

# Voices for Justice 2016 Policy Briefing - FAQs



## Australia: A Good Neighbour?

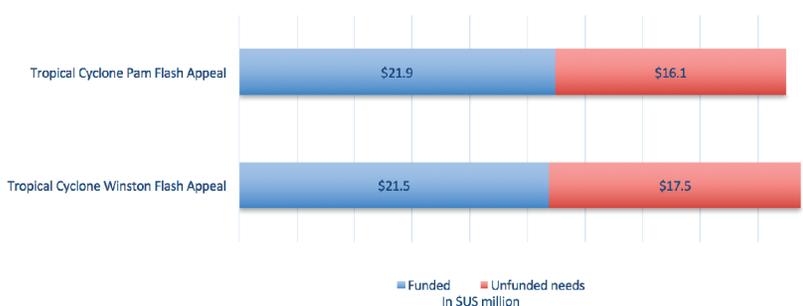
Australia lies within a region of rich culture, beauty and resilience but also unacceptable poverty and vulnerability. Over 40% of the world's poorest people live in Asia and the Pacific and our region continues to be the area of the world most affected by natural disasters. Helping our neighbours in the region overcome poverty is the right thing to do. Investing in regional security, stability and resilience in the face of disasters and climate change is also in Australia's interests.

In 2015, 160 disasters were reported in the region (almost half the world's total), causing over 16,000 deaths and billions of dollars of economic losses. Disasters included earthquakes in Nepal, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan; tropical cyclones that struck South-East Asia and the Pacific; floods in China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; as well as heat-waves and droughts across the region.

Warming atmosphere and oceans and disrupted climate patterns are increasing the likelihood and severity of many of these disasters – particularly heat-waves, droughts, storms and flooding. 2015 was the hottest year on record, fuelled both by global warming and by a powerful El Niño. The resulting impacts hurt the poorest and most vulnerable groups particularly severely – women, children, the elderly and people with disability. For example, heat waves that struck India and Pakistan between May and June resulted in more than 3,000 deaths. Droughts across the region in 2015 affected at least 20 million people, causing widespread hunger and emergency responses in India, Thailand, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Palau and the Marshall Islands. Of 90 major storms reported across the globe, 43 hit Asia-Pacific countries, of which 33 were high-intensity cyclones.



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The impact of disasters and climate change on human wellbeing, security and stability across our region is set to increase. Beyond responding to emergencies when they occur, it will be critical that the global community acts decisively to build communities that are resilient in the face of these disasters.

appeals for Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (March 2015) and Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji (February 2016) and we were generous contributors to the Earthquake in Nepal (November 2015) and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Australia has a proud history of supporting our neighbours when disaster strikes. In recent times, we were the largest bilateral contributor to the flash

appeals for Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (March 2015) and Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji (February 2016) and we were generous contributors to the Earthquake in Nepal (November 2015) and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

In addition, Australia had previously lead the way in proactively helping our neighbours to build resilience to disasters and climate change. In 2013, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the OECD recognised Australia as a lead donor and a potential role model for its investments and approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR), and applauded it for contributing between 2% to 3% of its aid program to DRR. Sadly, however, Australia has reduced its investments in this critical area, with DRR now representing less than 1.4% of a dramatically reduced aid program.

“It is distressing to see our people continuing to fight the onslaught of sea level rise, storm surges and disasters like Cyclone Pam & Cyclone Winston on their homes, their farmland, their livelihood, their heritage and their critical source of water. And I must say that the increasing frequency and severity of such events have exacerbated the heartbreaking impacts on our people... In some parts of our country, whole villages had to relocate due to severe coastal erosion and flooding. Food crops have been destroyed. Our fresh water lens, our major source of drinking water, are increasingly being contaminated by the intruding sea water.”

