

Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference NEWSLETTER



13th Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference



2009 annual Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference participants

Australia recently hosted one of the most successful annual conferences in October this year when 47 participants from 20 countries of the 23 PIDC membership including regional and international Observer organisations met to discuss immigration issues.

The 13th PIDC meeting was officially opened by the Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP, the Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services. The Hon. Laurie Ferguson in opening the conference had reiterated Australia's view on the significance of the PIDC forum in the Pacific and welcomed the opportunity to extend the hand of friendship to all regional neighbours in addition to using the opportunity to discuss immigration issues. Members and Observers discussed in open session's immigration issues ranging from immigration policy and legislation develop-

ment, strengthening of information management and exchange, research and analysis and training and capacity building. Members also had the opportunity to participate in workshop sessions where experiences were shared including exchange of ideas on how to progress immigration work in the region.

One of the major achievements emerging out of the PIDC this year was the commissioning of an Institutional Review which assessed the effectiveness of the current arrangements of the PIDC and made recommendations on the arrangements needed to support the PIDC in the future. PIDC Members noted the wide ranging findings of the Institutional Review. The review acknowledged that PIDC plays a pivotal role in uniting all their 23 members to benefit and learn from each other in order to improve policies and practices for managing immigration in the Pacific region.

December 2009

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Calendar of events

- I. 1st Management Board Meeting: 16-17 February 2010, Cook Islands



The PIDC now looks forward to the next annual conference to be hosted by Vanuatu Immigration in 2010. It is anticipated that the 2010 conference will see more members participating fully in open discussions and continue to contribute to the strengthening of PIDC as the pre-eminent regional immigration agency in the Pacific region.

The year ahead looks busy for everyone and we should carry on the good work. As Chair of the PIDC, I encourage all members to continue participating and contributing fully in the PIDC family. Working together and upholding PIDCs' key values of commitment, openness, family and teamwork, truth and respect, integrity, innovation and flexibility, rule of law and leadership will underpin our work as we confidently face the future.

From the Chairman...



Poloma Komiti the PIDC Chair writes::

Talofa and a warm Pacific greeting to all our members. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all members of the PIDC family for the work that we have achieved together in 2009. The exemplary work this year has culminated in one of the most successful annual conferences where forty seven delegates from 20 member countries including Observer organisations attended the 13th Pacific Immigration Directors Conference to discuss immigration issues affecting the region.

One of the major achievements this year was the commissioning of the PIDC Institutional Review. With moves toward international best practice governance standards, the recommendations of the institutional review recognised the opportunity that the organisation has to implement a role model for governance in international agencies. The review has provided PIDC with an opportunity to position itself as an effective regional force, making a major contribution to socio-economic development and security in the Pacific region.

2010 presents yet another year of challenges as we work hard to improve not only the services that PIDC provides to its membership but most importantly in ensuring that members continue to strengthen their border control systems and processes from the increasing sophistication of those contemplating the conduct of illegal activities in our region. It has certainly been a successful year of strengthening PIDC's profile at national, regional and international level.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous and blessed New Year.

From the Secretariat...

Bula Vinaka from the Secretariat in Suva. We takes this opportunity to thank the former Head of Secretariat Mr Viliami Lolohea, for leading the secretariat before his resignation in early September 2009. We wish Mr Viliami Lolohea all the best in his new career path.

The year has been a busy one with the annual conference being the highlight to this years work. The successful coordination of this years conference was the result of a great team effort. At this year's annual conference the Secretariat also presented the 2009 Human Trafficking, People Smuggling and Illegal Migration Report. This is the 6th edition of the report and a big "vinaka vakalevu" to all members that had submitted their annual collection plans. Your annual collection plans has enabled us to produce this detailed report.

The Secretariat has continued to work closely with members throughout the year especially in the delivery of document examination and immigration intelligence training programmes. One of the major products being produced out of the Secretariat on a monthly basis is the PIDC Intelligence Bulletin, which continues to receive praise for the quality and relevance of the product especially amongst front-line officers. PIDC continues to be represented at national, regional and international forums and the Secretariat continues to encourage all members to contribute towards raising the profile of PIDC in such forums. The year has also seen members who have played important roles in shaping the future of PIDC live for other fields of interest. Special mention should be given to Ms Jane McLoughlin of INZ who has recently left to pursue graduate studies. Jane has contributed a lot to the work of PIDC with great en-

thusiasm and passion and we wish her well in her studies. And on a brighter note, a new Head of Secretariat is expected to be announced soon and we all look forward to his arrival. We wish everyone all the best and look forward to a productive 2010.



