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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Australia's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

June 2006  
Canberra

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## Chair's Foreword

Australia has been the largest per capita country contributor to tsunami aid and played a major role in the relief and reconstruction effort, particularly in Indonesia, where the Boxing Day tsunami struck hardest.

It was against the backdrop of this generosity, and the fact that some 18 months have now elapsed since the disaster, that the Committee considered it timely to convene a forum where members could discuss with representatives of the Australian aid community where Australians' money is being spent and how aid agencies are continuing to deliver assistance to tsunami-affected communities.

Subsequently, the Committee hosted a public roundtable hearing at Parliament House on 12 May 2006, to which it invited a range of NGO representatives and government officials. At the roundtable, the Committee gained an overview of the progress to date, learnt about current operational priorities, and focused on emerging lessons that should inform ongoing responses to recovery requirements in the tsunami affected countries.

Witnesses outlined some of the reasons why the rebuilding process is progressing slowly. Ultimately, the sheer scale and complexity of the disaster must be borne in mind as the rebuilding phase progresses. It is also important that sufficient time be taken to consult with local communities and deliver high quality outcomes to beneficiaries. There are challenges with the supply of materials and labour and in some instances, the management of corruption issues. However, significant work has been done.

At the hearing, agencies described a wide range of projects which they are working on to achieve this end, from rebuilding houses, reinstalling basic services and restoring infrastructure, to health and counselling services, and training villagers to help with the planning of village reconstruction and direct access assistance.

The Committee would like to see greater coverage – including more positive stories – of the reconstruction effort as it progresses. While the tsunami is no longer “front page news” it remains the largest international relief and

reconstruction effort staged in recent times and one to which Australia continues to contribute significant resources.

In an era when the frequency of natural disasters appears to be increasing and the aid community finds itself being stretched to capacity, the Committee acknowledges that agencies are working at finding new ways to complement each others strengths, from engaging in joint reporting processes and civil-military cooperation to formal and informal evaluation processes.

The Committee hopes that this roundtable process contributes to and encourages public debate on this still important topic, and showcases some of the good work being done by Australian agencies.

Senator M A Payne  
Chair  
Human Rights Sub-Committee



## Membership of the Committee


Chair            Senator A B Ferguson

Deputy Chair   Hon G J Edwards, MP

Members	Senator A Bartlett ( <i>from 9 December 2005</i> )	Mrs J Gash, MP
	Senator the Hon N Bolkus ( <i>until 30 June 2005, retd</i> )	Mr S W Gibbons, MP
	Senator G Campbell ( <i>until 28 November 2005</i> )	Mr B W Haase, MP
	Senator the Hon P Cook ( <i>until 30 June 2005, retd</i> )	Mr M J Hatton, MP
	Senator P M Crossin ( <i>from 28 November 2005</i> )	Hon D F Jull, MP
	Senator A Eggleston	Senator J A L Sandy Macdonald ( <i>until 23 June 2005</i> )
	Senator B Harradine ( <i>until 30 June 2005, retd</i> )	Hon J E Moylan, MP
	Senator S Hutchins	Hon G D Prosser, MP
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	Senator C M Moore ( <i>from 23 June 2005</i> )	Dr A J Southcott, MP
	Senator M A Payne	Mr C P Thompson, MP

Senator N Scullion ( <i>from 17 August 2005</i> )	Mr M B Turnbull, MP ( <i>to 8 February 2006</i> )
Senator N Stott Despoja	Ms M Vamvakinou, MP
Senator R S Webber	Mr B H Wakelin, MP
Hon B G Baird, MP	Mr K W Wilkie, MP
Mr P A Barresi, MP	
Mr M Danby, MP	
Mrs T Draper, MP	





## Membership of the Human Rights Sub-Committee

Chair Senator M A Payne

Deputy Chair Ms M Vamvakinou, MP

Members Senator A Bartlett

Senator A Ferguson (*ex-officio*)

Senator L Kirk

Senator C M Moore

Senator N Stott Despoja

Hon B G Baird, MP

Mr M Danby, MP

Hon G J Edwards, MP (*ex-officio*)

Mr R C G Sercombe, MP

Mr C P Thompson, MP

## Committee Secretariat

Secretary Dr Margot Kerley

Secretary to the Sub-Committee Ms Sara Edson

Administrative Officer Mrs Jessica Butler





## Terms of reference

Pursuant to Paragraph 1 of its resolution of appointment, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is empowered to consider and report on the annual reports of government agencies, in accordance with a schedule presented by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

On 9 February 2006, the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade resolved to examine the 2004-2005 annual reports of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Agency for International Development, focusing specifically on Australia's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami.





## List of abbreviations

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AIPRD	Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BRR	Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency
Committee	Human Rights Sub-Committee
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DVI	Disaster Victim Identification
IDRL	International Disaster Response Laws
JSCFADT	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
MSF	Medicins Sans Frontieres
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
PM & C	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
TAFREN	Taskforce for Rebuilding the Nation
UN	United Nations

UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## Introduction

- 1.1 The Boxing Day 2004 tsunami was one of the worst natural disasters to occur in modern times. Equally unprecedented in scale has been the donor response and the challenges faced by governments and non-government organisations (NGOs) alike, in coordinating both the relief and reconstruction phases of the tsunami response.
- 1.2 Australia has been the second largest country contributor to tsunami aid after the United States,<sup>1</sup> and is playing a major role, particularly in Indonesia, in assisting tsunami-affected communities to rebuild and recover.

## Referral

- 1.3 On 9 February 2006, the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (hereafter referred to as the Committee) resolved to undertake a review of the 2004-2005 annual reports of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), focusing specifically on Australia's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami.

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1 K.F. Inderfurth et al, *The Tsunami Report Card*, Foreign Policy Magazine, December 2005, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3314&fp\\_src=ealert051213](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3314&fp_src=ealert051213)



## Scope of inquiry

- 1.4 In its 2004-2005 annual report, AusAID states that by 30 June 2005, a total of \$68 million in immediate humanitarian assistance had been committed by the federal government to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Seychelles, Thailand and India, and that additional reconstruction funds, including the \$1 billion Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development, are progressively being committed against longer-term reconstruction priorities.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.5 The annual report acknowledges that Australia's assistance has drawn on the flexible relationships which Australia's aid program maintains with implementing partners, including Australian NGOs, who received \$12 million to provide services, supplies and support to tsunami-affected communities, and the United Nations who received \$23.5 million to support its role in providing relief and coordinating the international humanitarian effort.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.6 By mid-May 2005, Australian NGOs had raised an additional \$313 million in donations from Australian businesses, community groups and private citizens to help tsunami-affected countries recover.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.7 It is now some 18 months since the tsunami occurred. The Committee considered it timely to convene a forum where members could meet with representatives of the Australian NGO aid community and discuss- together with government departments and agencies - where Australians' money is being spent and how aid agencies have delivered and are continuing to deliver assistance to tsunami-affected communities.

## Roundtable public hearing

- 1.8 For the inquiry, the Committee invited a range of witnesses to give evidence at and participate in a half-day roundtable discussion with committee members at Parliament House in Canberra on Friday 12 May 2006.

