



Recent Developments and Experiences

Background information for ITSIA Member States prior to the May 2021 Microsoft Teams tele-conference

State: Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

Since last year, PNG as almost every other State has been required to rapidly adapt to the changes in operational context as a result of the effects of the pandemics. PNG was not away from lockdowns, remote work and preventative measures, which also created opportunities to “think outside of the box”.

Major Organisational and/or Staff Changes

Over the last months, the AIC had a staff turnover of about 16%. Recruitment of new staff became a challenge as the uncertainty about lockdowns and evolution of the pandemics required careful planning to ensure that newly recruited staff obtained significant and timely interaction with the organisation and its culture, internal dynamics and practices, before entering a new lockdown.

The AIC is also adopting effective steps towards multi-modal investigation. One of the key actions consisted in the re-design of the organisational structure, transiting to a structure with critical areas are clearly established to provide adequate levels of responsibility, accountability and oversight, and ensure control and redundancy while optimising effectiveness of the core business, providing a clear and transparent development path for staff. The new organisational structure is highly scalable to eventually introduce other domains of transport without causing unnecessary disruptions to the organisation.

The strategy for developing the new organisational structure required the development of new positions and the review and update of existing Job Descriptions.

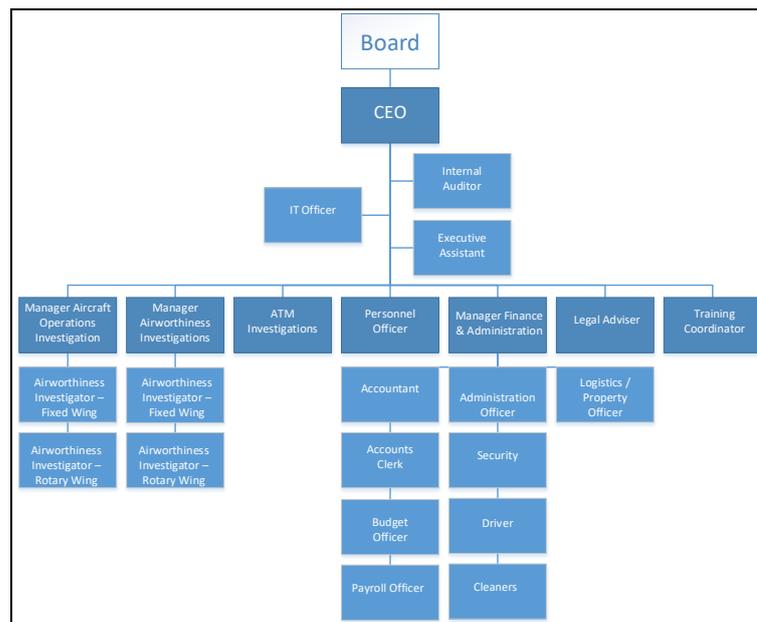


Figure 1. AIC 2010 Organisational Structure

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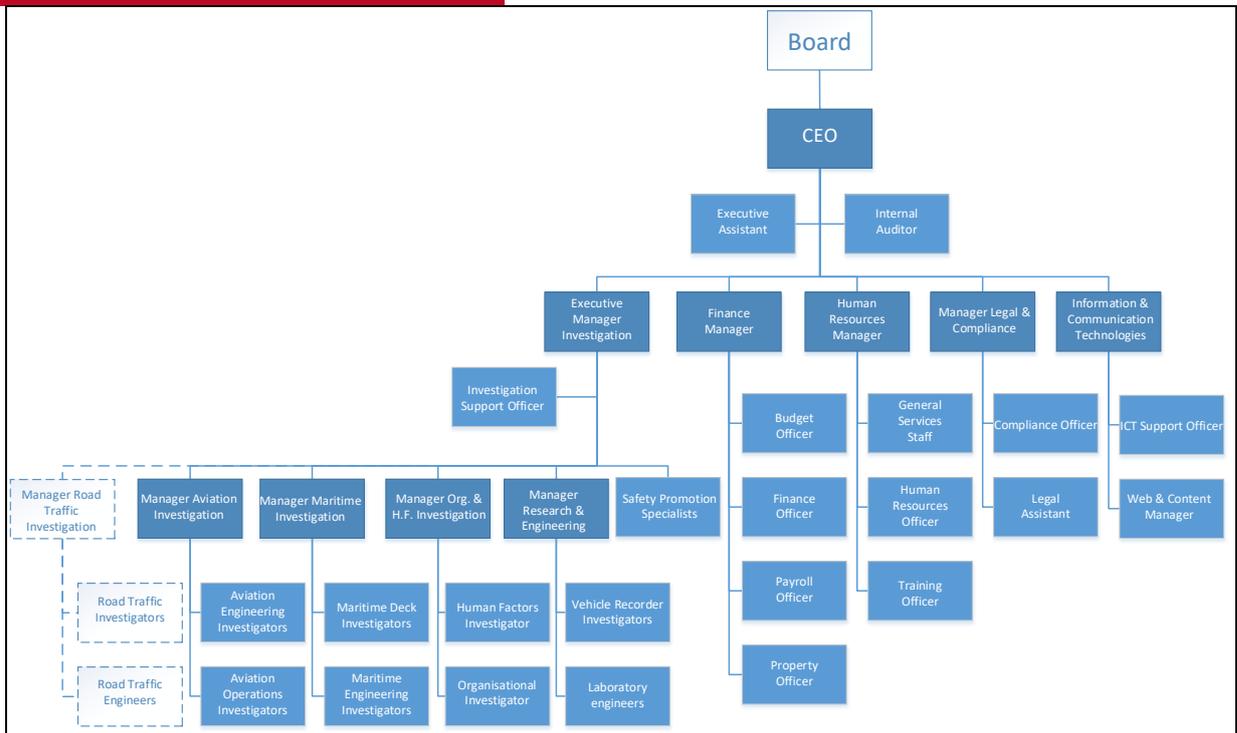