Participants listen attentively during the 2009 conference

The Power of Information

We have all heard the saying “information is power”. It might sound a little sinister or bring to mind the last spy film we saw. But, the truth is that information empowers us every day. Whether we are trying to catch a bus or buy groceries, having the right information can save money, time, and effort.

Similarly, having the right information is important for businesses, governments, and even immigration departments! Appropriate and accurate information can lead to better decisions being made that can speed up processes, make savings, or increase revenue. Within government, a policy based on sound evidence is more likely to lead to successful outcomes than a policy based on guesses about what is happening.

In immigration departments, we rely on information all the time. We need to know what time flights are due to land, so that we have officers on the immigration desks, ready to check passports. We need to know how many passports are issued every year, so that we can order the right amount from the supplier. We need to know what names are on international watch lists. We need to know how many overstayers there are so we can allocate resources to in-country enforcement. The list is almost endless. Immigration departments also collect information that is helpful to other parts of government and feeds in to long term planning and economic growth, or is important for the maintenance of law and order.

Accurate figures on tourist arrivals, for example, can help ministries of finance improve their revenue predictions with implications for national planning. Sometimes information is gained from precedent. We ordered 2,000 passports last year, so we ordered 2,000 again this year. But, do we know how many we actually issued last year? Did we have too many or too few? Having accurate information means that good decisions can be made, that services can be improved, that borders can be more secure, and that budgets stretch further. But, this means systems need to be in place to ensure that information is captured accurately, that it is recorded consistently over time, and importantly, that it is *used*.

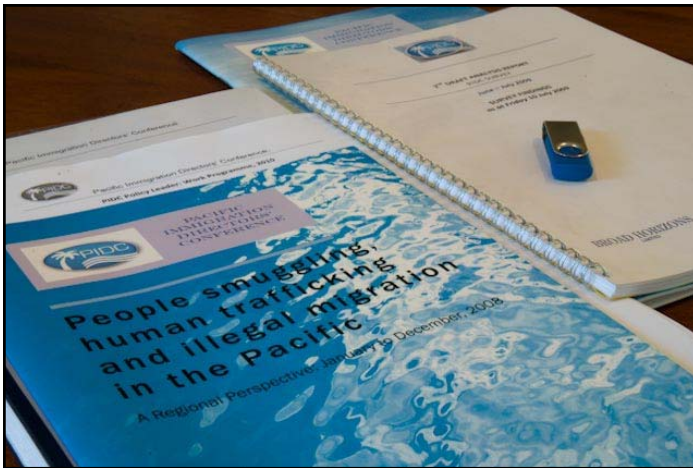
It is this time of year that the Secretariat sends out the PIDC Annual Collection Plan to our members. We now have six years of valuable information on immigration issues in the Pacific gathered through the collection plan. This enables us to detect key issues, predict future trends, and raise awareness amongst members. It also provides an evidence base that supports requests for donor funding. The Annual Collection Plan is intended to match the information that immigration departments already collect, or should seek to collect if they are not already doing so. The plan therefore also provides a benchmark for members to assess the information they collect and to en-



Delegates from Tuvalu, Tonga, Solomons, Samoa, Marshal Islands and Palau listen attentively to conference proceedings in Sydney

sure the systems they have in place to collect it are working as they should. Over the next 12 months, the PIDC Secretariat will be working in collaboration with members and partner organisations, and in-line with existing projects, to further empower directors and heads of immigration through improving and developing the collection and use of immigration data. As a starting point we hope that all members will complete and return the Annual Collection Plan to the Secretariat.

Making Policy Work For You



Sometimes policy documents seem to spend most of their time on a shelf gathering dust. Sometimes they are written to satisfy the demands of a donor, sometimes they are written because we are told we must have one, even though we do not really know why.

These are obviously not good policies. The development of good policy can be as much about the process as the final product. It is about gathering evidence, it is about involving everyone who might be affected, and it is about ownership. It is also about being clear about what you want the policy to achieve. We often only notice the need for a policy or the inadequacy of existing policy when circumstances arise that are less common or reflect a new phenomenon. A border agency may have a well-functioning policy to deal with inadequately documented arrivals, but what if those arrivals claim to be refugees? Does the immigration officer know what to do? Does he or she know what their legal obligations are? Where do they look for the answers?

Border checks ordinarily run smoothly, but what happens in the case of a national disaster? There may be an influx of officials, aid workers or volunteers from overseas. There may also be less scrupulous arrivals seeking to take advantage of the confusion caused by a disaster. Immigration officers may be stretched. What status should be given to the legitimate arrivals to ensure they are entitled to work under the immigration rules? Where does an immigration officer look for the answer?

