



## Options Paper

# What does it look like for Australia to be an... Effective Climate Ally with the Pacific

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# Why it matters

The effects, impacts and root causes of climate change should be Australia's central foreign policy concern in the Pacific. Climate change is the primary security issue for Pacific island countries and, due to their geographies, is an existential threat. Australia's comprehension of what is at stake for Pacific island countries is critical to its own regional security objectives. This requires taking Pacific concerns seriously and approaching climate change as a major regional priority requiring massive, urgent action.

Climate change is a shared experience Australia has with the Pacific. Through rising sea levels, changes in weather patterns and more extreme weather events, climate change is creating severe disruption to both Australian and Pacific communities.

In the Pacific, the comprehensive effects of climate change are dislocating communities and affecting both human and traditional security calculations. Low-lying regions face the prospect of wholesale migration as islands become uninhabitable.<sup>1</sup> Across the region there are impacts on employment, resource availability, food security and emergency services. For fragile states there is the danger of complete state failure.

For Pacific governments climate has become the central pillar of their national strategies. Development priorities are now built around the effects of climate change on health, livelihoods, infrastructure and resources. Climate change is seen not just through major natural disasters, but in how it affects specific communities on a day-to-day basis, such as those that are sensitive to environmental disruption like farming and fishing. This has ramifications for how Australia structures aid and development partnerships in the future. On the current global warming trajectory, there are regions where adaptation may not be possible. It is no longer a matter of development as usual.

Climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation disproportionately impact vulnerable social groups, often further entrenching disadvantage and disempowerment.<sup>2</sup> Discrimination and structural disadvantage can exacerbate vulnerability to climate change and exclusion from climate and environmental governance. However, opportunities also exist to harness and support positive shifts in gender norms and roles which can occur during episodes of environmental crisis and natural disasters.

Building trust with Pacific island countries supports Australia's broader geopolitical interests. China is aware of the importance of Pacific relationships to Australia's foreign policy, and it is making considerable effort to enhance its own relationships in the region, including opening a Climate and the Pacific Friendship Centre.<sup>3</sup>

For Australia to become an effective climate ally with the Pacific it needs to do more than simply position itself as a first responder to natural disasters. Australia needs to revisit its own contribution to climate change as a major emitter and fossil fuel exporter through an ambitious domestic climate policy and work with Pacific island countries through processes of multilateral diplomacy to drive global ambition to reduce emissions.

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1 Kate Lyons, *IPCC report shows 'possible loss of entire countries within the century'*, The Guardian, 10 August 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/10/ipcc-report-shows-possible-loss-of-entire-countries-within-the-century>

2 Robin Mearns and Andrew Norton (eds), *Social Dimensions of Climate Change Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World* (The World Bank, 2010), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/2689/520970PUB0EPI11C010disclosed0Dec091.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

3 Denghua Zhang, *Assessing China's Climate Change Aid to the Pacific*, ANU Department of Pacific Affairs, In Brief 3, 2020, [https://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2020-02/dpa\\_in\\_brief\\_2020\\_3\\_zhang\\_final.pdf](https://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2020-02/dpa_in_brief_2020_3_zhang_final.pdf)

# Aligning views

## PACIFIC VIEWS

The issue of climate change is **all-encompassing** in the Pacific. It permeates everything given its existential nature. There is a shared sense across the region of the importance of climate change as a security threat and an understanding of the loss and damage that climate change will cause.

Pacific island countries have been **at the forefront of global concern** about climate change since the scientific consensus emerged in the mid-1980s.<sup>4</sup> They demonstrated diplomatic leadership by forming an alliance of mutual interest and concerns with island states in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean in 1990,<sup>5</sup> while the following year the Pacific Islands Forum released a statement stating that climate change posed a major risk to the region.<sup>6</sup> Pacific island countries were instrumental in putting climate change on the agenda at the United Nations Security Council, while Pacific leaders have become highly experienced in climate negotiations.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of the **“Blue Pacific”** has become central to the collective diplomacy of the Pacific Islands.<sup>8</sup> It seeks to reframe these countries away from being considered “small island developing states” towards being seen as “large ocean states”. The idea of the Blue Pacific is the recognition that the ocean is the primary influence on the region’s way of life.

Pacific communities have a deep spiritual connection to the ocean: it shapes the region’s history, values, practices and cultural identity. Pacific people see themselves as custodians of the ocean and policy should be filtered through this lens.

