

# Australian Council for International Development

Submission to the  
JSCFADT Inquiry into  
Australia's response to  
the priorities of Pacific  
Island countries and  
the Pacific region



ACFID would like to thank the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for the opportunity to provide this submission on Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region.

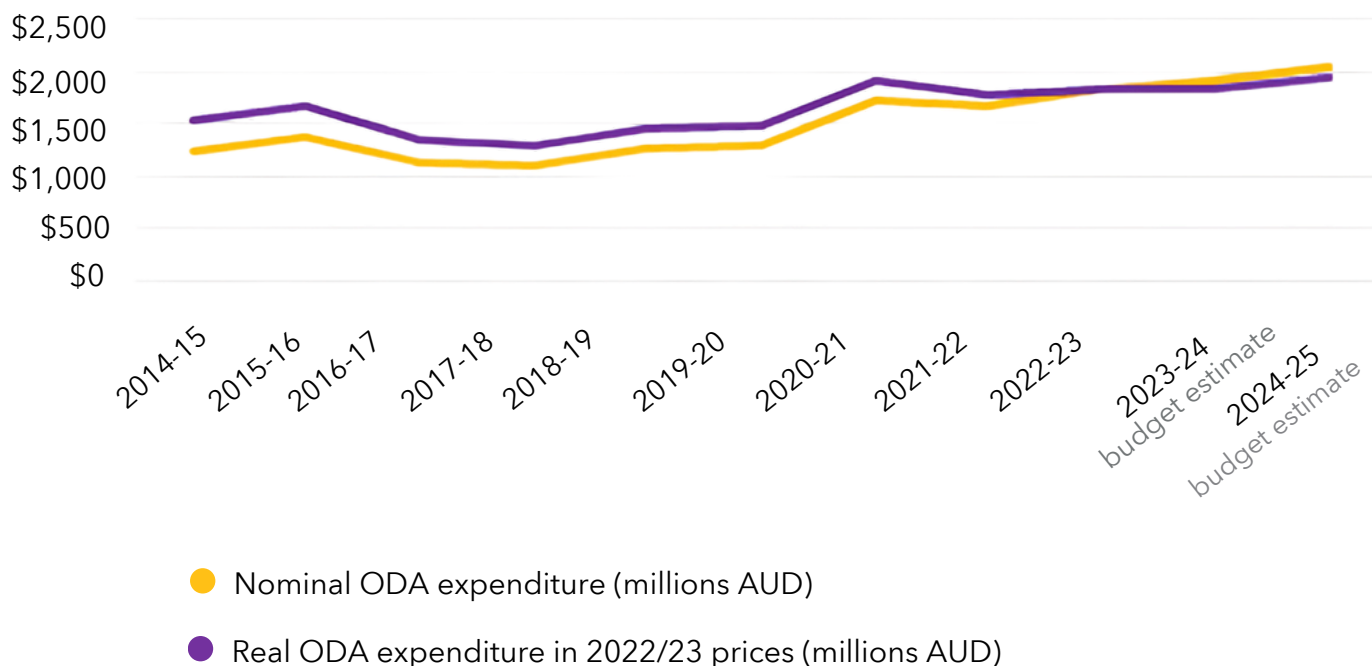
Further information about ACFID's members can be found in Appendix A.

## Executive Summary

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and our members welcome the Government's continued interest in responding to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region. Australian Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have a long history of working in the Pacific and partnering with Pacific Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) - with some partnerships extending for over a century.

Australia has been responsive to its perceptions of the Pacific's priorities and has been a consistent and generous partner to the region. Over the last 10 years, Australia's development investment in the Pacific has steadily increased, reflecting both the trajectory of geostrategic tensions in the region and an understanding that Australia's development program is a key tool in building a closer relationship with the Pacific. In addition to Australia's development program, the knowledge, organisational relationships and people-to-people links that Australian NGOs (ANGOs) possess, form an important component of a whole-of-nation development approach in the Pacific.

**ODA expenditure in the Pacific from 2014/15 to 2024/25 (In millions AUD)**



The Australian Government should continue to build on the strong foundations of Australia's development program in the Pacific, by:

- Listening to Pacific CSOs and other Pacific actors, particularly those who work directly with the most marginalised, to identify and respond to the key priorities and concerns of the region, building on its strengths.
- Addressing the deleterious effects of climate change, which is an existential threat felt keenly by the Pacific region. Australia should increase our provision of climate support to the quantity and quality required to address mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage needs faced by Pacific Island countries.
- Increasing sustainable, long-term, flexible and core support for Pacific CSOs - whether directly or through an ANGO - to combat shrinking civic space in the region and maximise development outcomes.
- Prioritising development investments that target the most marginalised in the Pacific - including the Pacific Island populations with the lowest incomes - rather than targeting geostrategic objectives.
- Continuing to embed inclusive development, including promoting gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, disability equity and children's rights through increased investment.

### Summary of Recommendations

ACFID recommends the following to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade:

**Recommendation 1:** The Australian Government should listen to Pacific actors in determining its response to the region, including Pacific CSOs, and be guided by strategies authored by Pacific actors such as the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.<sup>1</sup>

**Recommendation 2:** Increase Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2030 with a clear trajectory and commitment to subsequently reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI.

**Recommendation 3:** The Government should co-fund the Pacific-led development of a Pacific Regional Accountability Framework for Civil Society Organisations and endorse its use as a benchmark for civil society accountability. This will foster a vibrant civil society sector and expand the diversity of high-impact development partners for Australia.

**Recommendation 4:** The Australian Government should ensure that its support for the Pacific is targeting the most vulnerable. This includes ensuring that Australia's investments prioritise generating outcomes for the bottom 60 per cent of the population by income in the Pacific.

**Recommendation 5:** The Australian Government should continue to deliver grants as a preferred mode of development investment. The Australian Government should also encourage the increased use of development grants in the region. Australia's recent pledge to the Asian Development Fund of \$492m for the 2025-2028 pledging round is a welcome example.

**Recommendation 6:** Strengthen the Government's approach to innovative financing mechanisms and leveraging private sector capital and expertise, by supporting ANGO impact investments in the Pacific region, by:

- Modifying the mandate of Australian Development Investments (ADI) to include mechanisms that allow ANGOs to meaningfully participate in the development finance ecosystem.
- Creating a new \$50 million ANGO funding window through ADI, enabling ANGOs to use development finance in a wide range of thematic areas, identified by their local Pacific partners.



- Designing and implementing a dedicated Technical Assistance Facility for ANGOs that provides a combination of capability building activities and grant-based finance, to:
- invest in building the capability of ANGOs to meaningfully participate in the development finance ecosystem and transition from solely grant-based models to diversified funding streams; and
- provide a grant funding mechanism to support the design and establishment of innovative finance vehicles.

**Recommendation 7:** To enhance regional economic integration and mobility, the Australian Government should consider investing in regional and country development programs that ensure the potential benefits of these regional economic integration initiatives are fully realised by all involved, and negative impacts are minimised. This should be done through investments in:

- A case management approach to child protection and education risks for children who are separated from their parent(s).
- A long-term strategy to manage misaligned skills and loss of skilled workers for Pacific nations.
- A continued focus on eradicating exploitation of workers within these labour mobility schemes.

**Recommendation 8:** The Australian Government should explore different models to support free movement in the Pacific region, including undertaking detailed consultation with Pacific and Australian stakeholders. Greater regional connectivity between Australia and Pacific Island countries would be facilitated by allowing the free movement of people around the Pacific, with the potential for improved development outcomes.

**Recommendation 9:** The Australian Government should pay its \$4bn per annum fair share towards the global climate finance goal of USD100bn, with a significant portion going to Pacific Island countries based on needs. This funding should be new and additional to existing ODA. The Government must contribute its annual fair share of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) once agreed at COP29.

**Recommendation 10:** The Australian Government should pay loss and damage finance to the Pacific, making an initial \$100m contribution to the global Loss and Damage Fund which has been championed by Pacific Island countries since the 1990s.

**Recommendation 11:** The Australian Government should provide climate finance that is additional to the existing development budget, predictable, and high quality - through investing a much greater proportion of development projects in the Pacific that are 'principally' related to climate change.