Planning ahead, thinking about how immigration agencies can respond to scenarios, learning from other countries, and keeping up to date with changing trends in migration all play a role in ensuring im-

migration agencies are equipped to deal with such situations. Formalising these things into an agreed policy ensures that an immigration agency, its officers, partner agencies, and the rest of government know what should be done and can work together to achieve it. In recognition of the importance of this and following consultation with members, Immigration New Zealand is funding a new position in the PIDC Secretariat. This position is designed to support and assist members' policy needs through undertaking research and analysis and by directly extending policy expertise.



Matt Capper (left) is the newly appointed PIDC Policy leader

Following an extensive tender process, Matt Capper has been appointed the new Policy Leader. He will work as part of the PIDC Secretariat in Suva, reporting to the Head of Secretariat. Some of you may remember Matt from his previous work with us between 2006 and 2008. We are pleased to welcome him back to PIDC.

2009 PIDC Document Examination Principal and Application Training

The 2009 PIDC Document Examination Principals and Application training was recently delivered by Australia's Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in Apia Samoa from 24 - 26 November 2009. This training was co-funded by DIAC with Immigration New Zealand and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat. Twenty Immigration Officers from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, New Zealand Immigration at their Samoa Office, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu including representatives from the PTCCC and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

attended the three day document examination training. The document examination training was delivered by experienced DIAC document examiners and the course included: forensic decision making process, correct use of document examination equipment, demonstration of equipment and practical exercises, identification of paper and security features, hands on examination of documents to detect fraud and recording methodology for examination and results.

The training had sought to build national and organizational document examination capability in addition to strengthening immigration networks between Pacific Island Immigration agencies. The training especially assisted in preparing Immigration officers to Identify travel documents that have been altered or tampered with, and to be familiar with techniques to identify such documents; Understand the modus operandi of organised crime groups and the use of fraudulent documentation to facilitate criminal activities; Identify suspected individuals from their documentation, appearance, behavior, luggage and other factors and using interview techniques associated with the above.

The effective control of national borders is one of the most important steps in protecting revenue and combating the activities of national and transnational criminals. The use of false or fraudulent travel documentation to facilitate illegal migration by individuals and organized crime groups is recognized as a significant threat in the region. PIDC members have always recognized the need to continue training immigration officers in the area of document examination. This latest PIDC document examination and application training was specifically designed to meet members need to continually update the skills of frontline officers tasked with managing the movement of people and goods through their borders.



2009 Document Examination Training participants in Samoa

IOM Regional Representative Visits PIDC Secretariat

The IOM Regional Representative for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Mr. Mark Getchell, paid a visit to the PIDC Secretariat in Suva, Fiji on 1 Dec 2009, as part of a trip to meet Senior Government Officials and to attend the Regional Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) Workshop held from 2-4 December in Nadi.



Mr Mark Getchell the IOM regional Representative for Australia, NZ and the Pacific meeting Aukila at the Secretariat during his visit in December 2009.

The aim of the visit was to acknowledge the strengthening partnership between IOM and the PIDC Secretariat and its Membership. IOM currently has offices in the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands in the North Pacific and two offices in the South Pacific located in Port Moresby and Honiara, where IOM is working in close partnerships with the host governments in implementing immigration management capacity building program that aim to strengthen border management systems and practices. IOM also partners with the PIDC in implementing an Assisted Voluntary Return program for the Pacific, as highlighted at the PIDC plenary meeting held last October in Sydney.

Mr. Getchell reaffirmed IOM's commitment to working with Pacific States to address migration management challenges including capacity strengthening, irregular migration concerns, trafficking in persons and the potential impact on migration resulting from climate change, among other issues. Mr. Getchell encouraged continued and ongoing dialogue on migration matters with the PIDC membership and the Secretariat underscoring IOM's desire to develop strong partnerships with the Pacific community.



IOM and PIDC Launch Joint Assisted Voluntary Return Program for the Pacific

Introduced at the PIDC 2009 Annual Conference in Sydney, the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) program for the Pacific region is designed to contribute to an immigration department's capacity to deal with stranded irregular migrants originating from outside the Pacific region. These may be cases or issues that are currently posing challenges to immigration authorities or future cases that may arise.