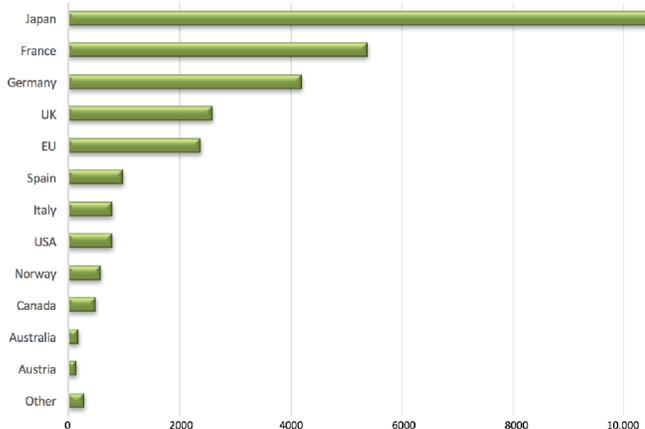
~ Taneti Maamau – President of Kiribati, September 2016



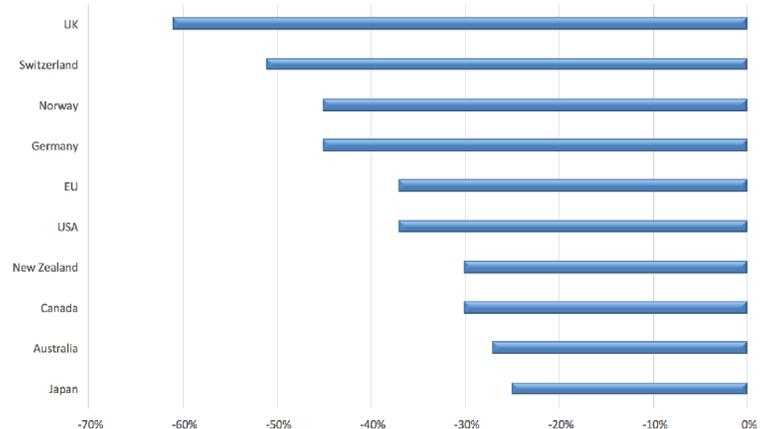
The Paris Climate Agreement, which came into force on Friday 4 November 2016, commits Australia and all other nations to work to limit global warming to as far below 2°C as possible. This will require a rapid and large-scale transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy, clean transport and sustainable farming & forestry. The treaty sets the world on a path towards zero net emissions, by the second half of the Century with developed countries accepting responsibility to pursue this pathway more rapidly. Indeed, many of our Pacific neighbours – led by former President of Kiribati, Anote Tong – are calling for a global moratorium on all new coal mines.

However, despite these commitments and calls from our neighbours, there remain large gaps between what Australia *needs* to do, what we have *pledged* to do, and what our current policies are *actually delivering*. We are the highest per person emitter of greenhouse gases among industrialised countries and our 2030 emissions reduction targets are among the least credible. We have pledged no additional support to help developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change, instead “reprofiling” funds already allocated in the aid program. Australia needs to reduce its emissions rapidly in order to contribute less to the problem of climate change. We also must increase our support for disaster resilience and response and climate adaptation so that we contribute more to the solutions. Doing this will not only support health and wellbeing, security and stability in the region and reduce the impacts of climate change on Australia. It will also help us develop renewable energy technology, infrastructure and jobs in line with increasingly climate-sensitive global investment and policy environments.

**Annual Public Climate Finance Pledge by 2030**  
In US \$,000



**2030 Emissions Reduction Pledges**



## What you can do

Make a speech in Parliament about the impact of climate change on all communities – particularly the poorest – and the need for Australia to do more to contribute to a just, peaceful & sustainable world free from poverty.

Ask the leader of the Opposition to commit that an elected Labor Government would lead the development of a national plan to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Ask the leader of the Opposition to commit that an elected Labor Government would increase investment in renewable energy and increase our 2030 emissions reduction targets above the currently low level of only 26–28% below 2005 levels by 2030.

Ask the leader of the Opposition to commit an elected Labor Government help our neighbours prepare for and mitigate the risks of disasters by restoring Disaster Risk Reduction funding to 3% of the aid program. This restoration should be achieved through new aid funding (i.e. not from reallocated funds).

Ask the leader of the Opposition to commit an elected Labor Government would set a pathway towards reaching our international commitment of increasing Australian aid to 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2030.