

## Cultural Celebration Award Entrant: The Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police



Building Pacific policing leadership is just one of the benefits of the successful Seconded Police Officer programme undertaken by The Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) organisation. The programme also provides the seconded police personnel and New Zealand Police members and community with a greater cultural awareness of issues affecting Pacific countries.

The Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1970, represents 21 member nations across the Pacific and is comprised of more than 75,000 serving police officers. The Commissioner, Chief or Director of Police of each national police service represents the member state.

In 2003 PICP members agreed that the PICP Secretariat, which operates on its behalf, would be strengthened and invigorated to meet strategic plan objectives by hosting secondments of Pacific Police Service members.

While this initiative was initially developed to help meet strategic plan objectives 'to build Pacific policing leadership and collectively navigate regional policing challenges through discovery, knowledge, influence and partnerships', the programme has had much wider success, not only for the personal development of the SPO but also for the increased cultural awareness and rich diversity it gives the Secretariat staff, New Zealand Police members and the communities they work in.

The first secondment was established in 2004 and, over time, the programme evolved as the Seconded Pacific Officer (SPO) programme with three seven-month placements per

year - two funded by New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and one by the Australian Federal Police.

Having a diverse range of Seconded Pacific Officers in the New Zealand workplace has resulted in a greater awareness of issues affecting the Pacific countries and enabled officers to hear the issues first hand and to work on sustainable solutions together. The reciprocity of sharing new skills, and areas of interest is a by-product of the SPO experience for all involved.

Challenges such as coping with the Wellington winter, homesickness, looking after themselves and eating properly, shyness and language are all addressed through specific initiatives of the PICP which provides clothing and living allowances, flu injections, Skype and free phone calls home, meals at the office, group quizzes and exchanges of language and culture.

Filipa Lini who was seconded from Vanuatu in 2015 reported:

"My first day of work was really challenging, having to deal with the weather, technology and the fast pace of life here in Wellington. The working relationship at the PICP Secretariat was really outstanding. The support and encouragement that I got from team members showed me that team members have great respect and are professional in what they do. I learnt great lessons to apply at home and at work and also had the opportunity to increase my knowledge.

"Being away from home for seven months was a bit of a challenge, but the smiles, encouragement, support and constant interaction with team members everyday made me feel at home," says Filipa.

The implementation of the initiative is consultative, with all member countries having the opportunity to participate. An expression of interest is sent to the 21 member countries, followed by a robust application process. This process aims to identify areas of personal and professional development for the Seconded Officer but equally to strengthen the workplace and efficiency of the PICP Secretariat in New Zealand.

Successful applicants undergo a medical and are visited by an Executive Secretariat Officer.

Next comes the paperwork, which includes the objectives, principles of co-operation and agency responsibilities. Once the paperwork is completed, the Secretariat organises travel, accommodation and payment of a living allowance. A fully funded visit home is arranged half way through the secondment and visits by family are encouraged.

The programme is well supported by the PICP Executive Director and Police Commissioner who receive a weekly report on each secondment. Activities and achievements are also reported at the annual PICP conference.

The secondees' Police Chiefs are accountable to their Governments for the success of the programme and the benefits to their Police organisation.

In addition to the intangible benefits of enrichment, awareness, friendship, fellowship, laughter and enlightenment, the tangible benefits of the programme include the contribution made to the PICP strategic plan; the exposure of the PICP brand, not only

within the Pacific but also throughout New Zealand via placement opportunities; participation in the community and at the Royal New Zealand Police College. The programme also assists in the identification of local issues and the resulting projects e.g. a driver-training programme for policewomen in Vanuatu. The SPO programme also enhances the communication between the Secretariat and PICP Countries as well as with the 21 Chiefs.

For PICP Secretariat staff the benefits are broad – an increased understanding of language barriers for people in an environment when they cannot use their own language; an increased understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, customs and beliefs; and a recognition of the resilience of those working in the Pacific in extreme conditions and with very little resources.

Upon completing a secondment from Papua New Guinea in 2010, Senior Inspector Elisha Tanale said, “I look forward to taking the operational learning experiences, ideas and knowledge back to my organisation in PNG. We admire your high standards in regard to general police operations and settings, which we hope to achieve in years to come.”