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2 AusAID Annual Report 2004-2005, p. 96

3 AusAID Annual Report 2004-2005, p. 96

4 ACFID, *Aussie Donors rebuild lives*, media release, 1 June 2005, [http://www.acfid.asn.au/pubs/2005\\_releases/tsunamireport.htm](http://www.acfid.asn.au/pubs/2005_releases/tsunamireport.htm)

- 1.9 The Committee advertised the hearing on its website in order to encourage public participation.
- 1.10 At the hearing, the Chair described the benefits of conducting committee hearings in the roundtable format:
- ...I particularly like using roundtables to discuss some of the key issues this committee works on because it seems to me that they are much more productive than a fairly intense witness interview session process for us. It enables the participants to bounce off each other's ideas as well.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.11 Whilst on this occasion the Committee did not call for written submissions as part of the inquiry process, the Victorian Department of Premier and Government referred the Committee to its website which contains information on Victoria's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.12 Appendix A lists the exhibits supplied by witnesses, further to the roundtable hearing.

### Program and participants

- 1.13 Those attending the roundtable included representatives from the five main non-governmental organisations in Australia,<sup>7</sup> the regional representative from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) and Trade, Defence (ADF) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP).
- 1.14 The roundtable was divided into two sessions. In the first session, the Committee sought an overview of progress to date on Australia's tsunami response and to learn about agencies' current operational priorities. In the second session, the Committee focused on lessons that are emerging, which should inform ongoing responses to recovery requirements in the tsunami-affected countries.
- 1.15 Appendix B contains a copy of the program and list of participants.

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5 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 42

6 See the Department of Premier and Cabinet website for details of projects funded through the Victorian government's \$10 million Tsunami Disaster Reconstruction Fund <http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D8000265E1A/page/Listing-Home+Page+News-Victoria%27s+Response+to+Indian+Ocean+Tsunami!OpenDocument>

7 Australian Red Cross, Oxfam Australia, World Vision Australia, CARE Australia and Caritas Australia

## Hearing transcript

- 1.16 The public hearing was webcast and broadcast internally on the House Monitoring System. The official Hansard transcript is available from the Committee's website.<sup>8</sup>

## Report structure

- 1.17 The report comprises three chapters. This first chapter contains an outline of the inquiry referral and process. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the initial impact of the tsunami and Australia's response. Chapter 3 sets out some of the main issues which were raised and examined at the roundtable.

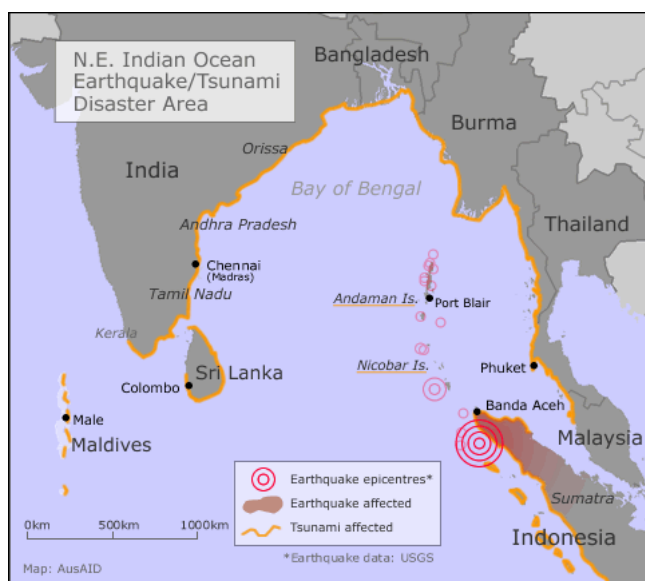
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8 JSCFADT website,  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/tsunamiresponse/hearings.htm>

## Background

### Initial impact of the disaster

#### Indian Ocean Earthquake/Tsunami Disaster Area



Source AusAID website

- 2.1 On the morning of Sunday 26 December 2004 a massive earthquake off the coast of northern Sumatra caused a series of tsunamis that devastated coastal communities in Indonesia and 11 other countries in the Indian Ocean: Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Somalia, Tanzania, Seychelles, Bangladesh and Kenya.

- 2.2 The earthquake measured 9.0 on the Richter scale and was the world's largest in 40 years.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 The Boxing Day quake shook the earth's crust for eight minutes. It unleashed enormously powerful waves that hit Sumatra within 15 minutes and crossed the Indian Ocean at nearly 500 miles an hour. The waves reached the East African coastline seven hours later, some 3, 100 miles away from the earthquake's epicentre.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.4 The human and physical impact of the tsunami was unprecedented. The United Nations estimates that more than 225, 000 people perished, one million people were displaced and five million people were deprived of basic services.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.5 As the table below indicates, the greatest number of fatalities occurred in Indonesia. Most of the deaths came from the provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra which were the areas closest to the earthquake's epicentre.<sup>4</sup>

#### Human Toll

Country	Fatalities	Missing	Total
Indonesia	130,736	37,000	167,736
Sri Lanka	35,322		35,322
India	12,405	5,640	18,045
Maldives	82	26	108
Thailand	8,212		8,212
Myanmar	61		61
Malaysia	69	6	75
Somalia	78	211	289
Tanzania	13		13
Seychelles	2		2
Bangladesh	2		2
Kenya	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>186,983</b>	<b>42,883</b>	<b>229,866</b>

Source UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Relief website

- 1 AusAID website  
[http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562\\_2054\\_7529\\_7688\\_4864#history](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562_2054_7529_7688_4864#history)
- 2 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p.1  
[http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf)
- 3 AusAID website  
[http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562\\_2054\\_7529\\_7688\\_4864#history](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562_2054_7529_7688_4864#history)
- 4 *Asia's Tsunami death toll soars*, BBC, 20 January 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4189883.stm>

- 2.6 Thousands of foreigners who were holidaying in coastal resorts died in the tsunami. Among them, there were 26 Australian casualties.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.7 In barely 24 hours, the disaster caused damage estimated at \$10 billion.<sup>6</sup> The tsunami devastated over 5,000 miles of coastline, destroyed 2,000 miles of roads, swept away 430,000 homes and damaged or destroyed 100,000 fishing boats.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.8 Three months later, on 28 March 2005, another massive earthquake occurred off the island of Nias in Sumatra. This earthquake left a further 70,000 people displaced and nearly 1,000 people dead.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.9 In the three worst affected countries, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India, the tsunami compounded existing conditions of poverty and conflict.<sup>9</sup>

## The international community's response

- 2.10 Mr Jan Egeland, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator stated that, the tsunami was "the most generous and immediately funded relief effort ever."<sup>10</sup>
- 2.11 The UN launched a flash appeal for \$1.1 billion for immediate needs, 85% of which was pledged within four weeks.<sup>11</sup> Governments, international organisations and hundreds of non-government organisations (NGOs) galvanised into action. Relief operations proceeded swiftly and effectively, providing food, clean water, health

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5 Tsunami 2004, AFP website,  
[http://www.afp.gov.au/international/operations/current\\_operations/tsunami\\_2004](http://www.afp.gov.au/international/operations/current_operations/tsunami_2004)

6 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p.1  
[http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf)

7 W. J. Clinton, *One Year Later*, The International Herald Tribune, December 24, 2005,  
<http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/presscenter/op122305.asp>

8 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p.1  
[http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf)

