

Australia's commitment to the Pacific

22 October 2012

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Senator David Feeney will visit regional neighbours this week to discuss security challenges and the follow-on program to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program with the national leaders of New Caledonia, Tonga, Samoa, and Tuvalu.

“The people of the South West Pacific share the common goals of peace, stability and security and my visit this week is an opportunity to continue dialogue on how this shared strategic vision will translate into practical action,” Senator Feeney said.

“Our long-standing cooperation with the military and police forces across the Pacific has played a key role in supporting this goal. However, security challenges are complex – geographic, social and economic circumstances influence security, and a successful response to these challenges must address these circumstances in a holistic way.

“This is no more evident than in maritime security. The challenges to maritime security are diverse. They include the devastation to fish stocks and the resultant effect on local livelihoods and food security caused by illegal unregulated and unreported fishing to the threat of weapons smuggling and transnational crime. Australia is committed to dealing with these issues in concert with our regional neighbours in a manner which upholds national sovereignty and supports regional cooperation.”

In New Caledonia, Senator Feeney will meet with President Harold Martin. His visit will coincide with the French-led exercise CROIX DU SUD, a multilateral exercise involving nine countries responding to a regional disaster. Ninety-four members from B Company 1 Royal Australian Regiment, 17 staff officers and HMAS Tobruk and her 193 crew will participate in the Exercise. In Tonga, Senator Feeney will meet with the Prime Minister of Tonga, Lord Tu’ivakano, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Food and Fisheries, and the Minister for Revenue. The Senator also met with Mr ‘Akilisi Pohiva, the Leader of the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands, as well as Brigadier-General ‘Uta’atu, the Commander of the Tonga Defence Services.

In Samoa, Senator Feeney will meet with the Prime Minister, the Honourable Tuilaepa Lupefeso, as well as the Minister for Police and Prisons, and the Commissioner for Police.

In Tuvalu, Senator Feeney will meet with the Prime Minister, the Honourable Willy Telavi, as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and address the Tuvaluan Cabinet.