**Recommendation 12:** The Australian Government should introduce greater transparency requirements on reporting of climate finance, including details on climate outcomes achieved, as well as publicly accessible methodology for calculating climate finance volumes and the share of climate finance provided at the local level. This could be provided via the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) new transparency portal.

**Recommendation 13:** Develop a Climate Adaptation Funding Window specifically for CSOs in the Asia-Pacific region to access climate finance and mobilise their localised expertise and networks.

**Recommendation 14:** The Australian Government should provide financial and technical support to Pacific Island countries to gain direct access accreditation with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other climate-specific vertical funds.

**Recommendation 15:** The Australian Government should set a timeframe for ending direct and indirect public support to the fossil fuel industry in all its investments – in all stages of project cycles and through assessment of supply chains. This includes investments via the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) and Export Finance Australia (EFA).

**Recommendation 16:** The Australian Government should implement 1.5C-aligned emissions reduction targets to reduce climate impacts experienced in the Pacific region and engage in an open dialogue with Pacific Island countries about establishing special visas to promote mobility with dignity.

**Recommendation 17:** The Government should increase investment in and strengthen the capacity of Pacific civil society. A strong and capable Pacific civil society, in all its vibrant diversity, will contribute to more effective and accountable governments in the region and is positioned to lead the implementation of Australia's development program at the local level. The Government should:

- Increase the proportion of total Australian ODA channelled to and through CSOs to 25 per cent for both humanitarian and development funding.
- Establish a central Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Hub within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support the coordination of CSO development delivery in the Pacific region, as recommended by the [final report](#) of the 2023 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Supporting Democracy in our Region*.
- Deliver increased investment to Pacific civil society through 'fit for purpose' funding modalities that deliver: core; flexible; and multi-year funding both directly to Pacific CSOs – and through ANGOs, if Government administrative capacity limits the effectiveness of direct funding.

- Acknowledge that effective support for Pacific CSOs will require a long-term commitment and consistent effort to achieve real outcomes.
- Engage with Pacific civil society through the design of Pacific Development Partnership Plans and the Civil Society Partnerships Fund (CSPF) to demonstrate a long-term investment in civil society. Commit to delivering \$80 million annually through the CSPF.

**Recommendation 18:** The Australian Government should expand the avenues through which ANGOs can access funding. This includes increasing investment to the Australian Non-Government Organisation Cooperation Program (ANCP) by an additional \$20m per annum ongoing, and an additional \$15m in a pilot accredited NGO adaptive response pool.

**Recommendation 19:** Ensure a dedicated focus on addressing the root causes of gender inequality by committing 20 per cent of ODA to initiatives with gender equality as the principal objective, including 5 per cent of ODA to Women's Rights Organisations (WRO) and movements.

**Recommendation 20:** Increase the Inclusion and Equality Fund to \$15m per annum, commensurate with the needs faced by Pacific Island peoples with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC).

**Recommendation 21:** Require that all in-country programs over \$3m have a disability objective, and that 80 per cent of programs effectively address disability equity.

**Recommendation 22:** Increase the central disability allocation to \$20m per annum with annual increases thereafter in line with overall budget increases to support delivery on disability equity commitments across the development program and provide core support to Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs).

**Recommendation 23:** Develop a strategy for children and young people for Australia's development cooperation program in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Recommendation 24:** The Australian Government should increase its investments in DFAT capability and ANGOs to enhance the Australian public's literacy on issues pertaining to the Pacific region and Pacific Island countries, including through educational initiatives.

# Acronyms

<b>\$</b>	Australian Dollar
<b>ACFID</b>	Australian Council for International Development
<b>ADI</b>	Australian Development Investments
<b>AIFFP</b>	Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific
<b>ANCP</b>	Australian Non-Government Organisation Cooperation Program
<b>ANGO</b>	Australian Non-Government Organisation
<b>C</b>	Degrees Celsius
<b>CBDR-RC</b>	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
<b>COP15</b>	2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference
<b>COP16</b>	2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference
<b>COP29</b>	2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSPF</b>	Civil Society Partnerships Fund
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
<b>EFA</b>	Export Finance Australia
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>JSCFADT</b>	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
<b>LDC</b>	Least Developed Country
<b>NCQG</b>	New Collective Quantified Goal
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organisation
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OPDs</b>	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
<b>PALM</b>	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
<b>PIANGO</b>	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SPC</b>	The Pacific Community
<b>SPREP</b>	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
<b>SOGIESC</b>	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>WRO</b>	Women's Rights Organisation

## 1. Identify the key priorities for Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region.

### (1a) Evaluate the key concerns and aspirations of Pacific nations regarding their economic, environmental, and social development

**Recommendation 1:** The Australian Government should listen to Pacific actors in determining its response to the region, including Pacific CSOs, and be guided by strategies authored by Pacific actors such as the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.<sup>ii</sup>

**Recommendation 2:** Increase Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2030 with a clear trajectory and commitment to subsequently reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI.

The priorities of Pacific Island countries are best identified and evaluated by Pacific Island countries. Australia's development program should ensure that it listens and responds to Pacific voices and priorities. The Australian Government must listen to the voices of Pacific Island countries and to have specific regard to the voices of Pacific CSOs.

The *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* outlines the key concerns and aspirations of Pacific states, as determined by and agreed upon by Pacific leaders. The Strategy maps out an approach of working together as a region to achieve the long-term vision of "a resilient Pacific Region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity that ensures all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy and productive lives."

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change is identified as a key priority of the Pacific in the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. Pacific Island countries are at the frontline of severe climate change impacts, with many already experiencing sea-level rise, shifts in rainfall patterns, higher temperatures and an increase in the intensity and frequency of extreme climatic events.<sup>iii</sup> These climate impacts degrade ecosystems, threaten food and nutritional security and adversely affect human health across the region. On the current trajectory, global temperatures will exceed an average increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius before 2030 and will reach two degrees Celsius of warming between 2041 and 2060 unless there are rapid, consequential and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>iv</sup> Climate change interacts with and exacerbates issues of deforestation, pollution and overexploitation of natural resources, compromising the livelihoods of many Pasifika peoples.<sup>v</sup>

ACFID's climate recommendations are covered in **section 3**.



## DEMOCRACY, INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

“We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic principles and values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies.”



The *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* also highlights the importance of safeguarding civic space in the region, an enduring Pacific commitment to democracy and good governance and a need to address issues of exclusion and inequality, particularly of marginalised groups. The Strategy notes that there is a limited commitment by some governments to human rights and emphasises that the Pacific region values open and plural societies.

### (1b) Examine the role and capability of Pacific regional architecture and agencies, including in the delivery of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, and the contributions of external partners to regional development and stability

**Recommendation 3:** The Government should co-fund the Pacific-led development of a Pacific Regional Accountability Framework for Civil Society Organisations and endorse its use as a benchmark for civil society accountability. This will foster a vibrant civil society sector and expand the diversity of high-impact development partners for Australia.

The Australian Government should work through the existing regional architecture in the Pacific, including the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO). PIANGO is the regional coordinating body for civil society networks in the Pacific and is an established and influential civil society actor, connecting and representing civil society across 24 Pacific Islands countries and territories.

The Australian Government should continue to focus on supporting open, plural and stable Pacific Island countries, which is both a priority for the Pacific and a key means of enhancing Australia's position as a partner of choice.

By working through PIANGO in a committed, sustainable and long-term manner, the Government can support the development of open, plural and diverse civic space in the Pacific. Civil society organisations are key protectors of civic space, underwriting the requisite values of freedom, transparency and inclusion - inherent features of effective and accountable states.

Since 2019, ACFID, PIANGO and PIANGO's members have partnered on the development of a Pacific Regional CSO Accountability Framework. This is a Pacific-driven proposition that provides tools and a framework to cultivate greater accountability and transparency across the Pacific civil society sector, building the institutional capacity of CSOs to take on increased donor funding. In consideration of the locally-led agenda referenced throughout the International Development Policy, this Pacific accountability framework provides a scalable and robust mechanism to bolster DFAT's locally-led development approach in the Pacific. The framework is currently positioned for a deeper investment by the Australian Government and a wider roll out in the Pacific.