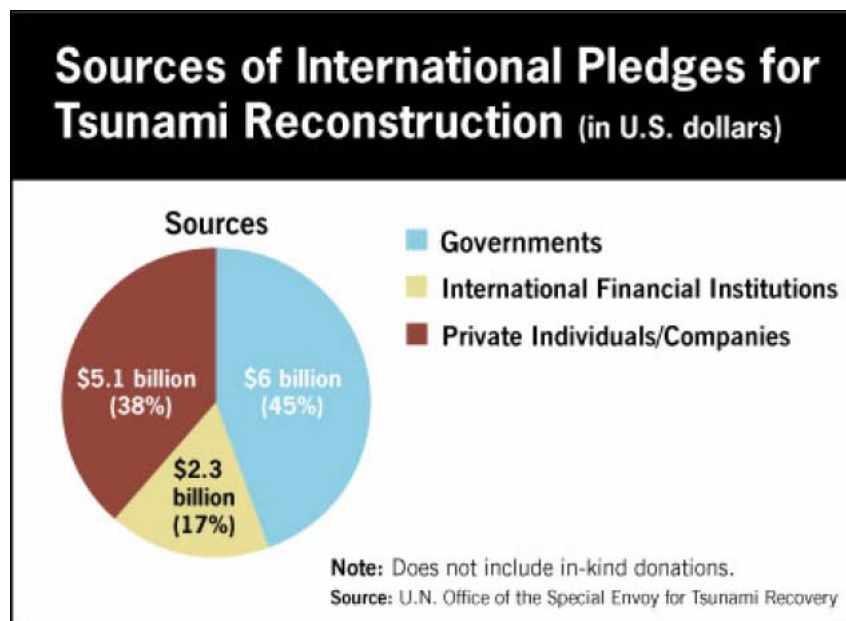
9 *Poorest people suffered the most from the tsunami*, Oxfam press release, 25 June 2005,  
[http://www.Oxfam.org/en/news/pressreleases2005/pr050625\\_tsunami.htm](http://www.Oxfam.org/en/news/pressreleases2005/pr050625_tsunami.htm)

10 K. F. Inderfurth et al, *The Tsunami Report Card*, Foreign Policy Magazine, December 2005,  
[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3314&fsrc=ealert051213](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3314&fsrc=ealert051213)

11 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p.2  
[http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf)

services and temporary shelter for hundreds of thousands of people.<sup>12</sup> It is widely acknowledged that this quick response helped to prevent a much-feared “second tsunami” of disease and malnutrition.<sup>13</sup>

- 2.12 In the weeks following the disaster, multi-agency assessment teams calculated that approximately \$10 billion would be needed to repair the destroyed communities.<sup>14</sup> In response, international pledges from governments, international organisations, private individuals and companies reached \$13.6 billion.<sup>15</sup>



Source Foreign Policy Magazine

- 2.13 Special tsunami relief funds, including that founded by former US presidents George Bush Senior and Bill Clinton, were formed and telethons and other fundraising events were organised worldwide to raise money.

12 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p. 2 [http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf) and K. F. Inderfurth et al, *The Tsunami Report Card*, Foreign Policy Magazine, December 2005, p. 2 [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3314&fpsrc=ealert051213](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3314&fpsrc=ealert051213) p. 1

13 K. F. Inderfurth et al, *The Tsunami Report Card*, Foreign Policy Magazine, December 2005, p. 1 [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3314&fpsrc=ealert051213](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3314&fpsrc=ealert051213)

14 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p. 2

15 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p. 2 [http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf)

- 2.14 As the pie chart above shows, private donations nearly matched the pledges offered by governments and international organisations. Private citizens were moved to donate large amounts of money to assist with the relief effort in an unprecedented way. Within days, US charities reported raising more than \$337 million for emergency relief. The Red Cross alone received \$150 million.<sup>16</sup> Many NGOs were overwhelmed with donations. Mediciens Sans Frontieres (MSF) reported receiving four times the amount of money it anticipated needing (\$135 million), despite closing the appeal within a week of the disaster.<sup>17</sup>
- 2.15 In some of the tsunami-affected countries, governments established special institutions to oversee the distribution of donor funds and the management of the reconstruction effort.<sup>18</sup> For example, in Indonesia a new aid body was established, the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias (BRR). In Sri Lanka, leadership of the longer-term recovery effort was entrusted to a newly created Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN).
- 2.16 In February 2005, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a Special Envoy to help sustain political will in the recovery effort. Former President Bill Clinton was appointed as the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery for a two year period.

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16 *Charities report record donations*, Alan Cooperman and Jacqueline Simon, Washington Post, 8 January 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A57477-2005Jan7.html>

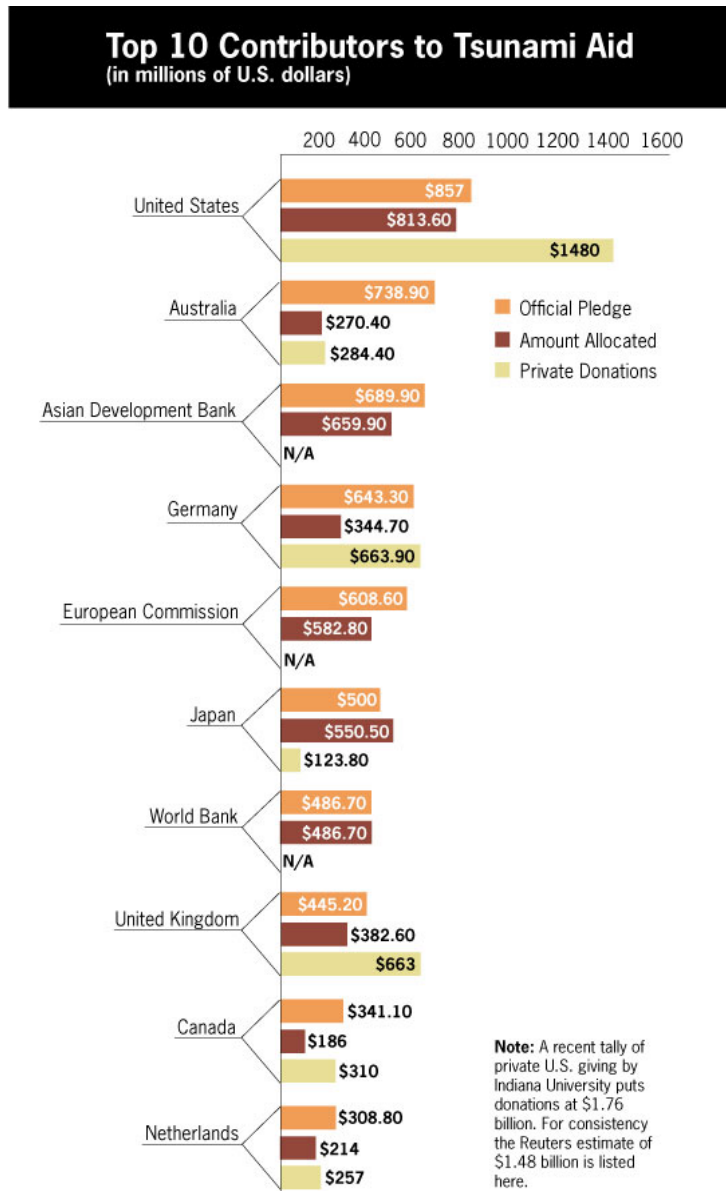
17 *Charity redirects money*, BBC, 11 May 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4535565.stm>

18 *Tsunami Recovery: Taking Stock after 12 months*, Report from the Secretary-General's Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, website, p. 2 [http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE\\_anniversary.pdf](http://www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/pdf/OSE_anniversary.pdf)



## Australia's response

2.17 The graph below shows the ten largest contributors to tsunami aid. Australia is placed second highest after the United States.



