

MC23-097811

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ESTABLISH A
RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM****Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, we recommend you:**

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

2. Note the Australian Government has not yet made a decision on financial support for a PNG franchise,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Noted / Please Discuss

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

PATRICK GORMAN

Date: 12/01/2024

Comments:**KEY POINTS**

1. s 22(1)(a)(ii)

2. s 22(1)(a)(ii)

On 21 July 2023, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, announced s 45 in funding to build player pathways and s 45 for PNG's Bid Board to develop a business case. Government is yet to make a decision on further funding to support a PNG franchise. The Prime Minister has said he supports PNG's bid to become the 18th franchise in the NRL, and that it will be a 'game changer' for Australia's relationship with PNG.

Financial Implications

Nil

Consultation

PM&C DIVISIONS – Social Policy Division

DEPARTMENTS – DFAT; DSS; Health (Office for Sport)

Bill Costello

Assistant Secretary

Pacific Branch

15/12/2023

Policy Officer:

Phone no:

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Circulation

PM&C Secretary; A/g DS, International and Security Group, **L Wood**; FAS, International Division, **C Chittick**; FAS, Intergovernmental Relations and Reform Division, **L Steel**; AS, Pacific Branch, B Costello; A/g AS, Health and Aged Care Branch, **s 22(1)(a)** FAS, Ministerial Support Division, **G Martin**

AMO Chief of Staff; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

PMO Chief of Staff; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Cabinet Secretary

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A DRAFT RESPONSE

ATTACHMENT B INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

OFFICIAL

SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIA’S SUPPORT TO PNG

Category s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Summary of Australia’s support

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sport (including
NRL)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

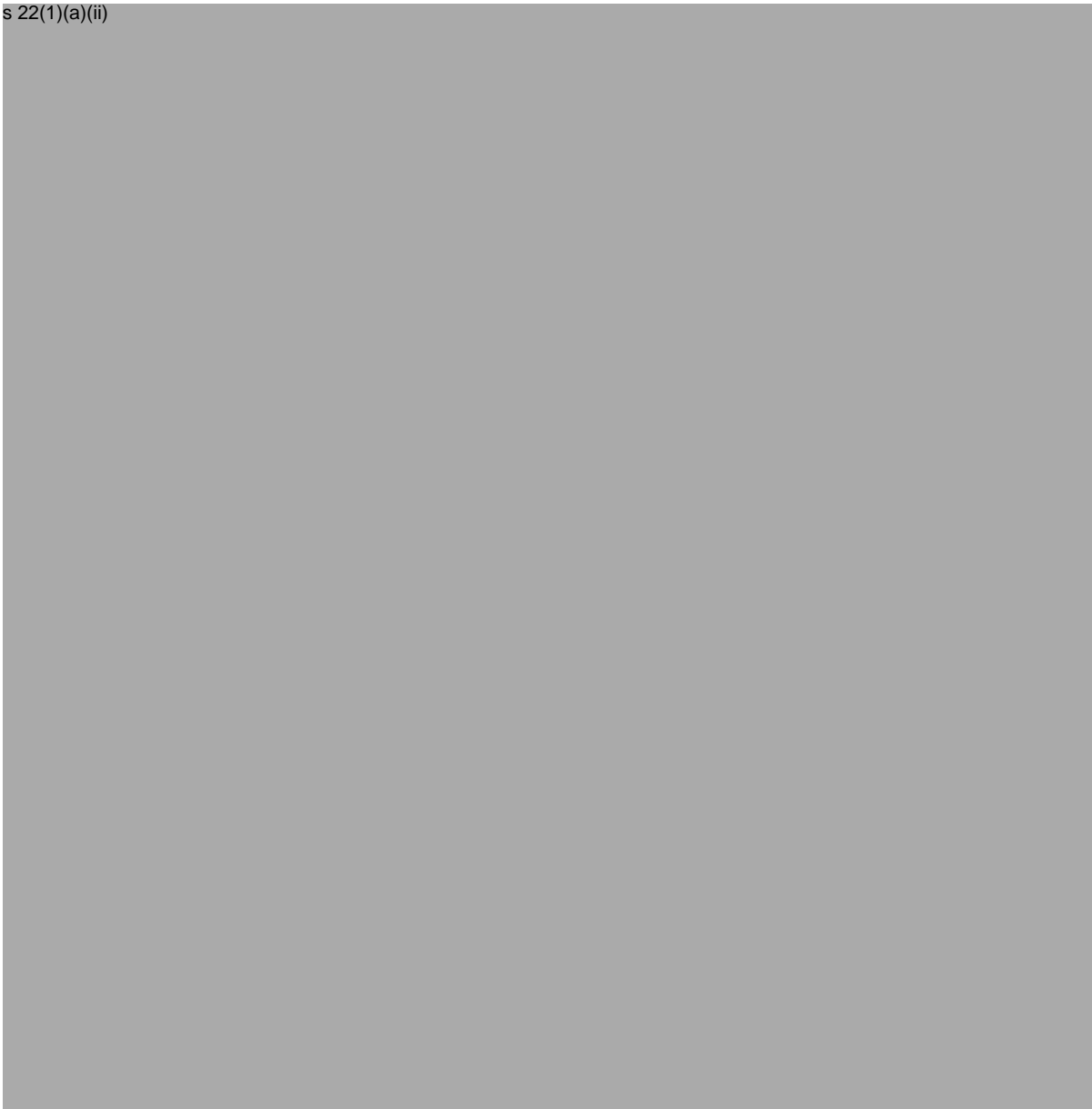
- **PNG Rugby League – Talent Pathways Program** - \$5.5 million (currently under design under Team Up) to support PNG's player development pathways towards having a team in the NRL competition, 2024-25