Pacific people have long advocated for locally-led and owned approaches to development that both value and respectfully integrate Pacific culture, faith, values and traditions. Supporting and strengthening civil society not only enables Australia to deliver a more effective and locally led development program - it also supports pluralism, strengthens effective and accountable governance, builds deeper partnerships and contributes to greater security and stability across the region.

## 2. Assess Australia's engagement in the Pacific and alignment of initiatives and policies with the identified priorities of Pacific Island nations

*The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* outlines that the Pacific peoples

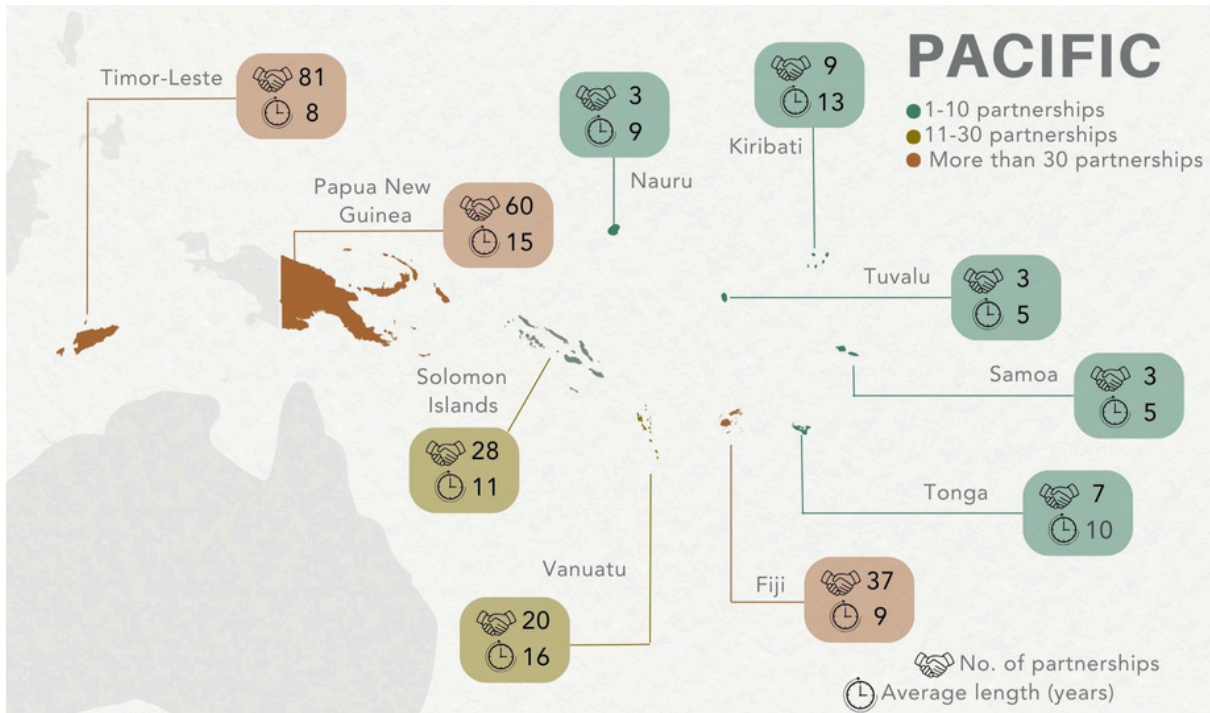
know their needs and potential; plan and own their development agenda; and act collectively for the good of all.<sup>vi</sup> Australia's engagement with the Pacific should ensure that we respect this knowledge and support Pacific actors to lead their development agenda.

Broadly, Australia's current engagement in the Pacific is aligned with the identified priorities of Pacific Island countries in the Strategy. However, improvements can be made to Australia's engagement approach. In one of the most contested geostrategic environments since the second World War, Australia must invest in its partnerships, particularly those with local Pacific actors, and take a whole-of-nation approach to expanding our influence in the Pacific.

Australia's development assistance underpins our close relationships with Pacific Island countries and cements Australia as a partner of choice in supporting the Pacific's economic development aspirations and security objectives. Leveraging the experience of ANGOs, including their deep partnerships (some more than a century long) in the Pacific region and strengthening our partnerships with Pacific civil society actors will be key to Australia cementing its position as a partner of choice for the Pacific region.



## NUMBER AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF ANGO PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE PACIFIC (AND TIMOR-LESTE)



Key also, will be Australia's ability to continue to advocate for, and strengthen, open, free and inclusive societies, pluralism, the rule of law and to support the safeguarding of civic space in the Pacific region. This will help drive more equitable and inclusive economic development, strengthen Australia's relationships, build community resilience and facilitate our ability to work together to tackle challenges such as climate change and regional security.

(2a) Evaluate Australia's current efforts in supporting the Pacific in areas such as trade, investment, infrastructure development, security and capacity building that enhance Australia's position as a partner of choice for the Pacific family.



### INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

**Recommendation 4:** The Australian Government should ensure that its support for the Pacific is targeting the most vulnerable. This includes ensuring that Australia's investments prioritise generating outcomes for the bottom 60 per cent of the population by income in the Pacific.

**Recommendation 5:** The Australian Government should continue to deliver grants as a preferred mode of development investment. The Australian Government should also encourage the increased use of development grants in the region. Australia's recent pledge to the Asian Development Fund of \$492m for the 2025-2028 pledging round is a welcome example.

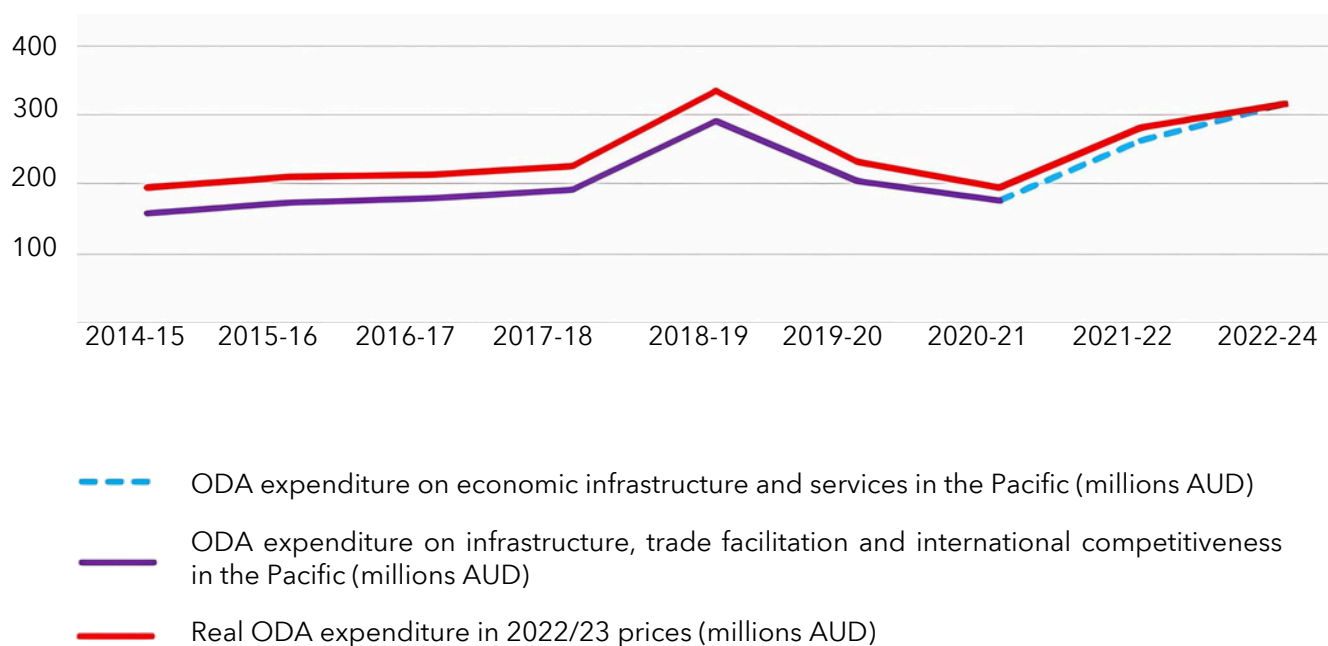
Australia has increased its focus on infrastructure investment in the Pacific as geostrategic competition has intensified. The establishment of the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) and increased investment by Export Finance Australia (EFA) in the region are key examples of this infrastructure focus.