Source *Foreign Policy Magazine*

## The Australian government

2.18 At a news conference in Sydney on 27 December 2004, the Australian Prime Minister said:

I express on behalf of all of the Australian people my deepest sympathy and great profound condolences to the people and the governments of so many countries in our region. The Australian people feel the greatest sympathy for our friends in the region. We'll do everything we can as a regional neighbour and regional friend to assist the countries that have been so badly affected.<sup>19</sup>

2.19 The Australian whole-of-government response involved various departments and agencies. In addition to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM & C), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Agency for Aid and Development (AusAID) and Department of Defence, Department of Finance and Administration, Department of Health and Ageing, Emergency Australia and state agencies were involved.<sup>20</sup>

2.20 The AusAID website states that within 36 hours of the disaster the following emergency response mechanisms were activated:

- an emergency task force of senior officials was established in Canberra at 6 pm on Sunday 26 December 2004 to coordinate Australia's response;
- the AusAssist Plan, a standing AusAID disaster response plan, was activated on 27 December 2004;
- essential supplies from the AusAID emergency store were sent to Indonesia on four RAAF C-130 Hercules;
- the flights also took two AusAID funded medical teams to conduct health assessments and provide primary treatment;
- AusAID funded the immediate deployment of four participants in United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams to Thailand and Indonesia;
- AusAID staff from posts in affected countries were dispatched to disaster areas to assess the impact of the tsunami; and

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19 AusAID website,  
[http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562\\_2054\\_7529\\_7688\\_4864#history](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562_2054_7529_7688_4864#history)

20 AusAID Annual Report 2004-2005, p. 96

- additional staff from Canberra were sent to Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka to support posts.<sup>21</sup>
- 2.21 Indonesia received the greater part of Australia's assistance with medical relief, water supply and sanitation, child protection and logistical support provided during the emergency phase. Seven medical teams and critical medical supplies were mobilised to Northern Sumatra. Water purification plants and millions of tonnes of clean water were delivered to Banda Aceh.<sup>22</sup>
- 2.22 Relief efforts to Sri Lanka focused on providing and distributing clean drinking water and medical relief. Assistance to the Maldives and Seychelles included sending Australian environmental assessment teams to assess damage to the islands' coral reef and ecosystems.<sup>23</sup>
- 2.23 Operation Sumatra Assist and Sumatra Assist Phase II was the ADF's contribution to provide assistance to people affected by the tsunami disaster in Aceh and the March 2005 earthquake in Nias.
- 2.24 The 2004-2005 Defence Annual Report notes that the ADF's achievements during Operation Sumatra Assist included:
- distributing 1, 200 tonnes of humanitarian aid by air;
  - undertaking 70 aero-medical evacuations;
  - providing air transport for 3, 530 people;
  - providing 3, 700 medical treatments;
  - producing 4.7 million litres of clean water;
  - clearing 9, 000 cubic metres of debris and 1, 700 large drains; and
  - salvaging six large fishing boats.<sup>24</sup>
- 2.25 Further, during Operation Sumatra Assist Phase II, the ADF:
- delivered 133 tonnes of rice;
  - provided 5, 000 litres of water;
  - provided medical treatment for 570 people;

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21 AusAID website,  
[http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562\\_2054\\_7529\\_7688\\_4864#history](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=9562_2054_7529_7688_4864#history)

22 AusAID Annual Report 2004 -2005, p. 97

23 AusAID Annual Report 2004-2005, pp. 97

24 Defence Annual Report 2004-2005, p. 4

- conducted 13 surgical and further treatments on board HMAS Kanimbla;
  - undertook seven Sea King aero-medical evacuations;
  - repaired the Lahewa town water pump and generator; and
  - moved over 138 tonnes of stores by C-130 Hercules.<sup>25</sup>
- 2.26 Similarly, the AFP committed to assisting with relief efforts within hours of the disaster.
- 2.27 On the invitation of the Thai government, personnel were dispatched to Thailand to take a lead role in coordinating the Disaster Victim Identification process (DVI) and DVI team members began arriving in Thailand on 28 December 2005.<sup>26</sup>
- 2.28 Drawing on knowledge gained from the first Bali bombings identification process, the AFP oversaw the establishment of the Thailand Victim Disaster Identification Centre. During a 12-month period, the AFP coordinated an Australian operation comprising officers from the AFP and state agencies, which identified more than 2500 human remains.<sup>27</sup>

## Tsunami summit

- 2.29 The Australian Prime Minister attended the special ASEAN leaders' meeting initiated in the aftermath of the tsunami on 5-6 January 2005 in Jakarta and was a signatory to the declaration on action to strengthen emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention. Key outcomes included:
- agreement to urgently mobilise further, additional resources to meet the emergency relief needs of victims in affected areas; and
  - agreement to establish a regional early-warning system such as a Regional Tsunami Early Warning Centre in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia region.<sup>28</sup>

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25 Defence Annual Report 2004-2005, p. 4

26 AFP website, [http://www.afp.gov.au/international/operations/current\\_operations/tsunami\\_2004](http://www.afp.gov.au/international/operations/current_operations/tsunami_2004)

27 ib id

28 Declaration on action, Special ASEAN leaders' meeting on aftermath of Tsunami, Jakarta, 5-6 January 2005, <http://www.aseansec.org/17066.htm>

## Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (AIPRD)

- 2.30 On 5 January 2005, the Australian Prime Minister announced the establishment of a \$1 billion, 5-year assistance package to Indonesia, to support reconstruction in and beyond the tsunami-affected areas. This is the single largest aid contribution ever made by Australia.<sup>29</sup> The package consisted of \$500 million in grants and \$500 million in concessional loans for infrastructure development. The loan program provides funding at zero interest for 40 years with no repayment of principal for 10 years.<sup>30</sup>
- 2.31 In a media release on 16 March 2005, the Australian Foreign Minister stated that,
- In addition to supporting reconstruction in tsunami affected areas, the Partnership will assist Indonesia's broader efforts to achieve development and raise the living standards of its people.<sup>31</sup>
- 2.32 Funding for the AIPRD was appropriated by the federal parliament on 16 March 2005.<sup>32</sup>
- 2.33 The AIPRD is governed by a Joint Commission overseen by the Australian Prime Minister and the Indonesian President. At the inaugural meeting in Canberra on 17 March 2005, senior ministers from both countries agreed to endorse a new partnership framework which outlined the broad strategic directions for funding allocation under the AIPRD. A copy of the Joint Ministerial Statement which provides an overview of how the AIPRD functions, and a copy of the Partnership Framework can be obtained from the AusAID website.<sup>33</sup>
- 2.34 Early grant priorities included:
- restoring health, education and local government services in Aceh (\$50 million);

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29 AusAID, *Focus Magazine*, March 2005, p. 5

30 AusAID website, Indian Ocean Disaster, [http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?Id=4574\\_2733\\_4489\\_2162\\_9764](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?Id=4574_2733_4489_2162_9764)

31 *Australia and Indonesia advance historic partnership*, The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP, media release, FA 29, 16 March 2005, [http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2005/fa029\\_05.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2005/fa029_05.html)

32 House of Representatives Official Hansard, 16 March 2005, <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/dailys/dr160305.pdf>

33 AusAID website, [http://www.ausaid.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?Id=4574\\_2733\\_4489\\_2162\\_9764](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?Id=4574_2733_4489_2162_9764)