s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Talking Points

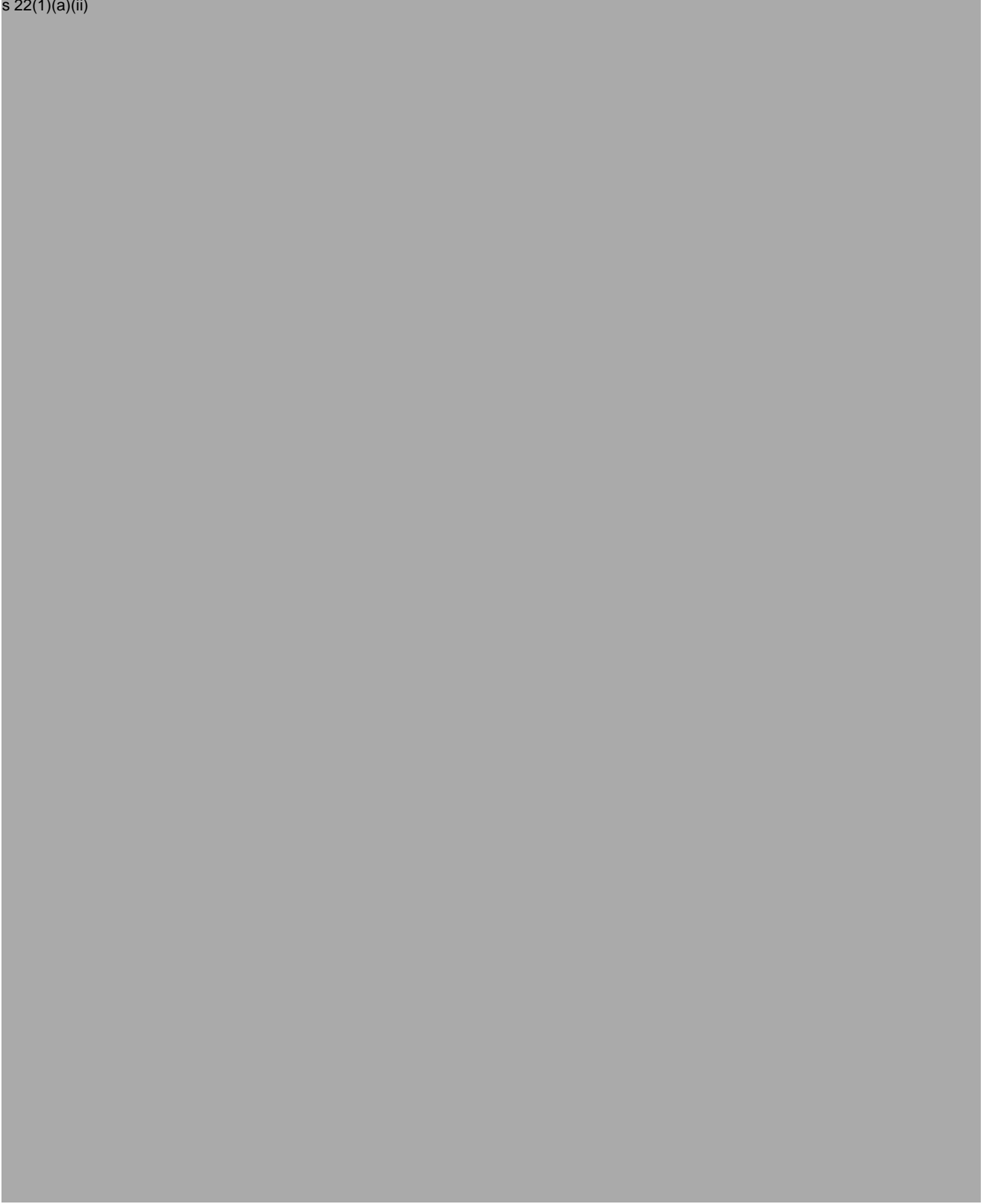
s 22(1)(a)(ii)




