreign-bribery>

²⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2013A00133/latest/versions>.

organisations (such as professional bodies, academia, NGOs and unions). [Key issues](#) raised by stakeholders included:

- support for proposals to establish a new whistleblower protection body, expand professional support available to whistleblowers, and improve access to civil remedies
- support for redrafting the PID Act to make it easier to understand and to increase consistency with other whistleblowing frameworks, and
- support for a ‘no-wrong doors’ approach, including to expand who can receive protected disclosures.²⁶

Commonwealth [Australian Government] Fraud Prevention Centre

The [Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre](#) (the Centre) within AGD helps to strengthen counter fraud arrangements across the Australian Government by creating and embedding leading practice.²⁷ In 2023-24, the Centre focused on strengthening the legislative requirements for fraud and corruption control by implementing a new Commonwealth [Australian Government] Fraud and Corruption Control Framework. The Framework is an element of the Australian [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#) which establishes a system of governance and accountability for public resources.²⁸ The Framework, which came into effect on 1 July 2024, will further strengthen the capability of the public sector to mitigate fraud and corruption and complements the Australian Government’s reforms to improve the standards of integrity.

In 2024, the Centre continued to deliver its award-winning Counter Fraud Practitioner Training Program for Government officials. The training program builds capability in the areas of fraud risk assessment, fraud controls, using data to find and prevent fraud and fraud control assurance.

(c) Sexual and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a global epidemic. In Australia, 15 women have been victims of intimate partner homicide between 1 January and 30 June 2024 according to the National Homicide Monitoring Program’s Intimate partner homicide dashboard, which was released in June 2024.

Technology-facilitated abuse

In September 2023, [Australia’s eSafety Commissioner](#) launched the Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) training for Frontline Workers in the Pacific.²⁹ The training package, developed in collaboration with Pacific partners working to end gender-based violence, aims to strengthen capacity of frontline workers in the Pacific to identify and respond to TFGBV, and to advocate for policy and legislative change. A pilot training was delivered in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tonga from 2023-2024. eSafety has partnered with The Pacific Community to develop a train the trainer program and support the rollout of the training across the Pacific region through local partners from 2024-2025.

Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council

Established in 2022, the [Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council](#) is a forum for Australian governments (nationally and at state level) to work collaboratively to drive national

²⁶ <https://consultations.ag.gov.au/integrity/pswr-stage2/>.

²⁷ <https://www.counterfraud.gov.au/>.

²⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2013A00123/latest/text>.

²⁹ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>.

progress on gender equality and women's safety.³⁰ This includes responsibility for the ongoing implementation of the [National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032](#) (the National Plan), which provides an enduring architecture that all governments have agreed to and guides efforts to end violence within a generation.³¹ As at August 2024, the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council has met on two occasions to discuss ongoing coordination of national efforts to address and prevent gender-based violence.

National Cabinet on Ending Gender-Based Violence

In May 2024, the Australian Government convened a National Cabinet on gender-based violence. National Cabinet, which includes the Prime Minister and First Ministers of each state and territory, committed to stopping violence and intimate partner homicides and agreed to a number of priorities to build upon existing efforts under Australia's National Plan.

On 6 September 2024, Australia's National Cabinet agreed a package to prevent gender-based violence and support legal services. This includes funding for frontline specialist and legal services responding to gender-based violence, innovative approaches to better identify and respond to high-risk perpetrators to stop violence escalating, and addressing the role that systems and harmful industries play in exacerbating violence. The package also includes funding to develop best practice risk assessment principles, deliver additional support for children and young people who have been exposed to family, domestic and sexual violence, and establish national standards for men's behaviour change. All work will specifically consider the application and implementation of approaches for First Nations peoples and communities.

Combatting child sexual abuse

Combatting child sexual abuse is a priority for the Australian Government as it continues to implement initiatives under the [National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030](#) (National Strategy).³² The National Strategy is Australia's first nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse in all settings, including within families, online and within organisations. The first phase of implementation is underway through four-year action plans, underpinned by dedicated Australian Government funding.

Australia works with international partners to strengthen the global response to child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). Australia's Indo-Pacific Child Protection Program helps strengthen Pacific and Southeast Asian law and justice frameworks to combat CSEA through capacity building, technical assistance and partnerships.

In the Pacific, in 2024 Australia completed its regional environmental scan of the nature, extent and causes of CSEA, including online, and developed a report. In August 2024, the findings of the report were presented to the Vanuatu Government during an in-person visit. The report is being shared with other Pacific stakeholders, including government officials, non-government organisations and civil society. The report increasing connectivity, relatively limited digital literacy, and children's access to mobile phones have created significant risks for online CSEA in the Pacific. The report also identified opportunities to respond to these risks, including raising awareness, enhancing reporting, strengthening legislative approaches to digital evidence, and increasing law enforcement

³⁰ <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/womens-safety/women-and-womens-safety-ministerial-council>.

³¹ <https://www.dss.gov.au/ending-violence>.