- urgent rehabilitation assistance to other areas of Indonesia (\$5 million);
  - capacity building of Indonesia's own systems for managing and responding to natural disasters (\$10 million); and
  - development of a Government Partnerships Fund to support exchange of skills, knowledge and expertise between Australian government agencies and Indonesian counterparts (\$50 million).<sup>34</sup>
- 2.35 The AIPRD is supported by a secretariat within DFAT and includes staff seconded from AusAID and the Treasury. A support office is based in Indonesia. Funding for the secretariat is provided separately and in addition to the \$1 billion aid package.<sup>35</sup>

## Australian NGOs

- 2.36 Within days of the tsunami, the main Australian charities had established relief appeals to receive donations from private citizens, community groups and businesses.
- 2.37 Australian charities-like their international counterparts-were flooded with donations. By 31 March 2005, 31 Australian NGOs had received a phenomenal \$280 million in donations from Australian businesses and the Australian public (this increased to \$313 million by mid May 2005).<sup>36</sup> Various fund-raising activities were held throughout Australia, including the Wave Aid Tsunami Relief Concert in Sydney, which raised more than \$2 million in proceeds for UNICEF, CARE, Oxfam and the Red Cross.<sup>37</sup>
- 2.38 Australia's five largest NGOs, namely Australia Red Cross, CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision Australia, received some 95% of the total donations.<sup>38</sup>

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34 AusAID website,  
[http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?Id=4574\\_2733\\_4489\\_2162\\_9764](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?Id=4574_2733_4489_2162_9764)

35 AusAID website,  
[http://www.AusAID.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Media&Id=3348\\_7372\\_5902\\_5715\\_7169](http://www.AusAID.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Media&Id=3348_7372_5902_5715_7169)

36 *Aussie donors rebuild lives*, media release, ACFID, 1 June 2005,  
[http://www.acfid.asn.au/pubs/2005\\_releases/tsunamireport.htm](http://www.acfid.asn.au/pubs/2005_releases/tsunamireport.htm)

37 *Wave aid gig raises \$2 million*, ABC, 30/01/06,  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200501/s1291823.htm>

38 First NGO Tsunami Accountability Report, ACFID, 26 Dec 04- 31 Mar 05,  
[http://www.acfid.asn.au/campaigns/ngo\\_tsunami\\_accountability\\_report\\_dec\\_to\\_mar.pdf](http://www.acfid.asn.au/campaigns/ngo_tsunami_accountability_report_dec_to_mar.pdf)

- 2.39 During the emergency phase of the relief effort, Australian NGOs:
- provided basic health care, medical supplies, food, fresh water, temporary shelter, blankets, clothes and sanitation to thousands of communities;
  - provided trauma care and psychological support for those who had lost family members;
  - helped families to trace relatives;
  - helped people to restore their livelihoods and businesses;
  - trained local people to take on leadership roles in these areas of activity; and
  - helped to reduce the spread of epidemics.<sup>39</sup>

## Corporate donations

- 2.40 Nearly all of the top 12 Australian Stock Exchange listed companies reported donations to tsunami disaster relief appeals.<sup>40</sup> Australia's top listed company, BHP Billiton's contribution totalled US\$1 465 200. This included an initial donation of US\$500 000 to World Vision and UNICEF plus US\$22 000 donated by BHP Billiton businesses in Indonesia, with additional donations from employees being matched by BHP.<sup>41</sup> Other substantial corporate donations included \$250, 000 from each of the Commonwealth Bank, Australia Post and Wesfarmers, and \$500,000 from Lonely Planet Publications.<sup>42</sup> A number of companies made in-kind donations.<sup>43</sup>

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39 ACFID, NGO Tsunami Accountability Report 26 Dec 04 – 31 Mar 05, p. 2

40 *Big business aids tsunami relief effort*, in The SMH, 31 December 2004, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/Business/Big-business-aids-tsunami-relief-efforts/2004/12/31/1104344978205.html#>

41 BHP Billiton website, <http://hsecreport.bhpbilliton.com/2005/repository/community/caseStudies/caseStudies34.asp>

42 BHP Billiton website, <http://hsecreport.bhpbilliton.com/2005/repository/community/caseStudies/caseStudies34.asp>

43 *Private donors assume role of good corporate citizen*, in The Age, 1 January 2005, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/Business/Private-donors-assume-role-of-good-corporate-citizen/2004/12/31/1104344985012.html>

## Issues and conclusions

- 3.1 The Committee's roundtable hearing was divided into two sessions. The first session was titled *Progress to date and current operational priorities*. The second session was titled *Emerging lessons*. While there was some overlap of issues across the two themes, this basic structure helped to keep discussions focussed.
- 3.2 This chapter highlights some of the main topics to emerge from each session.

### **Session 1 – Progress to date and current operational priorities**

#### Context

#### Scale

- 3.3 At the hearing, many witnesses alluded to the sheer scale of the tsunami, both in terms of its impact on communities and the challenges posed to those involved in the humanitarian response.
- 3.4 Rear Admiral Moffitt, of the ADF provided a vivid first-hand account of the impact of the earthquake in Banda Aceh:
- ...This was a war zone before it became a disaster zone...If you have not been there, I do not believe you can have the vaguest comprehension of what this was like. Even experience in Cyclone Tracy would not really prepare you for what this was like...The



town was divided into four zones...There was structural damage from beginning to end across the entire expanse of the town of some 350,000 occupants...[In some zones] entire houses were reduced to concrete slabs...the only things standing were a few of the tens of thousands of palm trees that had been there before...within the first two zones there were tens of thousands of bodies...<sup>1</sup>

3.5 Mr Tickner of the Australian Red Cross remarked,

I was thinking the other day of challenges that the organisation has confronted in its 91 years of existence. Probably you would rank the First World War and the Second World War and then the tsunami. It is that big.<sup>2</sup>

3.6 Underscoring these comments, Dr Glasser of CARE Australia said that,

Every aspect of the humanitarian response has to be viewed in the context of the huge scale of the disaster-staffing, coordination, logistics, the timeliness of the response and even assumptions about the funding that was available for our responses.<sup>3</sup>

### Complex operating environment

3.7 Federal Agent Kent gave an account of the conditions under which the AFP set up the DVI mission in Thailand:

We made strong recommendations early that we should try to consolidate all the deceased at a single point in Phuket, preferably near the airport- for logistical reasons and to facilitate a more rapid identification...That was a key efficiency.

However, there were sound cultural and practical reasons why the Thai government could not agree to that...[the people from the northern provinces were poor...to some of them that journey-to collect their loved ones- would have represented four months salary...That meant we had to extend our supply chains across hundreds of kilometres. We had to set up not one but four mortuaries and supply them with staff and resources.<sup>4</sup>

3.8 ACFID relayed the situation which confronted its member NGOs in Indonesia:

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1 Official Transcript of Evidence, pp. 20-21

2 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 9

3 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 3

4 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 32

I would also point out that dealing with multiple layers of government and with communities that had lost leadership-particularly in Aceh, where so many people had been killed, including community leaders-made this very complex.<sup>5</sup>

3.9 AusAID added,

...a lot of things were more complex than any of us assumed in this environment, and of course no one had practice on this scale.<sup>6</sup>

### Increased frequency of natural disasters

3.10 Statistics from the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery indicate that the frequency of natural disasters is increasing:

2005 was a record year for natural disasters with 27 named storms, 15 hurricanes and three category five hurricanes. Nearly 97,000 people died (78,000 of these in the Pakistan earthquake), 133 million people were affected and economic losses of \$220 billion were incurred (with Hurricane Katrina accounting for 78% of the economic costs).<sup>7</sup>

3.11 Witnesses commented on the strain that major disasters occurring in sequence were placing on the humanitarian system. Dr Glasser of CARE Australia noted that had the recent South Asian (Pakistan) earthquake occurred closer to the Boxing Day tsunami, rather than months later, the aid community “would have been absolutely overwhelmed.”<sup>8</sup>

### Transparency and accountability

3.12 From the outset, the umbrella organisation for Australian NGOs, ACFID (the Australian Council for International Development) undertook to publish quarterly reports on expenditure and progress. Similarly, AusAID produced regular progress reports.