As Australia increases its role as an infrastructure financier in the Pacific, it should ensure that:

- It continues to focus development investments on the poorest and most marginalised; and
- It continues act as a responsible lender, addressing growing regional debt burdens through the use of development grants and blended finance.<sup>vii</sup>

Australia should also support structural, policy, management and social adaptation to fully realise the development potential of infrastructure. All loans-financed infrastructure should be bundled with grant-funded mechanisms. These investments should include support for systems and institutions that support education, health, gender, governance and climate outcomes beyond the life cycle of the infrastructure establishment.<sup>viii</sup>

**Australia's ODA expenditure in the Pacific on the infrastructure sector 2014-15 to 2022-23 (million AUD)**



**Note:** In 2020-21 the ODA definition of the sector containing infrastructure was modified (from *infrastructure, trade facilitation and international competitiveness* to *economic infrastructure and services*). Data for 2023-24 and 2024-25 is not yet available.



 **IMPACT INVESTMENT**

**Recommendation 6:** Strengthen the Government's approach to innovative financing mechanisms and leveraging private sector capital and expertise, by supporting ANGO impact investments in the Pacific region, by:

- Modifying the mandate of Australian Development Investments (ADI) to include mechanisms that allow ANGOs to meaningfully participate in the development finance ecosystem.
- Creating a new \$50 million ANGO funding window through ADI, enabling ANGOs to use development finance in a wide range of thematic areas, identified by their local Pacific partners.
- Designing and implementing a dedicated technical assistance facility for ANGOs that provides a combination of capability-building activities and grant-based finance, to:
  - Invest in building the capability of ANGOs to meaningfully participate in the development finance ecosystem and transition from solely grant-based models to diversified funding streams; and
  - Provide a grant funding mechanism to support the design and establishment of innovative finance vehicles.

As Australia and other development actors seek to increase available development assistance resources without committing additional public funding, there is a globally recognised need to mobilise new forms of development finance. Australia and other donors have an important role in "crowding in" private sector capital, to finance the development of clean energy, sustainable agriculture and forestry, efficient governance initiatives and sustainable microfinance across the Pacific region.

This should be done in partnership with ANGOs, who specialise in impact investing.<sup>ix</sup> Facilitating the participation of ANGOs in the Australian Government's impact investments would:

- Enable co-investment by government and ANGOs in projects that have positive development impact for people and communities in the Pacific and which leverage ANGOs existing deep relationships with these communities.
- Expand the market-building and financial inclusion programs currently run by ANGOs, thereby supporting investment readiness and building the impact investment pipeline for funds, programs, and investors.
- Leverage the advocacy skills of ANGOs to build enabling environments, such as supportive policies and regulations, to grow development investments in the Pacific.
- Harness ANGO technical expertise in gender equality, disability inclusion, climate-responsive design, and monitoring, evaluation and learning, to ensure meaningful inclusion, engagement and the valuing of diversity continue to be built into development investment approaches.
- Build networks in the Pacific, laying the groundwork for future co-investment between government, the private sector, NGOs, and philanthropic organisations.

## (2b) Identify opportunities for enhanced regional economic integration and mobility



### PACIFIC LABOUR MIGRATION

**Recommendation 7:** To enhance regional economic integration and mobility, the Australian Government should consider investing in regional and country development programs, that ensure the potential benefits of regional economic integration initiatives are fully realised by all involved, and negative impacts are minimised. This should be done through investments in:

- A case management approach to child protection and education risks for children who are separated from their parent(s).
- A long-term strategy to manage misaligned skills and loss of skilled workers for Pacific nations.
- A continued focus on eradicating exploitation of workers within the schemes.

Australia's policies on regional integration, particularly labour mobility initiatives such as the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme continue to benefit the region economically through remittances and skills development. The Pacific Engagement Visa and the migration outcomes of the Falepili Union are also expected to deliver benefits to local communities and align strongly with Pacific priorities. These schemes are also of substantial benefit to Australia and our economy - allowing Australian businesses to recruit workers where there are existing labour shortages and supporting the delivery of goods and services to Australian consumers.

The labour mobility schemes have brought many positive economic and social outcomes to workers, their households and communities, with data suggesting high

satisfaction from workers within host countries.<sup>x</sup> However, there are also unintended consequences of labour mobility initiatives, including concerning reports of the impacts on the children of PALM worker(s), such as negative education and child protection outcomes. The delivery of wrap-around support services to workers and their families is essential to continuing to share the positive outcomes of the scheme.

Pacific countries are also experiencing a loss of skills as a result of the PALM scheme, with the public sector, private sector, manufacturing and tourism industries all losing people to the seasonal worker schemes. In Australia, Pacific Island employees are often employed in low-wage work and do not undertake skills development. This can mean these workers return to the Pacific without meaningful skills growth.<sup>xi</sup> The Australian Government should develop a long-term plan to address the impact of the skills flow to Australia from the Pacific and the misalignment of skills that return to the Pacific after workers conclude their PALM journey.

Australia must also continue to refine the conditions of the PALM visa to increase worker protections, including:

- Improving support for workers to change jobs and leave exploitative employment situations.
- Continuing to eliminate fees and costs of the PALM scheme that are charged to workers.
- Increasing worker access to Medicare - and other social protection systems in Australia.
- Continue to review the rules governing the PALM scheme and support the enforcement of fair work conditions.<sup>xii</sup>

Previous recommendations of the Strengthening Australia's Relationships in the Pacific Inquiry noted the growing importance of the PALM scheme for skills transfer and training and as a source of remittance income, and the support for such programs across the Pacific. The Committee recommended the Australian Government:

- Pursue steps to scale-up the program, better support career development, and provide pathways for permanent residency, akin to those being developed for the Agriculture Visa Scheme.
- Explicitly recognise the relationship building and cultural exchange elements of the PALM scheme in its design and promotion.

These recommendations have not yet been implemented and the PALM scheme remains a temporary work visa, aimed at supporting Australian businesses to fill short and long-term employment vacancies.<sup>xiii</sup>



## PACIFIC FREE MOVEMENT AREA

**Recommendation 8:** The Australian Government should explore different models to support free movement in the Pacific region, including undertaking detailed consultation with Pacific and Australian stakeholders. Greater regional connectivity between Australia and Pacific Island countries would be facilitated by allowing the free movement of people around the Pacific, with the potential for improved development outcomes.

Citizens of New Zealand and Australia enjoy free movement as part of the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, cementing our close relationship and supporting business, cultural, development and people-to-people links. This arrangement also extends to citizens of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, who hold New Zealand passports.

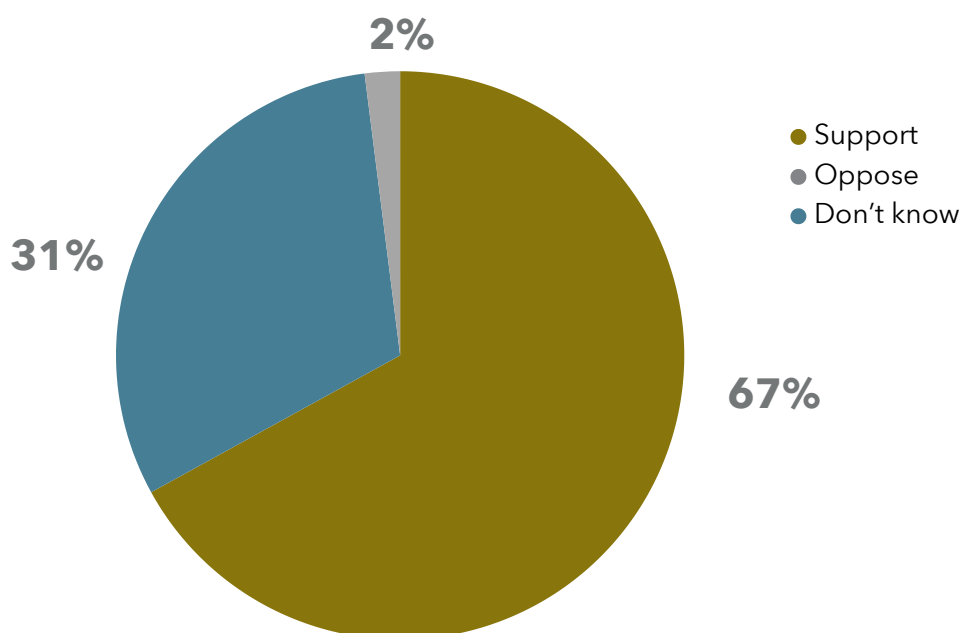
The Government should actively explore options for the free movement of people between Australia and Pacific Island countries to deepen our existing relationships.