On broader **environmental issues** there are a diverse range of views within the Pacific that reflect countries’ own economic interests and can create tensions within the Blue Pacific concept. Natural gas is important in Papua New Guinea and logging is important in Solomon Islands. As it struggles to find new sources of income, in June 2021 Nauru triggered a clause with the International Seabed Authority to finalise regulations around deep-sea mining.<sup>9</sup> The formation of a new Pacific Parliamentarians’ Alliance on Deep-Sea Mining demonstrates that this will be a source of tension within the Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

On **perceptions of Australia**, there is recognition of Australian funding for disaster response and for community adaptation over at least two decades. Australian diplomats are perceived as having done well in understanding and engaging with the needs of the Pacific region. However, there can be a perceived disconnect between listening and action, with Australia sometimes viewed as listening to Pacific views then doing the opposite.

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4 George Carter, *Establishing a Pacific Voice in the Climate Change Negotiations*, in Greg Fry and Sandra Tarte (eds) *The New Pacific Diplomacy* (ANU Press, 2015), pp. 205-222. <https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p328371/pdf/ch17.pdf>

5 <https://www.aosis.org/>

6 <https://www.forumsec.org/1991/07/29/twenty-second-south-pacific-forum-palikir-pohnpei-federated-states-of-micronesia-29-30-july-1991/>

7 Fulori Manoa, *The Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS)’ early advocacy on climate and security at the United Nations*, *Griffith Asia Insights*, 27 May 2021, <https://blogs.griffith.edu.au/asiainsights/the-pacific-small-island-developing-states-psids-early-advocacy-on-climate-and-security-at-the-united-nations/>

8 <https://www.forumsec.org/2050strategy/>

9 Kate Lyons, *Deep-sea mining could start in two years after Pacific nation of Nauru gives UN ultimatum*, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/30/deep-sea-mining-could-start-in-two-years-after-pacific-nation-of-nauru-gives-un-ultimatum>

10 <https://www.pacificblueline.org/pacificparliamentarians>

## AUSTRALIAN VIEWS

Pacific leaders believe that Australia has signed up to a series of regional agreements on climate and should **meet these commitments** regardless of the domestic pressure within Australia on energy policy. Australia is perceived as having tried to water down regional climate statements at key moments in international negotiations.

There is a deep concern among Pacific island countries about **migration** as a form of adaptation. Relocating is not the best or preferred option, especially given the cultural ties of Pacific peoples to their homelands. Migration as a form of adaptation also shifts the responsibility of adaptation away from carbon emitters to individuals and families.

Australians are conscious of vulnerability to climate change and there is **widespread recognition** of the climate crisis.<sup>11</sup>

At the federal political level, Australia's approach to climate change has been impacted by the economics of coal and natural gas being its second and third largest exports. This creates political calculations in regions where these industries dominate. Energy policy has been the "third rail" of Australian domestic politics, slowing Australia's transition towards renewables.

There are signs that the consensus in favour of climate action is strengthening.

Climate is part of **mainstream defence debate** in Australia, with the Australian Defence Force often called upon to respond to extreme weather events.<sup>12</sup> This impacts on resources and overall capability. The ADF has been looking at risk reduction measures, root causes, resilience and collaborating around response modalities. There are concerns that China may use its military for emergency response and disaster recovery, integrating itself into the security structures of the Pacific region.

11 The Australia Institute, *Climate of the Nation 2021, Tracking Australia's attitudes towards climate change and energy*, October 2021: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/211013-Climate-of-the-Nation-2021-WEB.pdf>

12 Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, July 2021, <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/publications/2020-defence-strategic-update>

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALIGNMENT

With Australian communities suffering major weather events, there is **growing awareness** of the shared experiences of Australians and their Pacific neighbours. For Australia to become an effective climate ally with the Pacific the first step needs to be a mutual recognition of the crisis.

There are shared interests and opportunities to work together on **disaster response**, enabling and supporting communities to protect and preserve key critical marine habitats with support for education, technology and capacity-building. This is not just one-way, as shown by Pacific assistance to Australia during bushfires and floods.

There is an opportunity for **mutual learning** between Australia and the Pacific. At the international level, there is a market for Pacific knowledge on environmental management and climate adaptation. The Pacific can contribute local knowledge and innovations on areas including desalination and crop techniques. Exchanges can facilitate mutual learning from ocean management to extractive industries.

**Indigenous knowledge** can be a critical component in this knowledge-building. The relationship between Australia's First Nations and Pacific peoples is a missing pillar of Australia's relations with the Pacific. Indigenous perspectives on environmental guardianship are complementary to the Blue Pacific concept, focusing on collective and individual responsibilities for caring for Country.<sup>13</sup> Pacific communities have signalled that they want to collaborate more with Indigenous First Nations.

