



28 June 2024

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

***Re: Submission to the inquiry into Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific Region***

Pacific Elders' Voice (PEV) is an independent alliance of prominent leaders and experts who have served in government and leadership positions across the Pacific region.

Our purpose is to provide guidance and advice that will strengthen Pacific resilience to current and future environmental, security, and human rights threats. We provide constructive policy inputs for current and future challenges and opportunities facing the Pacific.

We note the Terms of Reference of the inquiry into 'Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific Region' and refer the committee to remarks made by Senator the Hon Penny Wong to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in 2022:

*We will listen.*

*We will hear you – your ideas for how we can face our shared challenges and achieve our shared aspirations together.*

*As Australia's first ever Climate Minister, I know the imperative that we all share to take serious action to reduce emissions and transform our economies.*

*Nothing is more central to the security and economies of the Pacific.  
I understand that climate change is not an abstract threat, but an existential one.*

*It's right there in the Pacific Island Forum's Boe Declaration on Regional Security from 2018, and it's worth repeating those words now:*

*"We reaffirm that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific."*

*You've been saying this for a long time. Pacific leaders were saying this to me when I was Climate Minister over a decade ago.*

*You've been crystal clear and consistent. You've led the global debate.*

In light of these remarks, we respectfully suggest that the Australian Government is already well-aware of the priorities of Pacific Island Countries, and what a credible response by Australia to support these priorities would look like.

Our submission is comprised of this letter and the attached document referencing the *Boe Declaration on Regional Security* (signed by the Australian Government in 2018).



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## Submission to the Australian Government Inquiry into Pacific Priorities

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The Pacific Elders' Voice refers the committee to Australia's commitment to the Boe Declaration on Regional Security:

**...climate change remains the single greatest threat  
to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the  
peoples of the Pacific and our commitment to  
progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement**

Until Pacific Island leaders suggest otherwise, the Australian Government should assume that a credible response to the climate crisis and a commitment to ending fossil fuel subsidies and approvals remains our priority.

Yours Sincerely,

Ambassador Kaliopate Tavola  
President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr  
Dame Meg Taylor  
Professor Konai Helu Thaman  
Hon. Enele Sopoaga  
President Anote Tong  
Professor Robert Underwood

*Pacific Elders' Voice is an independent group of prominent Pacific Island leaders dedicated to serving the Pacific's current and future challenges and opportunities. Our purpose is to provide guidance and advice that will strengthen Pacific resilience to current and future environmental, security, and human rights threats. We provide constructive policy inputs for current and future challenges and opportunities facing the Pacific.*