Support for free people movement exists among Pacific leaders in Samoa,<sup>xiv</sup> Solomon Islands<sup>xv</sup> and Fiji,<sup>xvi</sup> who have all called upon the Australian Government to seriously consider the idea, including as a means of facilitating business, development and people-to-people links. Similarly, support exists in Australia, with the 2024 Lowy Institute poll identifying that "Australians are broadly supportive of the idea of further easing restrictions on Pacific Islanders seeking to travel to or settle in Australia. Two-thirds of Australians (67%) say they would support relaxing visa requirements for citizens of Pacific Islands countries to live, work, and study in Australia, while less than one-third (31%) would oppose it."<sup>xvii</sup>

Models to facilitate free movement of people in the Pacific region are varied and could range from the facilitation of short-term travel to a more comprehensive 'European Union-style' of free movement and coordinated development. A European Union-style common travel area comes with the potential to boost national incomes and development outcomes in the Pacific through increased labour mobility and remittance flows, advancing the region's collective response to climate change, and spurring reforms that would strengthen government capacity and regional security. (See also **recommendation 16** on climate mobility.)

These different models of facilitating free movement all come with different and unique challenges. These challenges run from the political, to the potential of significant skills loss from the Pacific, in the event of increased labour mobility. The Australian Government should commit to a detailed and considered exploration of this idea, consulting all relevant stakeholders in the Pacific and Australia as an immediate priority. A timeframe should be set for the Government to undertake this consultation and the consultation findings should be shared publicly.

**Question: Would you support or oppose relaxing visa requirements for citizens of Pacific Islands countries to enable them to live, work and study in Australia?**



**3. Assess climate change mitigation and adaptation responses in the Pacific**

(3a) Evaluate Australia's climate support and initiatives aimed at mitigating climate change and assisting Pacific nations in adapting to its impacts

 **AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSIBILITY AND THE PACIFIC'S CLIMATE NEEDS**

**Recommendation 9:** The Australian Government should pay its \$4bn per annum fair share towards the global climate finance goal of USD100bn, with a significant portion going to Pacific Island countries based on needs. This funding should be new and additional to existing ODA. The Government must contribute its annual fair share of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) once agreed at COP29.

**Recommendation 10:** The Australian Government should pay loss and damage finance to the Pacific, making an initial \$100m contribution to the global Loss and Damage Fund which has been championed by Pacific Island countries since the 1990s.

Australia has high historic emissions, high per capita emissions, and is the 13th largest economy (based on GDP) in the world. Australia's greenhouse gas emissions and economic size matter because they demonstrate that Australia has a historic and ongoing responsibility for climate change, and the economic capability to pay to address climate change as per Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention to Climate Change (UNFCCC).



Australia's climate finance contributions in 2022-2023 were \$619.1m<sup>xxix</sup> - well below its fair share of the global USD100bn per year climate finance goal, which was first agreed at COP15 in Copenhagen (2009) and then reaffirmed at COP 16 in Cancun (2010). Based on responsibility for (current and historical) emissions as well as capacity to pay to address climate change, the Australian government should be contributing \$4bn per year towards global climate finance.<sup>xx</sup> This should include a significant portion going to the Pacific region based on needs. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - including those in the Pacific - should be prioritised as climate finance recipients because they are most vulnerable to climate change impacts and thus the need is most urgent. However, this prioritisation should not prevent Australia's finance flows from also reaching other developing countries that are not SIDS or LDCs.

Pacific Island countries are the biggest recipients of Australia's climate finance. This is mostly provided as ODA. In 2022-2023, \$265.9 million of Australia's climate finance contributions was ODA provided to Pacific nations for climate mitigation or adaptation purposes.<sup>xxi</sup> However, Australia's climate finance contributions are comparatively low<sup>xxii</sup> and do not come close to matching the level of need among developing countries, including Pacific Island countries. According to a recent brief prepared by regional bodies including the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), "adaptation costs are likely to run into the hundreds of millions per country", on top of the hundreds of millions per country estimated for mitigation based on implementing those countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).<sup>xxiii</sup> These estimates range from USD500m for the mitigation needs of Fiji and Palau down to USD50m for Nauru's mitigation needs.

Australia should also pay loss and damage finance to the Pacific, including through the new global Loss and Damage Fund, which has been fought for by Pacific Island countries within the UNFCCC since the 1990s. Loss and damage must be paid in addition to mitigation and adaptation because it is a separate area of need. Losses and damages occur when climate impacts cannot be averted (via mitigation) or minimised (via adaptation), for example, loss of sectoral productivity, erosion of sustainable development potential, and rising debt burden.<sup>xxv</sup> For many Pacific Island countries, addressing loss and damage requires distinct activities that are significantly different from mitigation and adaptation activities. These activities help to create "viable and comparable alternatives when resources, infrastructure, ecosystems, economic sectors and other elements of life are irrecoverably lost and permanently damaged".<sup>xxvi</sup>



## AUSTRALIA'S CLIMATE CONTRIBUTIONS MUST BE ADDITIONAL, PREDICTABLE AND HIGHER QUALITY

**Recommendation 11:** The Australian Government should provide climate finance that is additional to the existing development budget, predictable, and high quality - through investing a much greater proportion of development projects in the Pacific that are 'principally' related to climate change.

**Recommendation 12:** The Australian Government should introduce greater transparency requirements on reporting of climate finance, including details on climate outcomes achieved, as well as publicly accessible methodology for calculating climate finance volumes and the share of climate finance provided at the local level. This could be provided via DFAT's new transparency portal.

**Recommendation 13:** Develop a Climate Adaptation Funding Window specifically for CSOs in the Asia-Pacific region to access climate finance and mobilise their localised expertise and networks.

**Recommendation 14:** The Australian Government should provide financial and technical support to Pacific Island countries to gain direct access accreditation with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other climate-specific vertical funds.

An evaluation of climate finance effectiveness in the Pacific authored by the United Nations Development Program made several relevant recommendations for improvement that the Australian government should implement.<sup>xxvii</sup> The bulk of climate finance in the Pacific is from bilateral sources; however, most bilateral finance addresses climate change as a secondary objective or co-benefit rather than its principal objective.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The Australian Government can increase the quality of its climate investments by ensuring that mitigating or adapting to climate change is a principal objective of its investments. Climate finance also needs to represent new and additional resources since its purpose is to help recipients deal with the additional burden of climate change. This means it should not displace 'regular' development finance, and that it should be principally targeted rather than mainstreamed across existing finance.

Based on Australia's OECD DAC reporting for 2022, Australia funded 46 projects in the Pacific scored as principally related to climate adaptation and 10 projects scored as principally related to climate mitigation (some of these are the same projects counted towards both).<sup>xxx</sup> In the same year, Australia reported 991 projects as significantly related to adaptation and 408 projects significantly related to mitigation. Based on publicly available reporting, it is unclear how these secondary objective projects will achieve climate outcomes. This demonstrates the need for improved reporting, transparency, and better-quality mainstreaming which could seek to apply the learnings of the OECD DAC's 2023 climate finance evaluation. This evaluation found that effective mainstreaming "requires clearer criteria and sharper focus on climate-specific outcomes in programme design, including in how these link to other objectives (going beyond generic links)."<sup>xxxi</sup>

To effectively address the threats of climate change and protect those most vulnerable in the Pacific, approaches to mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage must be genuinely inclusive and locally-led. There is an urgent need for climate action to simultaneously address structural and systemic injustices. The inclusion of people at the local level, including marginalised groups, is crucial. To achieve this direct access core funding for local civil society should be prioritised through a new Climate Adaptation Funding Window.