There is a role for the **Pacific diaspora** in Australia to share valuable knowledge both in the Pacific and in Australia. Australia can work more closely with the Pacific diaspora in support of disaster preparedness and response.

There are **foundations to work on** in Australia-Pacific climate action. Positive examples to build on include cooperation on sustainable fisheries with the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and Australia's support for Pacific island countries to preserve their maritime boundaries in the face of sea level rise. This is likely to require continuing cooperation as sea level rise may make the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) a more contested space in international relations.<sup>14</sup> This is something Pacific Islands have already been planning for, lodging their Exclusive Economic Zones using GPS coordinates rather than coastal baselines. In 2021 the Pacific Islands Forum made a declaration on "preserving maritime zones in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise."<sup>15</sup>

Cooperation on **climate science** is the foundation of joint efforts on adaptation, including monitoring sea level changes and gathering evidence and evaluations. There is a strong demand for scientific collaboration. Australian NGOs working with local Pacific NGOs can assist in aligning views.

Australia has the potential to develop a **maritime consciousness** that aligns with the Blue Pacific. Australia has expressed its desire to be a two-ocean power and this should be seen as more than just the ability to project naval power into the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Australia has a huge Exclusive Economic Zone, which should be understood as a responsibility. Major assets like the Great Barrier Reef could be viewed with the same guardianship that is central to the Blue Pacific.

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- 13 James Blackwell and Julie Ballangarry, *Indigenous Foreign Policy: a new way forward?* AFFPC Issues Paper Series. Issue 1, April 2022: <https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/AFFPC-issues-paper-Indigenous-Foreign-Policy-Blackwell-Ballangarry-FINAL.pdf>
- 14 Griffith Asia Institute, *Climate change and maritime boundaries: Pacific responses and implications for Australia*, Regional Outlook Paper No.66, 2021: [https://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0033/1378437/RO66-Strating-and-Wallis-web.pdf](https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/1378437/RO66-Strating-and-Wallis-web.pdf)
- 15 Pacific Islands Forum, *Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise*, August 2021, <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Declaration-on-Preserving-Maritime.pdf>

## CASE STUDY:


### AUSTRALIA'S SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR CLIMATE PARTNERSHIPS (SCITECH4CLIMATE)

The SciTech4Climate program is a \$5.5million science and technology partnership to support climate resilience in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>16</sup> The program connects leading Australian scientists and climate specialists with development partners in the Indo-Pacific to ensure the region's response to climate change is supported by the best available science and technological advances.

Through SciTech4Climate, DFAT is partnering with Australia's national science agency, CSIRO and the Australian National University (ANU), to develop practical actions to adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Indo Pacific. CSIRO and ANU work closely with partner governments, industry and local communities to translate cutting-edge science into novel, locally appropriate solutions to climate challenges. These partnerships help the Pacific to adapt to climate change and build resilience to the challenges ahead.

SciTech4Climate is building strong cooperation with the Pacific to harness science and technology to support climate resilience. It is an example of a successful program that can be built on in the region.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/climate-change/supporting-indo-pacific-tackle-climate-change/scitech4climate-harnessing-science-and-technology-support-climate-resilience-indo-pacific>



**“We reaffirm that 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.”**

Boe Declaration on Regional Security, Pacific Islands  
Forum Leaders' Meeting, Nauru, 2018



# Barriers

The high degree of **politicisation of climate change** has made cohesive and collaborative engagement difficult. With coal and gas as two of Australia's major exports, the Australian government has viewed fossil fuel industries as a vital national interest. Australia has been unwilling to plan for the emerging scenario where renewables become the dominant form of global energy consumption.

This has meant that Australia's economic and political settings **have not matched Australia's foreign policy priorities** in the Pacific. The reluctance of successive Australian governments to set ambitious emissions reduction targets has hindered Australia's diplomatic efforts in the Pacific. Given the importance of these issues to the Pacific, Australia's domestic energy policy effectively became its foreign policy within the region. There has been a lack of consistency between the adaptation and resilience measures Australia has supported in the Pacific and Australia's domestic climate policy.

This leads to a danger that measures such as Australia's "Pacific Step-up" are viewed as **lacking diplomatic credibility** if perceived to be only in response to China's increased presence and not a genuine commitment to regional integration. Successive cuts to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have weakened the ability of Australia to engage substantively with the Pacific.