Mr Lance Bonneau introducing the Assisted Voluntary Return Program to the 2009 annual conference participants in Sydney, Australia

With this in mind, IOM looks forward to receiving input from Immigration Officials throughout the Pacific concerning cases of unsuccessful asylum seekers, stranded migrants and victims of trafficking. Officials may wish to discuss how they might be assisted to give effect to a voluntary return either within the AVR program or within their existing migration management systems.

Since the programme began in May 2009, IOM was able to immediately offer its support to Vanuatu Immigration who assisted a Sri Lankan national to voluntarily return home following a failed application to UNHCR for refugee status. This return was aided with the help of Immigration New Caledonia who

allowed the Sri Lankan national to transit through Noumea with an escort. To learn more about the programme or to seek assistance in processing a voluntary return of an irregular migrant outside the region, please contact the PIDC Secretariat and/or Mr. Lance Bonneau (Lbonneau@iom.int) at IOM's regional office in Canberra.

UNHCR Holds Two Day Workshop with Fiji Immigration



Fiji participants at the UNHCR Workshop at the Naviti Resort in Fiji.

Building on Fiji's long tradition of humane treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees was the focus of a workshop jointly hosted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Fiji Immigration Department on the 28th and 29th of October.

The two-day workshop looked at deepening the understanding among officials of how to identify and act on the protection needs of people seeking international protection, and to provide technical advice on the development of its national refugee determination system. UNHCR's Regional Representative, Richard Towle, thanked the Fiji Immigration Department for co-hosting the highly successful workshop, and said it was evidence of the strong working relationship which has developed over many years between UNHCR and the Department.

Mr Towle said the workshop was also an opportunity for UNHCR to offer a global perspective and outline the complex factors relating to insecurity and conflict around the world that lead to people fleeing their homes and seeking international protection and to

make sure people needing protection were able to find it, even in the small Pacific Island States of this region.

"Fiji is an important role model for other Pacific Island States through its treatment of refugees and we encourage it to continue on this positive path", Towle said. Fiji is a leader in the Pacific as a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and through its adoption of a national refugee legislation and refugee status determination system. Through this workshop, UNHCR and the Fiji Immigration Department have recommitted themselves to working in a cooperative way to build on and strengthen the systems by which Fiji upholds its international refugee law and humanitarian obligations.

Dean Blakemore says "Goodbye"

Talofa and Kia Ora Pacific colleagues.

My 3 year posting in the Pacific is about to conclude and I want to take this opportunity to pass on my sincere thanks to all my Pacific Immigration & Law Enforcement colleagues for what has been a truly wonderful experience. Your support and professionalism have resulted in some very good initiatives and projects including the Vanuatu Passport Project, the Immigration and Customs Intelligence Training Programme, Niue, Tuvalu, Tonga and Cook Islands Project work and various related activities.

A special thanks to my colleagues at Samoan Immigration who have hosted this position for the last 3 years and have been truly fantastic to deal with, we have a strong relationship which bodes well for the future. Thank you Fouina, Siapo and Henry. Thank



Dean (right) and Shaun at the recent 2009 annual conference in Sydney

you to my support team and colleagues in Wellington including Api, Shaun (Shamus), Susan, Glenda, Jane and Katie. A truly dedicated & passionate group of people and a real pleasure to work with. The PIDC Secretariat have always been strong advocates for this role and I am grateful for the support of Akuila, Rachel and the 2 Matt's (Capper and Gibbs) along with Viliami. You are a truly dedicated group of pro-



The Fijian delegation at the 2009 annual conference singing the Fijian farewell song to delegates and friends of PIDC.

professionals who have the safety and security of the region as your primary focus.

Keep up the great work guys. I especially want to thank the chairman of the PIDC Poloma Komiti who I have thoroughly enjoyed working with for the last 3 years, Poloma, you are the consummate professional and your guidance has been truly appreciated.

I have enjoyed working with each and everyone of you over the last 3 years and will take many lasting memories and friendships with me back to Aotearoa. The work we have started is being carried on by my colleagues in NZ and will result in a stronger, safer and more secure Pacific which will ultimately benefit us all. The RLO position remains as a vacancy which INZ hope to fill in the near future. I return to NZ to run the Compliance Operations Branch based in Auckland, please feel free to visit anytime you are passing through.

Please continue to stay in touch, the Pacific is my passion and therefore will always be a priority, my e-mail address remains the same and I look forward to remaining a part of the Pacific community heading into the future.

"Faafetai faafetai faafetai tele lava."



1st Management Board Meeting in Koror, Palau: 18-20 March 2009



2nd Management Board Meeting in Wellington, NZ: 21-23 July 2009



13th PIDC Annual Conference in Sydney, Australia: 6-8 October 2009