³² <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-prevent-and-respond-child-sexual-abuse-2021-2030>.

capabilities. The report is being shared with other Pacific stakeholders, including government officials, non-government organisations and civil society.

In the financial year 2023-24, the [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation \(ACCCE\)](#), led by the AFP, received more than 58,000 reports of child sexual abuse.³³ The AFP charged 186 offenders with 925 child exploitation and abuse offences.

Respect@Work

The Australian Government is committed to creating safer, respectful and more equitable workplaces by implementing all recommendations from the Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report (Respect@Work Report). The Respect@Work Report made 55 recommendations aimed at improving the prevention and response to sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. Fifty-two recommendations have been implemented, with the implementation of the remaining 4 recommendations underway, including a new positive duty on employers to prevent certain forms of sex discrimination including sexual harassment.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's enforcement powers under the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022* commenced on 12 December 2023. Further, the *Australian Human Rights Commission (Costs Protection) Act 2024* inserts a provision that protects against costs being awarded against a complainant, to provide greater certainty to parties about the potential cost of court proceedings in federal unlawful discrimination matters. The legislation was passed in September 2024.

Human trafficking, forced marriage and other forms of modern slavery

In Australia, human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery disproportionately affect women and girls. During the reporting period, the Australian Government continued to strengthen Australia's response to modern slavery, including by passing legislation to establish an Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner. This is a new, independent pillar in Australia's comprehensive response to modern slavery. A merit-based process to appoint the Commissioner is underway.

The Australian Government continued to work with state and territory governments to tackle the issue of forced marriage, including by exploring enhanced civil protections and remedies for those affected. The Australian Government also committed funding for the new Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program for those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing forced marriage, and funding to extend Speak Now, Australia's national forced marriage community education service delivered by Anti-Slavery Australia.

The Australian Government also continued to make significant progress on implementation of the [National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–25](#), which includes 46 action items in support of five national strategic priorities: prevent; disrupt, investigate and prosecute; support and protect; partner; and research.³⁴ In financial year 2023-24, the AFP received 382 reports of human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices. Forced marriage (91), forced labour (69) and sexual servitude (59) were the three highest reported offences.

(d) PILON

AGD continued to support collaboration, coordination and cooperation between Pacific law and justice agencies to progress regional law and justice priorities through its support to PILON, the

³³ <https://www.accce.gov.au/>.

³⁴ <https://www.ag.gov.au/crime/publications/national-action-plan-combat-modern-slavery-2020-25>.

PILON Secretariat and PILON's Working Groups, as well as the PILON Legislative Drafters Committee. AGD also supported PILON's collaboration with other Pacific regional bodies, such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, to strengthen regional law and justice outcomes.

The [PILON Corruption Working Group](#), has run a series of webinars focussing on the Asia Pacific Group Mutual Evaluation Process, increasing the effectiveness of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing measures (AML/CTF) and the benefits of working with financial intelligence units.³⁵ AGD's Financial Action Task-Force Engagement Section and the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, Australia's financial intelligence unit and regulator, contributed their expertise to these webinars.

AGD worked closely with representatives of the [Sexual and Gender Based Violence \(SGBV\) Advisory Panel](#) comprised of senior prosecutors and witness support officers from Cook Islands, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, to implement the *Regional Guidelines for Prosecutors and Witness Support Officers to support Vulnerable Witnesses through the Prosecution of Sexual and Gender Based Violence Offences* (Regional Guidelines).³⁶ AGD will continue its championing of the Regional Guidelines alongside our Pacific counterparts as the Advisory Panel undertakes a mentorship program aimed at providing assistance to jurisdictions in implementing the Regional Guidelines from their own experiences.

In May 2024 the [PILON Cybercrime Working Group](#), supported by AGD, formed a subcommittee of interested members to develop a PILON Cybercrime Legislation Implementation Handbook.³⁷ The Handbook will draw on Pacific experiences and AGD's expertise in developing cybercrime legislation and be a resource for PILON members to put cybercrime legislation into practice. The PILON Cybercrime Working Group, with AGD's support, also offered in 2024 another session of the Zyber Fundamentals of Digital Forensics for Lawyers and Judges and Zyber Fundamentals of Digital Forensics for Law Enforcement courses following positive feedback in 2023.

The [PILON Legislative Drafters Committee](#), with support from AGD, has compiled the first edition of an annual circular to give Pacific island legislative drafter a place to share news, updates and resources to promote information sharing on legislative drafting developments.³⁸

(e) Legal policy development and law reform capacity

Under our Pacific Law and Justice Program, AGD continues to train and mentor Pacific island law and justice officials and police officers on legal policy, law reform and other legal capabilities through PILON webinars, training, workshops and bilateral law reform work.

In 2024 AGD delivered its flagship [Pacific Legal Policy Twinning Program](#).³⁹ Twinning participants work closely with AGD officers on a priority legal policy or law reform project with a crime or policing focus, as nominated by their home agency. Projects typically align with regional priorities of PILON and PICP.