3.13 So far, ACFID has issued four quarterly reports which can be downloaded from the ACFID website.<sup>9</sup> AusAID has released three reports, the first of which focused on the emergency phase of the relief effort, the latter two concentrate on the reconstruction phases. The most recent report focuses

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5 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 8

6 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 25

7 UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery website

8 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 4

9 ACFID website, [www.acfid.org.au](http://www.acfid.org.au)

on assistance to Indonesia. These reports can be found on the AusAID website.<sup>10</sup>

### Overhead costs

- 3.14 Back in January 2005, ACFID issued a pledge to keep administration costs as low as possible, to 10 per cent or less.<sup>11</sup> Observing that a recent ACFID report had shown that overhead costs averaged about 3.3%, the Committee sought information as to how this compared to other relief efforts.<sup>12</sup>
- 3.15 ACFID responded that the tsunami was a unique event and there was probably no comparison point, however,
- the evidence through our four quarterly reports indicate that there has been quite a considerable achievement to that end.<sup>13</sup>
- 3.16 While it is clear from a donor perspective that administration and labour costs should be kept to a minimum in humanitarian operations, agencies stressed that this should not be at the expense of driving projects forward and achieving quality outcomes on the ground for beneficiaries.<sup>14</sup>

### Rate of expenditure

- 3.17 The Committee said that some members of the public had voiced concerns about where their money was being spent. The Committee invited the agencies present at the hearing to comment on whether they had been slower to spend the money than raise it.<sup>15</sup>
- 3.18 CARE Australia, ACFID, Caritas Australia and Oxfam Australia advised the Committee that they had spent in the region of 45-60% of donor funds to date.<sup>16</sup>
- 3.19 Participants acknowledged the frustration felt generally at how much more needed to be achieved, but noted also that the completion of the reconstruction and development phase needed to realistically be viewed in terms of years, rather than weeks or months.<sup>17</sup>

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10 AusAID website, [www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)

11 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 9 and p. 10

12 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 8

13 Official Transcript of Evidence, p.9

14 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 10

15 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 10

16 Official Transcript of Evidence, pp. 11-15

17 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 15

...much more could be spent on quick but rash spending but there is obviously a commitment not to do that...this is going to take a long time and we need to do it properly.<sup>18</sup>

- 3.20 During the hearing, the Committee questioned AusAID on the status of the Australian government's commitment to deliver \$500 million in grants and \$500 million in concessional loans to Indonesia, via the AIPRD.<sup>19</sup> AusAID replied that, thus far, the government had focused expenditure on immediate needs, including food aid, shelter, health and education, rather than the loans component of the AIPRD. AusAID explained that the infrastructure loans component of the AIPRD was a longer term initiative given the time required to develop major infrastructure programs. That said, the government had already funded work through the UNDP to rebuild the port in Banda Aceh.<sup>20</sup>

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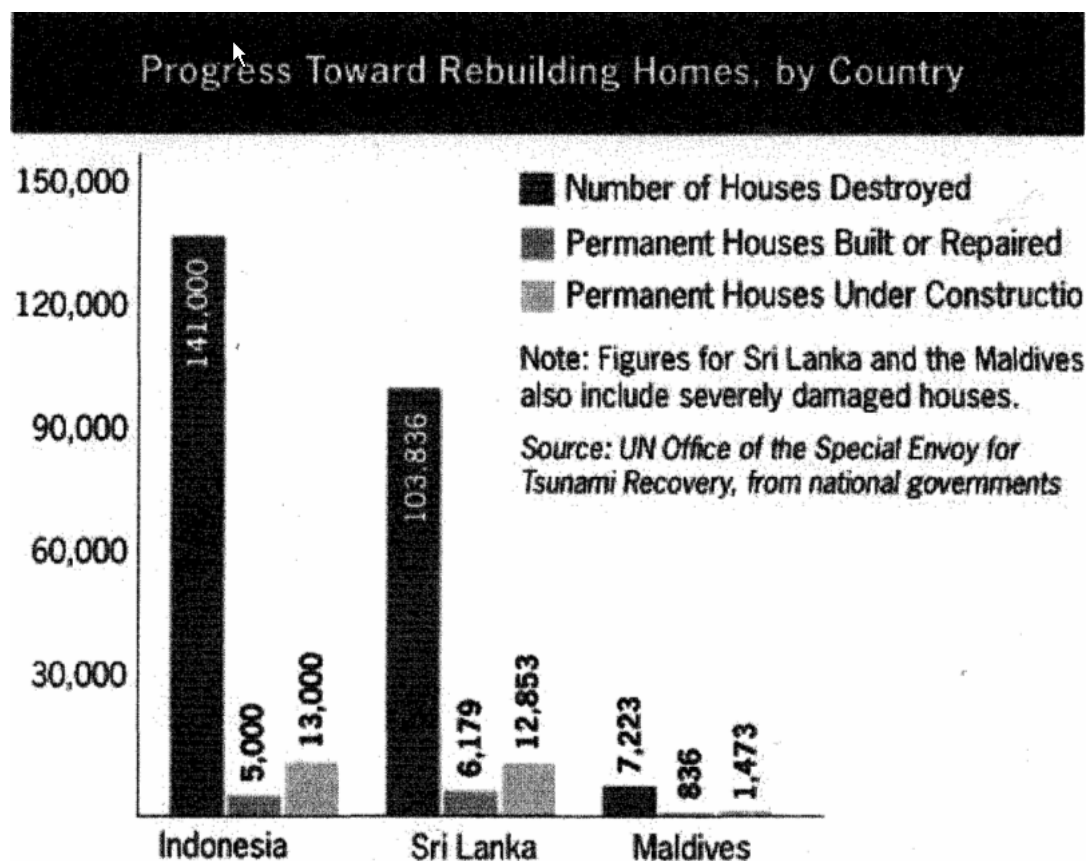
18 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 10

19 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 10

20 Official transcript of Evidence, p. 13

## Housing

3.21 As the graph below illustrates, the rebuilding of homes across the tsunami-affected countries has been relatively slow.



Source *Foreign Policy Magazine*

3.22 Similarly, as of December 2005, only a small percentage of schools and health clinics had been rebuilt:

In Indonesia's Aceh and Nias where 2132 schools were destroyed or damaged, 84 permanent and semi-permanent schools have been built. More than 400 health centres were also destroyed, with 132 temporary health clinics since built in their place.<sup>21</sup>

3.23 The issue of rebuilding is clearly "the priority" and the Committee wanted to hear about the particular difficulties that agencies were experiencing and to what extent these are being overcome.

