

Policing in paradise

Long white, sandy beaches, palm trees, warm breezes and a crystal clear ocean may seem like a tropical paradise. But even in such idyllic surrounds, law enforcement can be challenging.

The Pacific Police Development Program (PPDP) provides a new approach to capacity development programs in the region.

Three years ago, AFP staff working in the Pacific region identified that several government capacity development programs related to policing doubled up or overlapped and integration was needed.

As a result, the International Deployment Group (IDG) developed the PPDP. It aims to support Pacific police in delivering enhanced a rule-of-law in the region and to increase community confidence in police. IDG Planning and Development Manager Tony Murney said these two elements were crucial to success.

"Hard won AFP experience across several countries has shown that if you can get these two things right from a policing perspective,

most other things will work out," Dr Murney said.

PPDP members work in close collaboration with the Chiefs of Police of Pacific island countries to achieve the program's goals. The program is also designed to integrate with existing AFP initiatives in the region, such as the Pacific Transnational Crime Network.

"The biggest challenge is that each country has its own unique customs and traditions, so a standardised solution is unsuitable in much of the Pacific," Dr Murney said.

Another challenge is that police agencies in the Pacific often have responsibility for a range of services which fall outside traditional policing. For example, the police in Samoa, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia

have responsibility for various other activities including fire services, prisons, maritime services and immigration.

Circumstances in the Pacific are unlike those faced by law enforcement agencies in Australia, which means AFP members working on the PPDP program need to develop unique and flexible responses to problems they may not have previously encountered.

For example, traditional punishments that have been previously administered by village elders may be incorporated into the formal justice process. This means that, for instance, a thief could be required to compensate a victim with livestock or other goods.

The region's population is also growing by around 500 people a day, and this rapid growth is not evenly distributed. For example,





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01: AFP members at Tulagi Police Station, Solomon Islands 02: An AFP member travels by boat 03: AFP member with Department of Defence member on the beach at Avu Avu, Solomon Islands 04: Laulasi Island, Solomon Islands

Papua New Guinea is the largest country with a population of more than 6.4 million people. The smallest, Niue, has fewer than 1,500 people. The Pacific is also characterised by its young population. Around 3.5 million people in the region are under 14 years of age.

The PPDP and its direct partner, the Attorney-General's Department, in collaboration with other Australian Government agencies, began delivering the program earlier this year.

The first step in the process has been to start open conversations with our Pacific partner agencies and members of their local communities. The AFP's overseas liaison officers play a key role in this process, along with members of the PPDP, who use feedback from each country to help develop

solutions tailored to their individual needs. This dialogue will continue throughout the program, to ensure programs meet the needs of the local community, while taking local customs and traditions into consideration.

The PPDP aims to assist Pacific nations in developing programs that address a broad spectrum of criminal activity, from community policing to governance issues. As such, it collaborates with existing programs such as the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the Pacific Transnational Crime Network in creating an environment across the region that deters all forms of criminal activity.

The PPDP has a management team based in Canberra, and advisors in the field who work with the Pacific Chiefs of Police. These advisors identify the existing strengths of local policing agencies, then provide assistance to build additional capacity. The Papua New Guinea-Australia Policing Partnership, the Samoa-Australia Policing Partnership and the project in Nauru are all components of the PPDP, and bilateral programs such as RAMSI, the Tonga Police Development Program, and the Vanuatu Police Force Capacity Building Project are also linked to aspects of the program.

The PPDP is also based on strong police-to-police relationships, which echoes the success of the RAMSI initiative. All the nations invited to engage in this program also participate in RAMSI.

RAMSI was the world's first police-led, military-supported, multi-agency stabilisation and restoration operation. In July 2003, RAMSI began its mission to restore law and order in the troubled island nation, and to assist the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) develop its law enforcement capabilities. Since RAMSI began, more than 3700 weapons have been seized and more than 7000 arrests have been made. The RSIPF is now taking the lead in policing operations, which is a solid indication of the success of the programs being implemented by the RAMSI Participating Police Force.

It is vitally important to assist Pacific countries in protecting their natural resources, which form the basis of their economy. Maintaining the rule of law is fundamental to ensuring the region's future, and therefore a key element of the work being done by the PPDP. Each time a nation calls on the PPDP for assistance in developing its policing capacity it is also facilitating programs that will, over time, encourage sound economic development.

As such, the AFP remains committed to the work it is doing in the Pacific through programs such as the PPDP and RAMSI. Through capacity development initiatives and the implementation of strong rule of law principles, the AFP will continue to assist its partners in creating a strong policing presence across the Pacific region.



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