- The Australian Government is in discussions with the PNG Bid and the NRL on PNG's bid for a franchise in the NRL and NRLW.
 - s 22(1)(a)(ii) 
- All parties have stated that they support PNG's bid for a team in the NRL and NRLW
 - no decision has been made on any potential Australian Government financial support, beyond the \$5.5 million Minister Conroy announced in July 2023 to develop player pathways, a youth talent academy and ^{s 45}  to inform the bid
 - s 22(1)(a)(ii) 

- We are already supporting rugby league in PNG through \$5.5 million to support the PNG NRL Bid Board develop player pathways and a talent academy for PNG youth, and supporting ^{s 45} [REDACTED] to inform the PNG Bid's strengths and priorities
 - This is in addition to our existing support for the Pacific Championships (\$7 million over two years), and programs under Team Up and PacificAus Sports.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)




s 22(1)(a)(ii)



If raised: Why is the Australian Government investing \$5.5m in PNG player pathways?

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Discussions between the three parties are ongoing, and the Australian Government has not made any decisions on financial support for the bid, beyond the \$5.5 million Minister Conroy announced in July 2023 to develop player pathways, a youth talent academy and a ^{s 45} to inform the bid

- s 22(1)(a)(ii)


s 22(1)(a)(ii)


If raised: Pacific Championships (14 October – 5 November 2023)

- The Australian Government is proud to have partnered with the NRL to establish the Pacific Championships – an exciting new tournament
 - we committed \$7 million over two years so that seven Pacific countries are included in the Championships and for games to be played in Papua New Guinea and Fiji as well as Australia and New Zealand
 - the Pacific Championships will begin another bright chapter for Pacific sport.


Background

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



On 19 July 2023, Minister Conroy committed \$5.5 million ^{s 45} ) to support player pathways for boys and girls in PNG through coaching development, talent identification and player academy programs.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: DFAT Talking Points < talkingpoints@dfat.gov.au >
Sent: Friday, 2 February 2024 4:24 PM
To: International
Subject: DFAT Talking Points - PNG NRL Bid - v1 [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL:Sensitive



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**MEDIA TALKING POINTS
DISTRIBUTION:
STANDARD**

Topic: POLITICAL-ECONOMIC
Subject: PNG NRL Bid

Originating Division: OTP

Version Date: 2/2/2024
Version: 1

Reason for Update: New talking points
Expiry: 14/03/2024

Talking Points

s 22(1)(a)(ii)