Pacific countries face a large **climate finance gap** with demand for financing of climate adaptation far exceeding existing opportunities. There is also a lack of transparency and coherence in climate financing. The Green Climate Fund has become the dominant climate fund in the Pacific since it started approving projects in 2015. It has proven difficult for Pacific island countries to directly access financing through this mechanism, with low rates of accreditation and spending.<sup>17</sup> This means that often funding is not getting to the local level in the Pacific.<sup>18</sup>

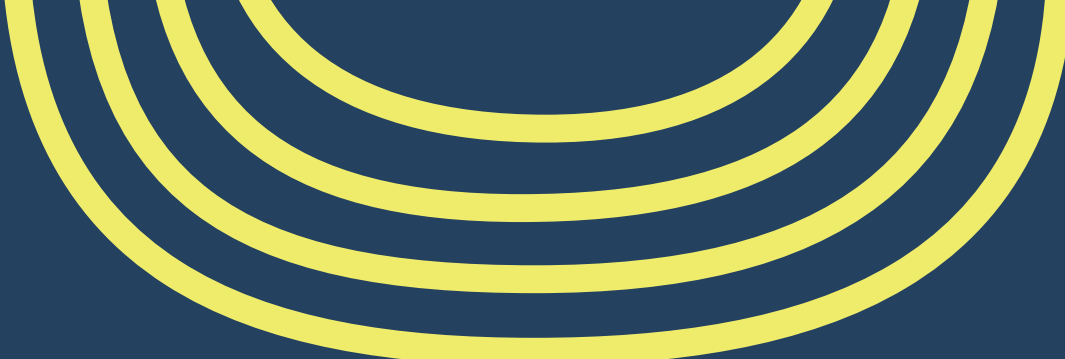
**Community resilience to disasters is weakening.** Bigger and longer disaster seasons are challenging communities across the region. There is the danger that with so many natural disasters, there are limits to resilience. Findings suggest that after the third time, people don't build back. This will require not just rebuilding but imagining new economies and politics that helps build a survival bridge into the future.

Perspectives on climate change, environmental destruction and disasters are **not being equally heard**, with marginalised voices including women, youth, LGBTQI+, disabled, rural, Indigenous and ethnically diverse people. This can severely reduce the efficacy of mitigation, adaptation and natural disaster recovery efforts, while also increasing or entrenching disadvantage and contributing to higher levels of state and human insecurity.

There is the potential for climate change to overshadow **other forms of environmental degradation** not directly related to carbon emissions. These include over-fishing, waste disposal, reduction in plastic use, deforestation and environmental rehabilitation. There are extractive industries within the Pacific that are both environmentally and socially fraught. The Panguna copper mine in Bougainville, mass logging in Solomon Islands and the prospect of deep sea mining instigated by Nauru all have local geopolitical effects that threaten regional stability. As with Australia's extractive industries, sometimes economic calculations can override environmental imperatives. The environment can be seen as a purely economic asset, creating tension between economic and environmental human security.

17 International Monetary Fund, *Unlocking Access to Climate Finance for Pacific Island Countries*, Departmental Papers, 2021: <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/087/2021/020/087.2021.issue-020-en.xml>

18 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 2020, Come Heat or High Water, Tackling the humanitarian impacts of the climate crises Together*, 2020: [https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-migration/documents/news/20201113-worlddisasters-full-final\\_1.pdf](https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-migration/documents/news/20201113-worlddisasters-full-final_1.pdf)



**“For Australia to get Pacific islands’ trust,  
Australia will have to prioritise what  
Pacific islanders think is important.”**

Michael Kabuni, Papua New Guinea,  
AP4D Pacific Voices Consultation, April 2022

**“Is there a magical solution to the  
reliance on fossil fuel? That would be  
great. That way we don’t have to have  
these awkward conversations.”**

Joep Tarai, Fiji, AP4D Pacific Voices Consultation, April 2022

**“The care of and preservation  
of Pacific knowledge is an area  
where we can grow with Australia.”**

Opeta Alefaio, Fiji, AP4D Pacific Voices Consultation, April 2022



# The vision in practice

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR AUSTRALIA TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE CLIMATE ALLY WITH THE PACIFIC?

Australia becomes a **constructive partner** for the Pacific on the mutual challenge of climate change. It works with the Pacific in a model of shared leadership.

Australia becomes a **staunch advocate for global climate goals**, understanding this to be an essential component of its national interest in terms of domestic well-being and its regional foreign policy goals. Australia uses its diplomatic capacity to promote greater climate action. Australia's diplomatic network views climate action as a priority and it uses diplomacy to drive climate ambition and reap the economic and strategic opportunities of climate action.

Australia joins the Pacific in a regional diplomatic bloc that can **drive global ambition** on climate change mitigation. Australia is no longer isolated from the international consensus on climate action. Australia enhances its status on the global stage by working together with the Pacific. Connected and combined, Australia and the Pacific have a strong international voice on climate action.