The Australian Government can also support Pacific Island countries to gain accreditation to climate-specific vertical funds, such as the Green Climate Fund. The direct access accreditation process is resource intensive, but once achieved brings several advantages including boosting the level of country ownership over funds, more effective use of financial resources, and stronger involvement of local organisations and other local stakeholders.<sup>xxxii</sup> To date, the only entities in the Pacific with direct access accreditation are the Fiji Development Bank, the Federated States of Micronesia Development Bank, Micronesia Conservation Trust, the Cook Islands' Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, the Pacific Community (SPC), and the SPREP.

### (3b) Evaluate Australia's role in supporting Pacific nations during natural disasters and national emergencies, including pandemics

**PLEASE REFER TO ACFID'S HUMANITARIAN REFERENCE GROUP (HRG) SUBMISSION TO THIS INQUIRY.**

### (3c) Identify opportunities for enhanced regional economic integration and mobility



#### REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

**Recommendation 15:** The Australian Government should set a timeframe for ending direct and indirect public support to the fossil fuel industry in all its investments – in all stages of project cycles and through assessment of supply chains. This includes investments via the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) and Export Finance Australia (EFA).

The Australian Government must ensure its finance and development finance in the Pacific, including through AIFFP and EFA is used to support climate mitigation and adaptation. While the use of development finance is welcome, it must be provided sustainably, put the voices of beneficiaries at the heart of decision-making, and not exacerbate negative climate outcomes during project cycles or through supply chains. The Australian Government has committed to end “new direct public support for the international unabated fossil fuel energy sector” by signing the Glasgow Statement in November 2023.<sup>xxviii</sup> To enhance regional economic integration, the Australian Government should meet its commitment to end the use of public funds to support the fossil fuel industry. The Government should adopt a broad definition when assessing whether finance contributes to the fossil fuel sector, including direct and indirect support, and prioritise finance that supports the green energy transition.



#### MOBILITY IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

**Recommendation 16:** The Australian Government should implement 1.5C-aligned emissions reduction targets to reduce climate impacts experienced in the Pacific region and engage in an open dialogue with Pacific Island countries about establishing special visas to promote mobility with dignity.

To support Pacific Island communities to safely stay on their sovereign, ancestral lands, the most effective action Australia can take is in implementing a 1.5C-aligned emissions reduction target. This will also show that the Australian Government has been listening to our neighbours who have repeatedly called for a global phase-out of fossil fuels.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

However, if Pacific Island peoples choose to move based on their determinations of safety and security, the Australian Government should provide accessible pathways for relocation as seen for example

with the Falepili Union Treaty signed in November 2023. The Australian Government should engage in open dialogue with other Pacific Island nations who may want to establish similar treaties allowing for special visas that promote “mobility with dignity”.<sup>xxxv</sup> This is affirmed by the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility, which committed to regional collaboration on cross-border relocations to “ensure they are carried out in a safe, dignified and timely manner and founded on respecting human rights at all stages of the relocation process”.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The Framework was agreed by leaders at the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum in November 2023.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The Australian Government should approach climate-induced migration as loss and damage under the UNFCCC (not adaptation), for which a separate pool of funding is required. Australia should pay its fair share towards addressing climate-induced losses and damages in developing countries such as Pacific SIDS.

#### 4. Strengthen People-to-People Links and Partnerships including through well designed development programs

##### (4a) Explore opportunities to enhance people-to-people links, cultural exchanges and educational partnerships between Australia and the Pacific to maximise local and community development outcomes

**Recommendation 17:** The Government should increase investment in and strengthen the capacity of Pacific civil society. A strong and capable Pacific civil society, in all its vibrant diversity, will contribute to more effective and accountable governments in the region and is positioned to lead the implementation of Australia's development program at the local level. The Government should:

- Increase the proportion of total Australian ODA channelled to and through CSOs to 25 per cent, for both humanitarian and development funding.
- Establish a central Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Hub within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support the coordination of CSO development delivery in the Pacific region, as recommended by the [final report](#) of the 2023 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Supporting Democracy in our Region.
- Deliver increased investment to Pacific civil society through ‘fit for purpose’ funding modalities that deliver core, flexible, and multi-year funding both directly to Pacific CSOs and through ANGOs, if Government capacity limits the effectiveness of direct funding.
- Acknowledge that effective support for Pacific CSOs will require a long-term commitment and consistent effort to achieve real outcomes.
- Engage with Pacific CSOs through the design of Pacific Development Partnership Plans and the Civil Society Partnerships Fund (CSPF) to demonstrate a long-term investment in civil society. Commit to delivering \$80 million funding annually through the CSPF.

Investing in Pacific civil society is a pragmatic and strategic decision to meet development objectives, foreign policy priorities and drive people-to-people connections. While government-to-government bilateral relationships underwrite Australia's engagement with the region, it is civil society networks, groups and organisations that connect communities across the region and are currently an untapped resource in Australia's foreign policy approach to partnership.



Australia's International Development Policy reaffirms that 'Australia will respect and promote civic space, recognising the distinct nature and value of civil society in each country.' Australia's development program must continue to reorient funding, strategic direction and policy commitments towards protecting civic space commensurate with the scale of the challenge the Pacific region and the world is facing.

The Australian Government should continue to focus on supporting an open, plural and stable Pacific region, which is both a priority for the Pacific and a key means of enhancing Australia's position as a partner of choice. Open civic space is the cornerstone of democratic societies. Civil society organisations are key protectors of this space, supporting inherent features of effective and accountable states.

Civic space in the Pacific is shrinking. In 2023, CIVICUS (a global monitor tracking civic space) noted concerns that journalists in Papua New Guinea<sup>xxxviii</sup> and Samoa had faced intimidation. Similarly, in 2022, CIVICUS found that five countries in the Pacific disrupted protest activities, media organisations were harassed in the Solomon Islands<sup>xxxix</sup>, and Kiribati had suspended judges.

There is an acute need to generate strong and enduring relationships between Australia and the Pacific and to prevent democratic backsliding, yet Australia's investment in civil society is in decline. In 2022, 12 per cent of Australia's ODA was delivered to and through CSOs. This is behind other OECD donors such as: the United States (17 per cent); Canada (15 per cent); New Zealand (15 per cent); Sweden (32 per cent) and Spain (58 per cent).

Equally important is the provision of flexible and core funding to support the day-to-day operations and core functions of civil society. CSOs tend to receive fragmented funding which is tied to specific projects or program outcomes. This restricts their ability to grow and develop their capabilities and resilience, invest in their staff, and pursue

their wider mandate as civil society actors. Visible, measurable change on governance reform requires patient commitment to approaches based on respect, trust, and long-term partnership.

The 2023 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Supporting Democracy in our Region made two recommendations calling for increased assistance to CSOs to support democracy:

- "The Committee recommends the Australian Government establish a central Civil Society Organisation Hub within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support the coordination of CSO development delivery in the region."
- "The Committee recommends the Australian Government set an annual base-line funding target for the delivery of humanitarian and development programs, through Civil Society Organisations, in the ODA budget."

Both these recommendations await implementation - and are vital to supporting democracy in the Pacific. The establishment of a formal CSO hub in DFAT could support the Government's ambition to develop a Civil Society Partnerships Fund as announced in August 2023, in the International Development Policy.

A failure to invest now in civic space in our region undermines development progress, regional stability and contributes to an increasingly challenging environment for Australia's overall engagement in the region. It is also a missed opportunity to develop critical people-to-people linkages, build public support for our shared development efforts, and engage in a cost-effective manner.

## (4b) Assess the effectiveness of Australia's aid programs and partnerships in promoting genuine community development, good governance, and capacity building for partners in the region



**Recommendation 18:** The Australian Government should expand the avenues through which NGOs can access funding. This includes increasing investment to the Australian Non-Government Organisation Cooperation Program (ANCP) by an additional \$20m per annum ongoing, and an additional \$15m in a pilot accredited NGO adaptive response pool.

