



An Australian Government Initiative



Communique

Pacific Engagement Technical Reference Group

3 September 2024

Attendees:

Chair: John Coyne (via MS Teams), Sonja Johnson, Jacinta Reddan, David Nye, Alana McKenna, Sam Doyle-Wiaczek, Lynn Carlyle-Jacob.

Apologies:

Ben Alexander, Hurriyet Babacan

The Pacific Engagement Technical Reference Group convened on 3rd September 2024 at the RDA Tropical North board rooms in Cairns city to discuss the progression of the Pacific Engagement Strategy. The meeting was chaired by John Coyne, who provided valuable insights throughout the discussions. John reflected on Cairns' pivotal role as the gateway to the Pacific, emphasising the importance of continuing to highlight the roadblocks that impede development. He also spoke about the value of "hunting as a pack," using this analogy to stress the need for a united and collaborative approach to leveraging Cairns' strategic position to drive growth and opportunity across the Pacific.

The meeting began with a review of outcomes from the previous meeting, with the Communique tabled and read. This was followed by a discussion of the Terms of Reference, which were formally adopted to provide a clear framework for the group's purpose and objectives. This critical step established a shared foundation for fostering collaboration and ensuring alignment with regional priorities. The discussion reinforced the importance of a structured approach to achieving the group's vision of prosperity and partnership across the Pacific.

Key areas of focus included Cairns' potential to position itself as an aspirational hub for women's sports, a concept that has been endorsed by Cairns Regional Council. The meeting also explored the strategic opportunity of having an Office of the Pacific based in Cairns, supported by Canberra personnel, which could significantly enhance regional dialogue and decision-making. Members highlighted the capacity of Cairns Airport to handle heavy loads and provide critical support if Far North Queensland required aid, reinforcing its role as a key logistical hub. Discussions also touched on the potential for training and education ventures in the marine space, leveraging the similarity of regional waters to enhance collaboration and skill development.

A significant portion of the meeting focused on the development of key deliverables to guide the strategy's implementation. Members agreed on the need for a comprehensive document to capture and map all the moving parts of the engagement strategy, providing a cohesive overview of its scope and opportunities. To support this, a sub-working group will be formed specifically to identify and collect data on stakeholders integral to the strategy's success. Separately, the group committed to drafting a "100-day plan" to outline actionable priorities and ensure momentum in the early stages of implementation, while also developing the comprehensive overview document.

As the meeting concluded, members reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the Pacific Engagement Strategy and fostering collaboration across sectors. The shared vision remains clear: to drive growth and opportunity for Cairns and the wider Pacific region through strategic initiatives and partnerships.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with the group's commitment to the following action items:

- Develop a comprehensive document to capture all moving parts.
- Form sub-working groups to identify and collect data on relevant stakeholders.
- Draft a 100-day plan to prioritise immediate actions and ensure early progress.

For further information or to get involved, please contact the RDA Tropical North office.