Figure 2. AIC 2021 Organisational Structure

Budget Issues and/or Legislative change

As in many other States, COVID 19 pandemics has caused a number of issues for public sector organisations. Being the AIC an organisation fully funded by the Government, and no unforeseen funding restrictions have affected the AIC with regard to personal emoluments, operational budget or development & capacity building budget, there could be issues in the event of requirements of supplementary funding for investigation.

During 2020 and 2021, the AIC has been working closely with the Departments of Finance and Treasury, to ensure that supplementary funding will be made available, especially in the event of a need to investigate a major accident occurred within the State or affecting other States requiring AIC involvement under the MoUs in place. Even when specific provisions for supplementary funding are yet to be included in a new legislative framework for accident and serious incident investigation, supplementary funding can be currently made available by the Government through the funding appropriated and secured for catastrophes. This understanding between the AIC and other Government authorities and Departments has only been possible through the awareness programs implemented by the AIC about the real importance of the investigation activity for the State.

With regard to legislative changes, the AIC is actively participating in the Aviation Working Group, which include representatives from relevant authorities and the aviation industry, for the development of a 10-year National Aviation Policy. At this stage, an “Issues Paper” has been developed and presented to the National Executive Council which highlights the need for a new legislative framework that should give birth to an independent Transport Safety Act, amongst other issues affecting the aviation system in PNG.

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Additionally, using the existing provisions of the PNG Civil Aviation Act, the AIC is in the process of developing Memorandums of Understanding between the relevant authorities including the Ministers for Transport and Civil Aviation to enable the AIC to build the minimum capacity for Maritime Investigation and eventually for Road Traffic investigation and to commence activities in both domains of transport.

Effective Maritime Investigation should be achieved before the next IMO audit to PNG, expected to occur in 2023.

Case Studies and Challenges

Main recent challenges have been related to maintain effective performance in the context of increasing restrictions for COVID 19. The AIC has implemented a working-from-home scheme, mainly for investigators, in which only the strictly necessary activities are conducted via face-to-face interaction. Microsoft 365 was fully implemented for remote work by mid-2020.

One of the main challenges has been to ensure access to reliable and high-speed internet. PNG is one of the most expensive States for internet. As an example, an unlimited 1mb fixed broadband connection can cost up to approximately USD 250 per month. Mobile data, when less expensive and comparatively faster, can be less reliable and stable which in many opportunities can cause difficulties for the investigators to attend to virtual meetings.

As part of the strategies developed by the AIC to face these challenges, performance-based activities and their relevant timeframes have been re-assessed to consider the difficulties of remote working while ensuring no significant delays occur and the quality of the work is maintained. The AIC has also implemented a policy to ensure the provision of the necessary resources for the staff to enable remote workstations including internet access and data plans. Additionally, new strategies have been developed for collaborative work in remote environments, requiring managers and team leaders to develop new types of working relationships to ensure working hours are respected even in remote working environments, electronic documents are prioritised instead of hard copies and that progress is effective and measurable.

Recommendations/Issues of Global Concern

Since last year, the AIC has issued 36 Safety Recommendations to aviation authorities including the Minister for Civil Aviation of PNG, the industry, manufacturers and stakeholders. No Safety Recommendations of Global Concern have been issued in the period.

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