



**PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE**

**NEWSLETTER**

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**2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE UNITES IMMIGRATION AGENCIES IN THE PACIFIC**

The 18th Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (PIDC) held in Apia, Samoa, on 28 – 30 July 2015 brought together Heads of Immigration agencies from 15 member countries that included Samoa (Chair), Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Niue, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, as well as French Polynesia as an observer.

The conference also welcomed representatives of observer organisations from the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Canadian Border Services (CBS), Canada Immigration and Citizenship, the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The Honourable Mr Fonotoe Pierre Lauofo, as Acting Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa and Minister for Commerce, Industry and Labour in opening the annual forum reiterated how the conference drew together heads and representatives of immigration

agencies and partners across the Pacific, to discuss issues affecting our borders and the challenges of border management processes and irregular migration in the region.

The Conference provides a regional forum for immigration agencies to discuss issues of mutual interest on border control issues particularly around irregular people migration, human trafficking, people smuggling, transnational organised crime, immigration policies, capacity development programmes and advocacy outreach

programmes. Conference delegates also participated in workshop sessions discussing the challenges faced by immigration agencies, and the relevance of PIDC to agencies in the region. Delegates shared experiences, reviewed their respective needs and discussed how PIDC could play a leading role in coordinating regional approaches to address members' needs. Members agreed that ongoing consultations and strengthening of relationships with stakeholders was crucial to the process of

managing border control issues.

Delegates expressed appreciation to the Government of Samoa and the Prime Minister's Office Chief Executive Officer, Ms Vaosa Epa and her staff for organising and hosting a successful Conference.

The Conference also welcomed the invitation by Marshall Islands to host the 19th Pacific Immigration Directors Annual Conference in 2016 and New Zealand in 2017.

## FROM THE SECRETARIATS DESK



Bula vinaka and warm Pacific greetings from the Secretariats desk. The end of 2015 seems to have reached everyone and the year seems to have flown by very quickly. Such is the reality of time as time waits for no man”.

December is a time when business activities wind down and a period where staff take time off work but in the business of border control and those of us bestowed with the responsibility of monitoring and protecting our border, the business of border protection continues and doesn't stop nor take time off. However, the beauty about December is that it provides everyone an opportunity to review their performances and reflect on how we can continue to strengthen our ability to deliver successfully.

2015 has been an eventful year for members and for our organisation. The most significant for our organisation has been the historical decision by our members to relocate the PIDC Headquarters to Apia, Samoa. We have begun mapping out relocation plans to Samoa. Establishing a new Headquarters in Samoa will bring with it expected

changes which ultimately should benefit all our members.

2015 saw the return of two members into the PIDC family. When PIDC undertook to restructure the organisation with members signing onto a Memorandum of Understanding in 2014, our membership numbers dropped and we undertook an advocacy programme seeking to get the Pacific Islands immigration agencies signing onto our new MoU and membership. We will have two members returning into the PIDC family; French Polynesia and Vanuatu. The Pacific is scattered in character and often regarded as one of the most scattered region in the world. The PIDC family addresses these scattered characteristic of our island states and pulls members together to collectively work towards regional solutions that benefits all the Pacific islands. Our unity as members of what we now fondly call the PIDC family is perhaps our biggest strength and the trust members have woven together under the PIDC banner continues to strengthen our collective efforts in monitoring and protecting the vast Pacific ocean.

In spite of the busy programme that the organisation had this year, the Secretariat and the organisation forged ahead to successfully deliver its core services to the wider membership. We can confidentially state that we have completed another successful year achieving results that are in line with the guidance range we set ourselves to at the beginning of the year. Members endorsed at the 2016 Annual Conference our new Strategic Plan 2016–2018 with the organisation strategically positioning itself in the changing immigration landscape in the region. The public have high expectation of immigration agencies and we continue to receive media wide discussion forums on emerging immigration issues that generally challenge social stability and the security of our nations. Though, unseen to the public eye is the work that our immigration agencies continue to deliver against a backdrop of limited resources and capacities. We take our hats off to all immigration officers in the Pacific who continue to uphold high professional standards in their duty of monitoring our borders making our nations and the shared region one of the safest places on earth.

Finally we would like to thank our Management Board members and members for your continuing support to the Secretariat throughout the year.

Vinaka Vakalevu.

## VANUATU AND FRENCH POLYNESIA JOIN PIDC MEMBERSHIP IN 2015

PIDC welcomed two new members into the PIDC family; Vanuatu and French Polynesia in 2015. Their inclusion brings to 19 the total number of immigration departments that have now joined the PIDC membership. The return of Vanuatu in January 2015 and most recently French Polynesia in October was welcomed by members as we continue to build our collective efforts in managing our shared borders.

Following the establishment of the PIDC MoU in 2013 PIDC had undertaken a membership drive obtaining immigration agencies support in the Pacific to sign the new PIDC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). PIDCs' strength lies in member's unity and collective effort to work together to address national, regional and global border control issues in the Pacific in spite of our limitations and scattered characteristic. The establishment of an MoU was to formalize existing cooperative ties and arrangements between members and establish a PIDC Constitution and associated governance documents.

