

Bel isi PNG: a public-private partnership responds to family and sexual violence

by Tovi Amona

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Tovi Amona, Bel isi PNG, 2025 Pacific Update, Suva

Photo Credit: Robin Davies

This post is an edited version of a keynote speech delivered on 4 June at the [2025 Pacific Update](#). View [the full speech](#) and [the livestream](#).

In 2018, a consortium of private sector institutions in Papua New Guinea convened in response to a critical and escalating concern: the increasing prevalence of family and sexual violence (FSV) and its profound impact on workplaces. Recognising the necessity for a unified and strategic approach, these organisations collaborated to establish an initiative committed to fostering safer, more supportive professional environments and addressing FSV through coordinated action – from this, Bel isi PNG was established. The Tok Pisin words *Bel* and *isi* colloquially mean peace, a concept at the very heart of this initiative.

Bel isi PNG is an innovative public, private and civil society partnership. It brings together the strengths of each partner.

The program currently receives 60% of funding from the private sector through a four-tiered subscription model and the remaining 40% comes from the Australian Government through the PNG Australia Partnership. Subscriptions are paid based on number of employees. The lowest tier enables smaller organisations, with less than 25 employees, to subscribe. The bigger organisations with over 100 employees, pay the highest tier subscription fee.

The private sector companies fund critical services and advocate for workplace responses to FSV. This includes developing workplace policies on how to respond to FSV, including the provision of FSV leave to allow staff to take time off to deal with issues around FSV. Key partners include Bank South Pacific, through which we are able to offer safe accommodation and Steamships Trading Company who offer a free space for a case management office. G4S provides safe and secure

transport, as well as office space for Bel isi PNG and Santos, through the Santos Foundation is able to effectively manage the program and Australian government grant funding and the subscriptions.

The PNG government, through the Department for Community Development and Religion and the National Capital District Commission provide policy leadership and coordination for the national and subnational levels. The Australian government supports the operations of the case management centre (CMC) and the Bel isi PNG safe house, which also enables the public in the National Capital District to access case management services and safe house options.

Civil society organisations are essential implementing partners. This includes Femili PNG which operates the CMC, coordinating FSV support to clients through case management and referral to safe accommodation options, counselling and other necessary support for survivors. The Business Coalition for Women (BCFW) supports companies with policy development and implementation, including training of staff to act as focal points for colleagues experiencing FSV.

Through its partnerships, Bel isi PNG is able to deliver a comprehensive package of services: case management, safe accommodation, referrals to support services and workplace policies, all delivered with a survivor-centred approach.

From inception in September 2018 to the end of phase one in March 2025, Bel isi PNG has achieved significant results:

- 23 businesses have subscribed across the period and at March 31st, 2025, there were 20 active subscribers.
- The BCFW has supported 18 businesses with FSV policy development and/or reviews and trained 245 human resources and contact team staff from among subscribers.
- Five annual leadership forums on FSV for the private sector have been planned and delivered. Attendance has doubled from 68 attendees in 2018 to 148 in 2024.
- The case management centre has consistently exceeded the agreed target of 25 cases per month with an average of 33 cases per month.
- Subscribers have referred 594 survivors to Bel isi PNG CMC (23%) with police being the biggest referral source at 26% and self-referrals at 25%.
- The CMC has provided services to 2,572 survivors.
- 1,470 survivors were provided with safe accommodation with 680 referred to the Bel isi PNG safe house and 790 referred to other safe houses and paid accommodation. Bel isi PNG currently is the only FSV service provider that mitigates the gap for safe accommodation for men by providing paid accommodation as an option.

- The CMC has supported 333 people with disabilities and has strong working relationships with two local disability services.
- An estimated 20,000 employees have access to Bel isi PNG Inc services and an estimated 5,500 have attended education and awareness sessions delivered through Bel isi PNG Inc since 2018.
- Over 49,000 services were delivered to survivors with over 8,000 legal services provided through the in-house lawyer
- 175 survivors have been relocated or repatriated, many in partnership with subscriber members.

The program has also demonstrated that supporting GBV survivors is not only a moral imperative — it makes business sense. Companies benefit from reduced absenteeism, improved staff wellbeing and reputational strength.

Across our Pacific, too many lives are still being affected by violence. But Bel isi PNG shows us that change is not only possible — it's already happening. These are some of the lessons we have learnt.

First, partnerships matter. When government, private sector and civil society come together with purpose, we create more than programs — we create lifelines.

Second, survivor dignity must be non-negotiable. Every person seeking help deserves safety, respect and compassion. Dignity must be the foundation of every response.

Third, we cannot wait for violence to happen before we act. Prevention is not a luxury — it is our responsibility. We must challenge the beliefs, behaviours and systems that allow violence to persist.

Last but not the least. Leadership culture matters. It is essential that addressing violence needs influential leaders, without whom we are unable to effect change.

I'd like to close with this. The fight against GBV is one of the defining challenges of our time. The Bel isi PNG partnership shows us that when we come together — across sectors, across cultures, across gender lines — we can build a safer, more peaceful future.

Let's not be bystanders. Let's be builders of bel isi — peace — not just in words, but in actions.

Because the Pacific we dream of — safe, equal, and free from violence — is within reach. And Bel isi PNG is proof that we can build it together.

Disclosures:

Bel isi PNG is supported by the Australian Government through the PNG Australia Partnership, Santos, Bank South Pacific and Steamships Trading Company. Its implementing partners are the Santos Foundation, Femili PNG, the Business Coalition for Women, G4S and the National Capital District Commission. The Development Policy Centre provides pro bono support to Femili PNG which operates the Bel isi Case Management Centre and Safe House in Port Moresby.

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Link:

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