³⁵ <https://pilonsec.org/our-work/working-groups/corruption/>.

³⁶ <https://pilonsec.org/our-work/working-groups/sexual-gender-based-violence/>.

³⁷ <https://pilonsec.org/our-work/working-groups/cybercrime/>.

³⁸ <https://pilonsec.org/our-work/legislative-drafters-committee/>.

³⁹ <https://www.ag.gov.au/international-relations/pacific-law-and-justice-program/pacific-legal-policy-twinning-program#:~:text=The%20Pacific%20Legal%20Policy%20Twinning,the%20Australian%20Attorney%2DGeneral's%20Department.>

Instead of running the Legal Policy Champions Program in Australia in 2024, AGD visited Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, RMI, FSM, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji, to support alumni of our Pacific Legal Policy Programs to deliver the Legal Policy Development Course in-country.

AGD's bilateral work

Bilateral work AGD has done over the past year to help strengthen Pacific legal policy capacity includes:

- supporting consultations in Kiribati on a proposed new bail law, and
- collaborating with PNG's Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) under the PNG Institutional Partnerships Program, to facilitate legal skills training to 21 officials and support implementation of PNG's *Family Protection Act* and policy on sorcery and related violence.

AGD also delivered a targeted program to help uplift Pacific Island countries' anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CTF) capabilities, and to help harden our region against criminal exploitation. AGD has provided technical assistance to the Solomon Islands, PNG, Niue, Tonga and Fiji to:

- develop and strengthen legislative frameworks
- assist in preparation for countries' Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering mutual evaluations, and
- provided targeted asset recovery training to investigators and prosecutors.

Australia-PNG institutional partnership

Australian agencies, including AGD, work with PNG counterparts to help build a strong and durable partnership between Australia and PNG.⁴⁰

In 2023-2024, AGD continued to work with the PNG DJAG and the broader PNG law and justice sector on shared priorities including technical assistance and collaboration on international crime cooperation casework and related policy, supporting PNG's response to the mutual evaluation of its AML/CTF framework, and actively pursuing opportunities to better integrate gender equality, disability and social inclusion.

The Australian Government Solicitor continued its regular program of delivering legal skills training to DJAG lawyers and officers from the Offices of State Solicitor, Solicitor General and the Legal Policy and Governance Branch, with in-country trainings delivered in November 2023 and July 2024 and further trainings scheduled for October 2024.

Pacific Forensic Working Group (PFWG)

[*The Pacific Forensic Working Group*](#) is a regional body established under the PICP to strengthen operational policing across the Pacific by identifying and supporting the implementation of sustainable forensic capabilities, including crime scenes, fingerprints and digital forensics disciplines.⁴¹ The PFWG membership currently includes forensics representatives from 18 PICP countries. In April 2024, the PFWG held their annual face-to-face forum in Apia, Samoa, hosting forensic leaders from 16 police forces across the Pacific. The forum provided an opportunity to collaborate and identify key challenges, opportunities and capability development needs across

⁴⁰ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/papua-new-guinea/development-assistance>.

Pacific policing organisation, and explore options for PFWG members to work collaboratively towards forensic uplift in the Pacific.

Gender and Family Harm Strategy

Through the Pacific Community for Law Enforcement Cooperation (PCLEC) and in collaboration with the PICP, the AFP identifies and supports Capability Development Initiatives (CDIs) that address violence against women within Pacific policing organisations and their communities.

A regional Gender and Family Harm CDI Continuum has been developed in collaboration with Pacific police partners and will be shared and used to inform discussions with Pacific police organisations, donors and providers regarding the design and delivery of contextualised capability development initiatives to support Pacific police. PCLEC also supports national Gender and Family Harm initiatives prioritised by Pacific police organisations. For example, through receipt of a PCLEC small grant, the Cook Islands Police Service enhanced their crime prevention objectives on Gender and Family Harm capabilities while aligning with the PICP’s strategic direction and vision of ‘Our Blue Pacific: Safer Together’.

Human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices

Australia co-chaired (with Indonesia) joint events of the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons and the Bali Process Task Force on Planning and Preparedness in Bangkok in November 2023. Australia sponsored six Pacific island members of the Bali Process to attend these events as observers (Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, PNG, Samoa and Vanuatu). Australia continued to deliver peer-to-peer technical assistance and capacity building, including by co-delivering a workshop to support Fiji’s policy, legislative and operational response to human trafficking, and providing written comments on another Pacific island country’s draft National Action Plan on human trafficking.

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 law and justice system, international crime cooperation, AML/CTF engagement, child sexual abuse policy and strategy and the whole-of-government domestic policy response to modern slavery	Pacific Branch	6141 3322
Department of Home Affairs	National security, cyber security and border protection	National Security and Law Enforcement Division	6264 1111
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Working with international partners and other countries to tackle global challenges, increase trade and investment, protect international rules, promote regional stability and manage Australia’s overseas presence	Office of the Pacific	6261 1111
AFP	Policing	Pacific Asia Command	5126 0000