• s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- All parties have stated that they support PNG's bid for a team in the NRL and NRLW
 - no decision has been made on any potential Australian Government financial support, *beyond the \$5.5 million Minister Conroy announced in July 2023 to develop player pathways, a youth talent academy* s 45 *to inform the bid*
 - ultimately, the decision on who to award an 18th franchise rests with the NRL.
- We are already supporting rugby league in PNG through \$5.5 million to support the PNG NRL Bid Board develop player pathways and a talent academy for PNG youth, and supporting s 45 s 45 to inform the PNG Bid's strengths and priorities
 - This is in addition to our existing support for the Pacific Championships (\$7 million over two years), and programs under Team Up and PacificAus Sports.


s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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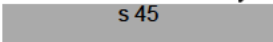
If raised: Why is the Australian Government investing \$5.5m in PNG player pathways?

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



s 22(1)(a)(ii)




- Discussions between the three parties are ongoing, and the Australian Government has not made any decisions on financial support for the bid, *beyond the \$5.5 million Minister Conroy announced in July 2023 to develop player pathways, a youth talent academy*  ^{s 45} *to inform the bid*

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Background

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)




s 22(1)(a)(ii)



Key Ministerial comments/extracts:

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The Courier Mail reported Prime Minister Albanese as stating:

- “I am very supportive of an 18th NRL team in PNG[...]This is a game changer for the relationship with Papua New Guinea. We’re definitely behind the NRL bid and, importantly, Prime Minister (James) Marape in PNG is very much behind an NRL team.”
- “This is a country that will celebrate its 50th year of independence in a couple of years (2025). Having PNG participate in the NRL, I can’t think of any better way to get that ongoing relationship and engagement between our two countries.”
- “We haven’t landed on exact figures. It’s a bit premature. That’s a matter for discussions, which are taking place at the moment. We put \$7 million into the recent Pacific Championships and we are prepared to have talks with the NRL on funding.”

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Approval	
Consultation	PMC, AGS, Office for Sport, PNG Desk, Strategic Communications
Author	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cleared by	s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Distribution

Media Liaison Section, SES, HOMs/HOPs, STO Directors, Secretary's EO and Senior Executive PAs, A-based public affairs officers, A-based HOM PAs, FMO, TTMO, MIDPO, ATMO, AFMO, PMO and PM&C addressees.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Tuesday, 6 February 2024 4:42 PM
To: International - Melanesia; Costello, Bill
Subject: FW: MINISTER PAT CONROY - TRANSCRIPT - INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD KING - 6 FEBRUARY 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

[See below exchange on PNG NRL Bid](#)

RICHARD KING: It comes under your ambit, being the Minister for International Development and the Pacific – the AUKUS agreement. Last week it was revealed that New Zealand are keen to sort of become involved in AUKUS, and China straight away sent a warning to the Kiwis about joining, and we continually hear about the influence of China in the Pacific region. Highly contentious issue. I get a lot of calls and emails about people saying, “Oh, this is bloody stupid. The Federal Government, they’re giving \$600 million to PNG for a football team, and yet at the same time China are trying to organise police agreements and defence agreements that we should be spending that money elsewhere.” Is it right that we’re giving them \$600 million for an NRL team, Pat?

MINISTER CONROY: Well, we haven’t made a decision. We’ve been very clear that we’re supporting the aspirations of the Papua New Guinean government to get a team in the national rugby league. We already do lots in the Pacific and we’ll continue to do lots. We’re the biggest development partner, so providing aid. We’re the biggest security partner, so when Prime Minister Albanese and the Papua New Guinean Prime Minister signed the Bilateral Security Agreement in December last year, we announced a \$200 million law and order policing security package. So that’s all about bringing the Pacific closer to Australia and us being the partner of choice.

But part of that is people-to-people connection. Nothing will do more for our relationship with Papua New Guinea than getting a rugby league team into the national rugby league. They are – I was up there in September for the Prime Minister’s XIII. Their stadium holds 16,000. It was louder than any state of origin or rugby league match, and it’s how – we’re in a geostrategic competition in the Pacific and how we win it is through our people-to-people connection. Because we’ve got lots of Pacific Islanders working in Australia as well. That’s all bringing us together.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)