The inclusion of the two newest members further strengthens our network across the Pacific. Our collective efforts are central to our ability to protecting our shared borders in a globalised world where

the forces of globalization continue to expose our vulnerabilities to transnational organised crime and irregular migration. No longer can the Pacific rely on its isolation from the rest of the world and our scattered characteristics as the forces of globalization continue to make the world smaller. The PIDC family and the partnership that members establish in these membership strengthens our ability to collectively monitor and protect our borders.



## ASSISTANCE FOR POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT

At the recent PIDC Management Board meeting, New Zealand offered assistance to the Secretariat and PIDC members in restarting work on policy and legislative reform. The New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO) has a 'Pacific Desk', which exists to provide legislative drafting assistance for Pacific Island countries. This includes drafting legislation, training drafters in-country and creating legislative drafting templates and guidelines.

The office is very willing to include Pacific Island countries' immigration legislation in its work. The designated drafter is based in Wellington but is funded to travel to Pacific Islands to provide training, receive instructions, draft and review legislation, consult with stakeholders, and to present draft legislation to cabinets and ministers.

While priority is given to the New Zealand Realm territories of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, assistance is extended to other Pacific Island countries as resources permit. At the November Board meeting, New Zealand suggested that the four PIDC pilot countries reviewed in 2011 (FSM, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu) could be ideal candidates, as recommendations for legislative change were already identified.

The PCO is also keen to promote its services; perhaps through attendance at a PIDC annual conference or a presentation given on its behalf. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has a Legal Drafting Unit that might also be called on to assist.

If PIDC member states are interested, New Zealand can discuss with PCO the potential for its Pacific Desk to assist. PCO is open to requests from the offices of the Solicitor-General or Attorney-General in PIDC member countries for assistance in drafting immigration legislation that is within their legislative programme.

If any PIDC members would like to enquire about this offer please contact [immigration.international@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:immigration.international@mbie.govt.nz)



## AUSTRALIA WELCOMES FIJI DELEGATION

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) welcomed a delegation from the Government of Fiji in October 2015, which visited Australia for three days to learn more about border security functions, particularly in the cruise ship sector.

The three participants, from Fiji Immigration, Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority and the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre, travelled to Brisbane and toured Brisbane Airport and the nearby cruise ship terminal facilities. They observed the arrival and departure processing of two cruise ships and viewed the small craft yacht arrival point.

Margaret Twomey, Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, said the visit highlighted the strengthened relationship between the two countries.

"We were pleased to welcome the delegation to Australia, and I commend Fiji for its commitment to working together on strengthening border protection across the Pacific," High Commissioner Twomey said.

"The leisure cruise industry is enjoying strong growth in both our countries and it is regarded as one of the fastest growing areas within the tourism sector. To ensure we are ahead of the game we need to work together and continue to put robust immigration and customs clearance procedures in place.

"This visit is an important step as we continue to build on the partnerships between agencies and strengthen regional capabilities. It recognises that collaboration is needed to achieve effective outcomes and ensure all our borders are protected," High Commissioner Twomey said.

At Brisbane Airport, the delegation observed arrivals and departures using Australia's new SmartGate technology which allows eligible travellers to self-process through passport control when they arrive in Australia. The system provides a secure and efficient way to clear passport controls. The delegation also visited the container terminal to observe cargo inspections there.

*Source: Australia Department of Immigration and Border Protection*

## PIDC HEADQUARTERS TO BE RELOCATED TO SAMOA



The 2015 Annual Conference agreed for the relocation of the PIDC Headquarters to Samoa. Members deliberated on the ongoing need to establish PIDCs' legal entity status under a Headquarters agreement reviewing a prolonged process that was initiated in 2005. Conference members in their deliberations unanimously agreed to relocate the PIDC Headquarters to Samoa in light of the need to finalise a Host Country Agreement to enable the Secretariat to become fully operational.

The decision was unanimous following Samoa's willingness to facilitate and support the organisations establishment under a Headquarters agreement in Samoa. The current PIDC Headquarters

has been located in Fiji since its formative years in 1996 after moving from Australia, to be housed under the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat between 1999 – 2010. In 2011 the Secretariat moved out of the PIFS buildings relocating to the Suva business center.

The need to establish a legal entity status under a HQ arrangement is central to the organisations restructure plans as it realigns its structure and services to meet members needs in light of emerging security and border control issues now challenging the Pacific region.

## INTRODUCING MEEGAN SORENSON



Ni sa bula Vinaka. I have recently been appointed to a new Risk Manager role based in the Suva office of Immigration NZ. A key focus of the role is to support our INZ visa processing offices in Suva, Apia and Nuku'alofa in

risk and intelligence matters and to lead and drive intelligence activity for the Pacific region. Another key focus of the role is to establish and maintain effective working relationships with our key partners across the Pacific region and to support and build on the relationships that some of my fellow INZ colleagues have already shaped, people such as Tricia Welsh, Rob Stevens, Rex Heesterman, Steve Jones and Grayson Rowse to name a few.