ANGOs consistently deliver high-impact development programs, often in logistically challenging and resource constrained environments. The ANCP is one example, with a high-impact development program that supports ANGOs to work in the Pacific. The ANCP has a 50-year track record as a civil society partnership that brings results and lasting impact, with a reach of 57 million people across 54 countries. DFAT's own evaluation of the ANCP corroborates the effectiveness of the program's approach. The 2022 ANCP Evaluation states "the ANCP enables DFAT to support ANGOs to implement activities where they represent the most effective, and in some cases, only effective delivery mechanism". The 2015 Evaluation described the ANCP as "one of the best performing programs", delivering 18.2 per cent of DFAT's aggregate development results for only 2.7 per cent of the overall development program spend.

Community development, improved governance and capacity building sit alongside service delivery, social inclusion and advocacy and policy influence as core areas of impact for ANGOs and their partners. This places ANGOs in a position to deliver on the objectives identified in Australia's International Development Policy. The below examples of good governance and capacity building, illustrate how ANGOs, in concert with local civil society partners, effectively promote capacity building, governance and genuine community development.

### *Good governance*

ANGOs work with local partners to support governance initiatives, provide training and develop institutional structures that are representative of community voices and needs. Beyond direct governance programming, ANGOs with local CSOs to advocate for policy change at the local, provincial and national government levels. Through building trusted relationships and by fostering an enabling environment for a more robust civil society, ANGOs play a crucial role in working with local partners to hold governments accountable and drive long-term change.

An example of ANGO governance work is the Gender Action Platform (GAP) program that ran between 2017 and 2020 with the aim of strengthening ANGO programming to achieve gender equality outcomes in developing countries. The program consisted of six projects, including two in Pacific Island countries: Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. All six projects were successful in changing Government and private sector policies, practices, and curricula, driving gender equality outcomes through policy and law reform. The GAP report notes that ANGOs were well placed in leveraging long-term existing relationships to influence policy change. <sup>xlv</sup>

## Capacity building

The Government should invest in ANGOs to work with their Pacific partner organisations and increase their capacity to absorb donor funding, including through training in governance, financial management and technical skills. Investment in capacity building advances program outcomes and underpins successful locally-led development. The Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development six-year Evaluation Report published in 2020 found "the resourcing of capacity building at multiple levels" also helped "sustain gender equality gains." The Report also details the flow-on effects of the program's investment in capacity building which included organisational strengthening of local women's organisations, empowered local leadership and expanded program outreach to minority groups including young girls and persons with disabilities.<sup>xlvii</sup>

As Australia moves towards a locally-led development agenda, capacity building should be understood as a continuous and evolving process that is led by local priorities and contexts. As the needs of local actors evolve over time, so too should capacity-building efforts through Australia's development program. The development program should engage Australian partners with capacity building expertise, that hold trusted relationships with local communities and have a deep understanding of local contexts. ANGOs hold longstanding partnerships with the region. A recent survey of over 50 ANCP accredited agencies found they held a total of 1,250 in-country partnerships, with an average partnership length of 11 years. Of these, over 250 partnerships have existed for more than 20 years.

Community development considers community members to be best placed to make decisions about their lives, needs, communities and values community knowledge and wisdom. The Government's policy shift towards a locally-led agenda naturally favours partnerships with development actors that support local communities to drive action on the issues important to them.

Australian NGOs work with local partners to mobilise and organise to engage communities in identifying their needs, planning projects, and implementing solutions. Australian NGOs also work to complement grass-roots community development efforts through supporting local NGOs to participate in regional partnerships in the Pacific, high-level advocacy processes or input to partner-government strategy. This community-driven approach fosters ownership, accountability, and contributes to the long-term sustainability of development initiatives. The section below outlines how community development approaches to gender equality, disability equity, LGBTQIA+ inclusion and youth engagement are essential to ensuring all "people have every opportunity to reach their full potential."



### IMPROVING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES THROUGH INCREASED INVESTMENT IN GENDER, LGBTQIA+, DISABILITY AND YOUTH EQUITY

**Recommendation 19:** Ensure a dedicated focus on addressing the root causes of gender inequality by committing 20 per cent of ODA to initiatives with gender equality as the principal objective (currently 5 per cent), including 5 per cent of ODA to Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) and movements.

**Recommendation 20:** Increase the Inclusion and Equality Fund to \$15m per annum, commensurate with the needs faced by Pacific Island peoples with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC).

**Recommendation 21:** Require that all in-country programs over \$3m have a disability objective, and that 80 per cent of programs effectively address disability equity.

**Recommendation 22:** Increase the Disability Inclusive Development Fund to \$20m per annum with annual increases thereafter in line with overall budget increases to support delivery on disability equity commitments across the development program and provide core support to Organisations of People with Disabilities.

**Recommendation 23:** Develop a strategy for children and young people for Australia's development cooperation program in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Australia is a regional leader in promoting the rights and opportunities of women and girls in the Pacific, including the prevention of and addressing gender-based violence. The International Development Policy recognises that "placing gender equality at the centre of development creates opportunities for people to thrive, making our countries strong, more secure and more inclusive.<sup>xlviii</sup> ACFID welcomes the target for 80 per cent of all development investments to address gender equality effectively and for investments above \$3 million to include gender equality objectives. The Performance and Development Cooperation report released earlier this year shows that these targets have already been effective in driving investment in gender equality across the development program and improving performance.<sup>xlix</sup>

Achieving gender equality outcomes has been shown to be effective when delivered through carefully targeted and designed programs implemented by local actors with lived experience of gender inequality. Local WROs and other constituent groups hold deep contextual knowledge and relationships that are crucial to drive progress at a systemic level. Currently, around 1.1 per cent of Australia's ODA to the Pacific goes to women's equality organisations (\$20.7m in 2022-23).<sup>i</sup> We believe increasing this to 5 per cent is fundamental to driving sustainable progress at the local level. Global evidence points to the most effective and impactful outcomes being achieved when WROs are provided with core, flexible, long-term funding which provides stability for them to exist and become a mainstay of local civil society, advocating for women's rights and gender equality.

Peoples with diverse SOGIESC in the Pacific face legal and social discrimination, despite diverse SOGIESC peoples having always existed in Pacific Island traditions and Indigenous cultures. Seven Pacific Island Countries are among the 67 countries globally that have national laws criminalising same-sex relations between consenting adults.<sup>li</sup> The Australian Government should increase contributions to the Inclusion and Equality Fund to \$15m per annum, in line with the needs of Pacific Island peoples with diverse SOGIESC. Further, CSOs and human rights defenders in the region are those driving progress on LGBTQIA+ rights and protections yet are severely underfunded. The Inclusion and Equality Fund should therefore prioritise CSOs and human rights defenders for co-design and delivery. The urgency with which greater funding is needed for Pacific Island peoples with diverse SOGIESC remains high, given ongoing legal and social discrimination, unique impacts on diverse SOGIESC communities due to climate change,<sup>lii</sup> as well as a growing global anti-rights movement.



The Government's commitment to disability equity as a 'core issue for action' in Australia's International Development Policy is a first step to driving better outcomes for people with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific. ACFID welcomes the development of the new International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy which offers an opportunity to course-correct at the policy level and put Australia back on track as a leader and partner of choice on disability rights and equity in the Pacific. Achieving disability equity across Australia's development program will help ensure Australian aid reaches persons with disabilities, who are often the most marginalised in communities across the Pacific. This requires the Strategy to be accompanied by adequate funding and resourcing. To realise the Government's commitment to being led by "the experiences and expertise of people with disabilities when designing and implementing development activities", the Government should also adequately invest in and meaningfully partner with OPDs and disability rights advocates in program design, delivery and evaluation.<sup>liii</sup>

Over 50 per cent of the population in the Pacific is aged 24 and under.<sup>liv</sup> Children and young people experience marginalisation directly related to their age and intersecting factors, which combine to prevent them from realising their rights. At the same time, the region's youth also offer untapped potential to drive prosperity and sustainable development if empowered to play a role in decision-making. Children and young people can identify opportunities and creatively problem-solve challenges faced by Pacific communities, through strategic investment and well-designed policy. It is critical that Australia develop and implement a clear strategy for protecting and empowering children and young people through the development program as it is the progress, wellbeing and rights of children and young people that will catalyse the achievement of the SDGs and help deliver long-awaited development outcomes for the region.