3.24 Witnesses expanded on factors which are continuing to hamper the reconstruction phase, such as:

21 *The Tsunami A Year On*, Insight, The Age, Christmas edition 2005, p. 16

- the local inflation rate of 40% in Aceh, in part caused by the response, and the effect this is having in driving up labour, materials and transport costs;<sup>22</sup>  
⇒ (for instance, the cost of building a house has effectively doubled)<sup>23</sup>
  - difficulties in obtaining sufficient supplies of sustainable and legal plantation timber;<sup>24</sup>
  - labour shortages, with competition for staff amongst NGOs and the BRR;<sup>25</sup>
  - the laborious processes of re-issuing lost identity cards and land title documentation, and processing compensation claims;<sup>26</sup>
  - delays in agreement over transitional housing strategies;<sup>27</sup> and
  - the remoteness of some communities.<sup>28</sup>
- 3.25 In spite of these very significant challenges, agencies reported making some progress on rebuilding homes.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.26 AusAID recounted that its reconstruction efforts were focused on Aceh and it was closely monitoring the speed of rebuilding with its NGO partners.<sup>30</sup>

## Corruption

- 3.27 Various concerns about the effectiveness of aid delivery<sup>31</sup> and the misappropriation of aid funds have been voiced in the media in recent months.<sup>32</sup> Oxfam Australia told the Committee that it had recently conducted a fraud investigation which concluded that approximately \$US 29,000 of Oxfam funds had been used inappropriately.<sup>33</sup>

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22 Official Transcript of Evidence, pp. 23 -25

23 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 24

24 Official Transcript of Evidence, pp. 22 - 24

25 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 22 and p. 23

26 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 23 & p. 25

27 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 25

28 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 11

29 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 22

30 Official Transcript of Evidence, p, 5

31 See Aid Watch, *A People's Agenda? Post-tsunami Reconstruction in Aceh*, Feb 2006

32 See *Waves of Corruption*, The Australian, 24 April 2006

33 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 29

- 3.28 At the hearing, the Committee explored the subject of corruption with witnesses.
- 3.29 A number of agencies commented on the issue, with reference to stories from the field. Agencies agreed that corruption was an ongoing challenge for them all:
- Although we are all accredited with systems for managing fraud and every aspect of corruption, no system is perfect so you hope that the systems you have put in place are going to catch the key issues...In this case, Oxfam's system caught something...It takes both good systems and very experienced people to manage it effectively.<sup>34</sup>
- 3.30 AusAID emphasised that both the Indonesian and Australian governments are committed to addressing the problems of corruption. AusAID outlined a number of initiatives in this regard, including working with the Supreme Audit Agency on their assessment of irregularities in the administration of emergency funds and in a broader sense, strengthening central government agencies.<sup>35</sup>

## **Session 2 – Emerging lessons**

### **Community-based approaches**

- 3.31 At the roundtable, members and witnesses discussed how agencies determine their assistance in consultation with the local community. AusAID communicated their process of training over 600 village leaders [in Indonesia] to help with the planning of village reconstruction and direct access assistance.<sup>36</sup> AusAID acknowledged that these processes could lengthen the rebuilding phase.<sup>37</sup>
- 3.32 ACFID reiterated the importance of community-based approaches:
- That has certainly been key in all the work of our member agencies because, essentially, doing this in a completely top down way, apart from the immediate survival aspects for survivors, tends to

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34 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 27

35 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 26

36 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 5

37 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 5

be a very ineffective way of bringing the community together again.<sup>38</sup>

### Acknowledging local resources

3.33 A number of witnesses wished to have placed on the record the effort of Indonesian people to assist themselves. Rear Admiral Moffitt of the ADF said that was something that Australians needed to recognise and give much more credit for:

In comparison with what we did, particularly in the area in which Australian Defence Force members worked physically, they overshadowed our effort phenomenally... They were exceptional in spirit, and, given the circumstances, their stoicism was unbelievable.<sup>39</sup>

3.34 Mr Isbister of Caritas Australia endorsed the Rear Admiral's comments and reported a strong network of doctors from Yogyakarta operating the clinics and hospitals in Malabu shortly after the disaster.<sup>40</sup>

### Cultural sensitivity

3.35 When the AFP described its DVI operation in Thailand to the Committee, it was apparent that cultural sensitivity was key.<sup>41</sup> Rear Admiral Moffitt provided further examples of instances where Australian personnel had made the effort to observe local ways and noted,

...the degree of sensitivity Australians can show when they go into these circumstances is one of the great assets that we take with us.<sup>42</sup>

### Women

3.36 Committee members and agencies acknowledged that women play a vital role in getting communities back up and running again. Accordingly, women require appropriate support services.

3.37 Dr Glasser of CARE Australia stated that,

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38 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 7

39 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 21

40 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 22

41 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 32

42 Official Transcript of Evidence, pp. 39- 40



...it has been demonstrated time and time again that women play a fundamental role in resolving conflict and building peace.<sup>43</sup>

3.38 AusAID noted that of the 600 village leaders being trained to assist with rebuilding, over 300 of those were women.<sup>44</sup>

3.39 The Committee questioned AusAID about what counselling was available to women following the tsunami.<sup>45</sup>

3.40 AusAID informed the Committee,

We have been funding an NGO to work in Aceh to help build up capacity for counselling...<sup>46</sup>

3.41 Subsequent to the hearing, AusAID supplied the Committee with additional material on a range of programs and initiatives it has in place to assist women in Aceh, in respect of trauma awareness and counselling, and also improving services in the areas of reproductive health and maternal child health.<sup>47</sup>

## Media and public education

3.42 The Committee wanted to discuss the role the media had played in determining public perceptions about whether tsunami response funds were being spent appropriately. Participants agreed that media reports were not always accurate or conducive to what agencies were trying to achieve.

3.43 Oxfam told the Committee that it had made a conscious decision early on in the fraud investigation to be proactive, and had contacted journalists with the facts in order to prevent inaccurate reporting. This strategy had resulted in an initially sympathetic media response.<sup>48</sup>

3.44 AusAID described a similar proactive approach which it had taken with the media. Anticipating that there might be negative press, particularly in the area of housing, where there has been a number of well-documented problems, and as the tsunami response neared its one year anniversary, it invited a group of journalists from both Australian television and print media to come to Aceh. It was hoped that with full access to all of

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43 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 36

44 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 35

45 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 37

46 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 37

47 Exhibit 2, Supplementary information from AusAID on services for women in Aceh.

48 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 29

AusAID's projects, journalists could appreciate the multi-faceted nature of undertaking development in the Aceh context.<sup>49</sup>

- 3.45 AusAID noted that it had recently extended a similar invitation to a number of Indonesian journalists to encourage greater positive coverage in the Indonesian media as well and this had been successful.<sup>50</sup>

### Inter-agency collaboration

- 3.46 Several NGOs placed on the record their appreciation for the support they received from the government. ACFID summarised the sentiment:

We really welcomed the Australian government's close collaboration with our member agencies and our council. This was one of those instances where Australia Inc., so to speak really came through.<sup>51</sup>

- 3.47 However, ACFID observed that for future operations, it would be better to have the government and NGOs present as a united front, with joint statements and so forth, at the beginning phase of the crisis, rather than the middle phase as was the case with the tsunami response.<sup>52</sup>

### Civil-military cooperation

- 3.48 ACFID told the Committee that although NGOs had a good working relationship with the ADF at senior levels, there was still much to be gained from greater interchange between civil and military organisations:

We participate in a number of training activities. We have a generally good dialogue, but we simply do not have enough understanding of one another of how the forces operate and vice versa. That is something we need to do jointly in our own way.<sup>53</sup>

### Formalised agreements

- 3.49 The AFP noted that there was no formalised agreement between Australia and Thailand regarding the Australian-led DVI operation there, and it may be helpful to have a more formal arrangement in place for future operations.<sup>54</sup>

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49 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 29

50 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 29

51 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 7

52 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 40

53 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 41

54 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 33

## Lifting the bar of accountability

3.50 ACFID told the Committee that Australia was the only country in the world,

that did a consolidated NGO public accounting exercise.<sup>55</sup>

3.51 CARE Australia indicated that the joint reporting process had 'lifted the accountability bar' amongst NGOs and encouraged agencies to have robust discussions amongst themselves and with ACFID about costs.<sup>56</sup>

## Disaster preparedness

3.52 Linked to the earlier observations about the increasing incidence of natural disasters, witnesses alluded to the need to strengthen the standing capacity of the international aid community to respond to future humanitarian emergencies.<sup>57</sup>

3.53 Oxfam and World Vision referred to the difficulties of recruiting and retaining suitably experienced staff.<sup>58</sup> The Red Cross echoed their concerns:

We need to reach out...to a whole range of professions in order to build our volunteer base in the case of external emergencies...<sup>59</sup>

3.54 With funding from the Gates Foundation, an international working group has been formed to examine issues such as humanitarian staffing capacity.<sup>60</sup> Other disaster preparedness initiatives referred to at the hearing include the Red Cross movements' examination of International Disaster Response Laws (IDRL).<sup>61</sup> Following the hearing, the Red Cross provided the Committee with some information on this project.<sup>62</sup>

3.55 Above all, witnesses spoke about the need to have sufficient funds on stand-by for the international community's initial response to future emergencies. The AFP described the frustrations and delays it

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55 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 41

56 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 9

57 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 4 & p. 39

58 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 22 & p. 38

59 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 39

60 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 38

61 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 34

62 Exhibit 1, Australian Red Cross, Supplementary information on International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL).

experienced in trying to procure financial support from other nations for the DVI mission in Thailand.<sup>63</sup>

- 3.56 Mr Neill Wright, from UNHCR, noted that his agency's central emergency revolving fund- to which Australia had contributed - had been strengthened.<sup>64</sup>

### Formal evaluations

- 3.57 At the hearing, AusAID advised the Committee that the agency was formalising a formal evaluation of AusAID's response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, and the roundtable hearing would provide important input to that process.<sup>65</sup>

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63 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 33

64 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 38

65 Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 6

## The Committee's views

- 3.58 The Committee found the roundtable discussions on Australia's response to the tsunami extremely valuable. Feedback from the witnesses, both at and after the hearing, indicated that they too found the sessions both informative and illuminating.
- 3.59 Throughout the course of the morning, the Committee heard agencies express their disappointment about how a few negative stories about the tsunami response in the press seemed to take precedence over the many positive stories that could be told. At the hearing, the Committee was pleased to hear some of the many good stories agencies which had to tell. The Committee was affected by the shared experiences of agencies, and particularly, those of the ADF and AFP personnel who were involved in the initial clean-up and DVI missions. Officers clearly carried out their jobs with compassion and dignity under exceptionally difficult and quite overwhelming circumstances - and this is something that those individuals and all Australians can be proud of.
- 3.60 The Committee would like to see more coverage of the reconstruction effort as it progresses, disseminated through the Australian media and both government and NGO agencies' publications and websites. Clearly, the tsunami is no longer considered "front page news." It took place some 18 months ago and has been superseded by a sequence of other distressing natural disasters. That said, it remains the largest international relief and reconstruction effort staged in modern times and one to which Australia continues to contribute significant resources.
- 3.61 The Committee recognises that the frequency of natural disasters appears to be on the rise in the region and worldwide and heeds the humanitarian community's concerns about being stretched to capacity.
- 3.62 The Committee endorses the government's plan to enhance its emergency response capacity, as outlined in the AusAID white paper.<sup>66</sup>
- 3.63 The Committee notes AusAID's intention to formally evaluate its response to the tsunami in the near future. The Committee looks forward to learning the outcomes of that evaluation.

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66 See *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability, A White Paper on the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program*, p. 46, available from the AusAID website [http://www.aisaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?Id=6184\\_6346\\_7334\\_4045\\_8043](http://www.aisaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?Id=6184_6346_7334_4045_8043)

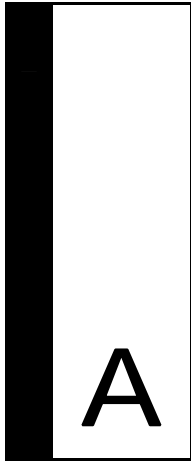
- 3.64 The Committee encourages AusAID and ACFID to continue with their regular progress reports on the tsunami response for as long as Australia remains involved in post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

**Senator A B Ferguson**

**Chair**

**22 June 2006**



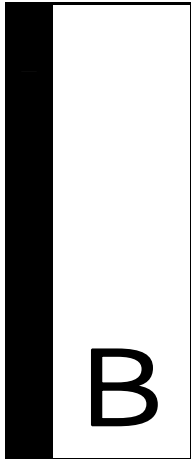


## Appendix A - Exhibits

1. Supplementary information from the Australian Red Cross on International Disaster Response Laws, Rule and Principles (IDRL) programme.
2. Supplementary information from the Australian Agency for International Development on services for women in Aceh.







## Appendix B – Program and list of participants

### **Program**

**PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE HEARING**

**AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI**

**FRIDAY 12 MAY 2006**

**09:15 am to 12:15 pm**

**Committee Room 2S1**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>09:15 am</b> | <b>Chair's opening statement</b>   |
| <b>09:20 am</b> | <b>SESSION 1</b><br><b>Progress to-date and current operational priorities</b> |
| <b>10:40 am</b> | <b>Morning tea</b>   |
| <b>10:55 am</b> | <b>SESSION 2</b><br><b>Emerging lessons</b>                                    |
| <b>12:15 pm</b> | <b>Adjournment</b>   |

## Participants

Name	Position & Organisation
Mr Miles Armitage	Assistant Secretary, Maritime South-East Asia Branch, DFAT
Ms Alison Cleary	Tsunami Information Coordinator, Oxfam Australia
Ms Suzanne Edgecombe	Director, Humanitarian and Emergency Section, AusAID
Ms Jules Frost	Manager for Tsunami Response, World Vision Australia
Dr Robert Glasser	CEO, CARE Australia
Mr Jack de Groot	CEO, Caritas Australia
Federal Agent Bruce Hill	Manager, Border, AFP
Mr Jamie Isbister	International Programs Manager, Caritas Australia
Federal Agent Karl Kent	Acting Manager, Technical Operations, AFP
Rear Admiral Rowan Moffitt AM, RAN	Deputy Chief of Joint Operations, ADF
Mr Paul O'Callaghan	Executive Director, Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
Mr Murray Proctor	Deputy Director-General, Asia Section, AusAID
Ms Jennifer Spence	Acting Director, Australia Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (AIPRD), AusAID
Mr Chris Staines	General Manager, Tsunami Response, Australian Red Cross
Mr Robert Tickner	CEO, Australian Red Cross
Mr Neill Wright	Regional Representative, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)