Having been with INZ for over twenty years now, I would describe myself as 'career Immigration'. I have worked in varied roles across the operational, service design and strategic arms of Immigration New Zealand. Operationally I've worked both onshore and offshore in the Wellington, Beijing and Bangkok offices of INZ and have also held various Business Analysis roles at our National Office. I look forward to being a part of the PIDC network and contributing to its Vision for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives.

Meegan is contactable at - [Meegan.sorenson@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Meegan.sorenson@mbie.govt.nz).

## BALI PROCESS LEADING REGIONALLY COORDINATED APPROACH TO TRAINING IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

At the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process, Ministers highlighted the value of linking the Bali Process with the training expertise of existing regional COE's.

The Regional Support Office of the Bali Process (RSO) in partnership with the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) led a region meeting with regional Centers of Excellence and stakeholders to establish a mechanism to deliver a regionally coordinated approach to training related to People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. The regionally coordinated approach to training aims to align training on people smuggling and trafficking in persons to be delivered through COE's. In doing so, Bali Process members and COEs will benefit from streamlined resource usage and allocation, enhanced awareness of available training programmes and increased diversity in the types of training programmes available to the Bali Process Membership and PIDC. PIDC continues to monitor with interest the work that is being led by the Bali Process RSO on regional coordination approach of training in the region.

## REGIONAL BORDER TRAINING OFFICER



The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) has funded a new position in the Pacific, the Regional Border Training Officer (RBTO). The aim of the RBTO position is to enhance cooperation on border security issues by building strong working relationships and establishing lawful information

sharing arrangements with agencies and organisations with airport responsibilities

The RBTO position commenced in February 2015 and is now based at the Australian High Commission in Suva. The first RBTO was Neil Faithfull, whose broad operational experience includes working in the Compliance, Skilled Migration, Family Migration and Regional Migration programmes. More recently, Neil worked in an immigration integrity role at the Australian Embassy in Thailand and in an Airline Liaison and Training role in the Middle East, China and Japan.

The role of the RBTO is to provide support to airlines that have direct air services to Australia in the Pacific region. This support is provided in the form of advice and assistance with Australia's Advance Passenger Processing (APP) check-in system and with providing training to staff on Australia's Entry Requirements and Border Management, Advance Passenger Processing, Document Examination, Improperly Documented Passenger Trends, Passenger Assessment and Impostor Detection.

Since February Neil has visited the international airports in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu. On these visits he established contacts with key personnel in the airlines and the ground handling organisations and provided assistance and training sessions for airline staff responsible for passenger

processing. Most recently, Neil was working in a support role with airline staff at Nadi and Nausori International airports in Fiji.

Neil left Fiji recently, having completed his rotation, and his temporary replacement is George Rhind. George is also a highly skilled DIBP officer, with 25 years' experience in border management. He will fill the RBTO role until the longer term placement, Michael Velastagui from the Australian Border Force at Sydney Airport, can arrive early next year. Like Neil, George is available to provide presentations and training to Immigration and Customs officers and other key stakeholders with airport responsibilities.

## INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP ON INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS HOSTED IN FIJI



The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) with the support of the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC) and the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) hosted a five day introductory workshop on intelligence analysis from 16 to 20 November 2015 in Suva, Fiji. Participants from customs and immigration from Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Fiji, CNMI, Tuvalu and Kiribati were represented at this workshop

The Training programme aimed to provide participants with an introduction to the theory and basic practices behind intelligence analysis and targeted officers' who have had no previous experience in this important field.

The training was opened by the Fijian FRCA Chief Executive officer Mr Jitoko and in his opening address mentioned the need to strike a balance between protecting our respective borders and trade facilitation. This continues to challenge border control officials as we live in a world that continues to get smaller and knows no borders.

Participants expressed appreciation generally agreeing that the intelligence course would up skill officers in the areas of information exchange. Moreover, participants are expected to strengthen networking contacts with other law enforcement agencies represented at the forum but most importantly have a better understanding on the value of information exchange.

We are now living in a world where the functions of borders as barriers continues to be exposed to increasing challenges brought about by the forces of globalization. Changes that are facilitated by safer, faster and cheaper modes of transportation and ease of

communication across international borders. While increasing migration is eroding the functions of borders, it continues to be regulated by borders. In a time of heightened concern for national security, controlling borders is considered indispensable in stopping the danger coming from outside. The Pacific is commonly synonymous to issues around lack of resources, expertise and capacity to monitor the movement of people through our shared region. Our scattered characteristic across the Pacific Ocean can be strengthened through a regional approach of sharing information on movement of people across the region.

Sharing information across borders becomes crucial in these evolving borders that continue to be exposed to transnational criminal activities. This intelligence programme sets the platform on the need of a work cultural shift that is open and willing to share information with other immigration agencies and partner law enforcement agencies in the Pacific with the underlying purpose of protecting our shared borders.