(4c) Consider ways in which the Australian community can be more engaged with and have a better understanding of Australia's international relations and in particular the official aid and development program in the region

### DRIVING LINKAGES WITH THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC

**Recommendation 24:** The Australian Government should increase its investments in DFAT capability and ANGOs to enhance the Australian public's literacy on issues pertaining to the Pacific region and Pacific Island countries, including through educational initiatives.

Australia should invest in enhancing Pacific literacy, not only amongst policy-makers but also within the Australian community. Australian donors and volunteers are an untapped starting point where there is a natural interest in connections to the Pacific. In 2021-22 over 13,300 Australians volunteered with ACFID members and 1.1 million individual Australians donated to ACFID members working overseas, contributing a total of \$16 million in donations to the Pacific. The Australian Government could leverage this interest in the Pacific and the work of nearly 50 ACFID members organisations delivering 535 projects across the Pacific.<sup>lvi</sup>

In undertaking a whole-of-society approach to foreign policy, the Australian Government could better raise awareness of Australia's development cooperation program in the Pacific by engaging various services of the public sector including educational initiatives and partnerships through schools and universities.



# Appendix A - About ACFID

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations involved in international development and humanitarian action.

## Our Vision

Our vision is Australia acting with compassion and fairness for a just, sustainable and equitable world.

## Our Shared Purpose

Our purpose is to lead, unite and support international development and humanitarian organisations to realise our vision.

## About ACFID

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 128 full members and 20 affiliate members operating in more than 85 developing countries. The total revenue raised by ACFID's membership from all sources amounts to \$1.89 billion (2021 - 22), \$773 million of which is raised from over 1.14 million Australians. ACFID's members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community-based groups, with a mix of secular and faith-based organisations.

ACFID members must comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct, a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of signatory organisations.

Covering 9 Quality Principles, 33 Commitments and 92 compliance indicators, the Code sets good standards for program effectiveness, fundraising, governance and financial reporting. Compliance includes annual reporting and checks. The Code has an independent complaint handling process.

## ACFID'S VALUES

### INTEGRITY

We act with honesty and are guided by ethical and moral principles in all that we do.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our actions and are accountable to our stakeholders, and in particular primary stakeholders, for our performance and integrity.

### TRANSPARENCY

We openly share information about our organisations and our work with all our stakeholders and the public.

### RESPECT

We recognise the value and diversity of all people and are committed to treating others with due regard for their rights, dignity and integrity.

## **EFFECTIVENESS**

We strive to deliver outcomes that bring about positive change in the lives of people living in poverty.

## **EQUITY**

We are committed to overcoming prejudices and disadvantage and promoting fair and just access to resources and opportunities.

## **COOPERATION**

We work with and alongside others in a spirit of mutuality, respecting diversity and difference in the pursuit of common goals.

# List of ACFID Members

## FULL MEMBERS

A Liquid Future	CARE Australia
ACC International Relief	Care for Africa
Act for Peace - NCCA	Caritas Australia
Action on Poverty	CBM Australia
ActionAid Australia	ChildFund Australia
Adara Development Australia	CLAN (Caring and Living as Neighbours)
ADRA Australia	Cufa
Afghan Australian Development Organisation	DAISI (Doctors Assisting in South Pacific Islands)
Anglican Overseas Aid	Destiny Rescue Australia
Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia	Diplomacy Training Program
Anglicans in Development	Disaster Relief Australia
ASHM Health	Door of Hope Australia Inc.
Asian Aid Organisation	Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia)
Assisi Aid Projects	EDO NSW
Australia for UNHCR	Educating the Future
Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association	Engineers without Borders
Australian Doctors for Africa	Every Home Global Concern
Australian Doctors International	Fairtrade Australia New Zealand
Australian Himalayan Foundation	Family Planning Australia
Australian Lutheran World Service	FemiliPNG Australia
Australian Marist Solidarity Ltd	Foresight (Overseas Aid and Prevention of Blindness)
Australian Medical Aid Foundation	Global Evergreening Alliance
Australian Red Cross	Global Mission Partners
Australian Respiratory Council	Good Neighbours Australia*
AVI	Good Return
BridgIT Water Foundation	Graceworks Myanmar
Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation	Habitat for Humanity Australia
	Hagar Australia
	Health Serve Australia

Health Equity Matters	Partner Housing Australasia
Home in Place	Partners in Aid
Hope for Children	People with Disability Australia
Indigo Foundation	Plan International Australia
International Justice Mission Australia	Pollinate Group
International Needs Australia	Project Rozana
International Nepal Fellowship (Aust) Ltd	Quaker Service Australia
International Women's Development Agency	REACH for Nepal
Interplast Australia & New Zealand	RedR Australia
Islamic Relief Australia	Reledev Australia
John Fawcett Foundation	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
KTF (Kokoda Track Foundation)	Salesian Missions
Kyeema Foundation	Salvation Army International Development
Live & Learn Environmental Education	Save the Children Australia
LiteHaus International	School for Life Foundation
Love Mercy Foundation	SeeBeyondBorders
MAA International (Muslim Aid Australia)	Sight For All
MAF International*	So They Can
Mahboba's Promise Australia	Sport Matters
Mary MacKillop Today	St John of God Outreach Services
Mary Ward International Australia	Surf Aid Internationalf
Mercy Ships Australia	SUSTAIN Projects Myanmar
Mercy Works Ltd	Symbiosis International
Mission World Aid Inc.	Taking Paediatrics Abroad*
MIT Group Foundation	Tearfund Australia
MSI Asia Pacific	The Fred Hollows Foundation
Murdoch Children's Research Institute	The Leprosy Mission Australia
Opportunity International Australia	The Nusatenggara Association (NTA), Inc
Our Rainbow House	The Oaktree Foundation
Oxfam Australia	This Life
Pacific Assist	Transform Aid International (incorporating Baptist World Aid)
Palmera Projects	UNICEF Australia

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

UnitingWorld

Water for a Village

WaterAid Australia

Worldshare Australia

World Vision Australia

WWF-Australia

YWAM Medical Ships

University of New South Wales - Institute  
for Global Development

University of Queensland - International  
Development

University of Technology, Sydney -  
Institute for Sustainable Futures

Vision 2020

Western Sydney University- School of  
Social Sciences and Psychology

Women's Plans Foundation

### **AFFILIATE MEMBERS**

Australian National University -  
Development Policy Centre

Deakin University - School of Humanities  
and Social Sciences

Global Citizen

Global Health Alliance Australia

Institute for Economics and Peace

James Cook University - The Cairns  
Institute

La Trobe University - Institute of Human  
Security and Social Change

Monash University - Monash Sustainable  
Development Institute

National Centre for Immunisation  
Research and Surveillance

Nossal Institute for Global Health -  
University of Melbourne\*\*

Refugee Council of Australia

RESULTS Australia

Transparency International Australia

United Nations Association of Australia

Unity Housing

*\* Denotes Interim Full Member*

*\*\* Denotes Interim Affiliate Member*





## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Pacific Islands Forum (2022), "Leaders' Commitments to 2050," *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*,

<https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/PIFS-2050-Strategy-Blue-Pacific-Continent-WEB-5Aug2022-1.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Pacific Islands Forum (2022), "Leaders' Commitments to 2050," *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*,

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<sup>iii</sup> Elizabeth Mcleod et al (2019), "Lesson From the Pacific Islands - Adapting to Climate Change by Supporting Social and Ecological Resilience," *Frontiers in Marine Science*, vol 6, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2019.00289/full>

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<sup>v</sup> Jean Pierre Ometto et al (2022), "Cross-Chapter Paper 7: Tropical Forests," *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/ccp7/>

<sup>vi</sup> Pacific Islands Forum (2022), "Leaders' Commitments to 2050," *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*,

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Cover photo: Matthew with his grandson Charlie outside their home which Matthew has pieced together using items salvaged after Tropical Cyclone Harold destroyed their home. Matthew says that thanks to the unblocked cash program he now has a chance to build a house. After purchasing essentials like food and soap, Matthew now plans to purchase timber for his new home. Credit: **Arlene Bax/Oxfam**