Australia positions itself as a genuine part of post-independence **Pacific regionalism**, overcoming the idea that the Pacific is Australia's "backyard" and instead seeing itself as being an integral and invested part of the Pacific neighbourhood.

Australia has an energy policy that is committed to **transitioning away from the use of fossil fuels** for domestic energy consumption. There will also be a realisation that exports of fossil fuels have a limited lifespan and that new sources of export revenue need to be found before demand for fossil fuels in international markets falls.

Australia's energy transition includes building **economic resilience within communities that are currently reliant on fossil fuels**. A priority should be preventing these communities from experiencing an economic shock when export demand falls as major economies' 2030 emissions targets reduce the viability of coal. This will be a highly political process that will need sustained leadership across government to manage obstacles.

Australia becomes a **major exporter of renewable energy**. Australia's emergence as a renewable energy superpower allows it to reconcile its economic needs with its foreign policy in the Pacific, enhancing Australia's global standing, as well as respect and trust within the Pacific. A fossil fuel provider like Australia changing tack also provides a major signal to global markets.

Australia works in cooperation with Pacific island countries to enhance their **access to renewable energy technology**, including servicing, as part of transitioning to a green economy together. Australia consolidates the successes of its engagement in the Pacific, such as cooperation on fisheries and the growth of environmentally sustainable industries. This can be a shared partnership vision between Australia, New Zealand and Pacific island countries.

This should include support for the development of a significant **Australian domestic solar panel industry**. With China currently dominating the market, Australia should invest in next generation technology, such as crystal technology based on iodine rather than silicone, for strategic independence and respect for human rights.<sup>19</sup>

Australia develops a **defence policy response** to the challenges and risks posed by climate change, including working closely with New Zealand and Pacific island security forces in humanitarian assistance and disaster response. This will include coordination with community networks, churches and civil society groups throughout the Pacific who are often frontline responders to natural disasters.

Australia will make **gender equality a central pillar** of its action, adopting a feminist foreign policy that promotes gender equality as a key goal. It will understand the disproportionate manner in which climate change affects women and will include issues around women's empowerment, safety and political voice in all its work, viewing women's individual security as essential to national security. Australia will build on the Pacific Women Lead program launched in 2021 to promote women's leadership and economic empowerment with regards to climate change, adaptation and disaster planning.<sup>20</sup>

Australia will promote and strive to ensure the full, meaningful, and equal representation of women – particularly including Indigenous women – in all local, regional and international climate action and environmental diplomacy efforts.

Australia will develop strong **climate action linkages** between Australia and the Pacific at multiple levels including through youth climate networks, civil society, churches and women's coalitions.

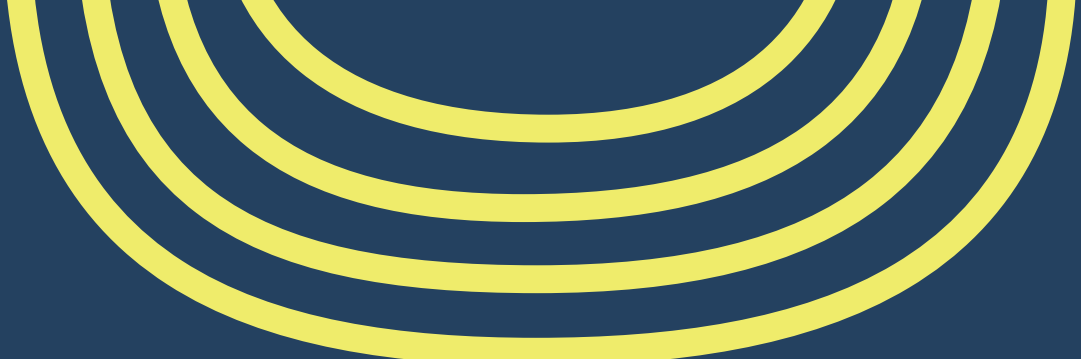
Australia strengthens **institutional and regulatory frameworks**, including the Pacific Island Forum's Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific. Australia is part of regional efforts, including on technical working groups. As an ambitious and responsible middle power, Australia works with coalitions of other states to set global climate rules.

Australia will pursue a Pacific diplomacy that is based on mutuality and respect, on shared interest and a shared future. Coordinated climate action becomes an opportunity for the development, diplomacy and defence communities to work together in an **integrated way**.

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19 See, for example, Laura Murphy and Nyrola Elimä. *In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains* (Sheffield Hallam University and Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, 2021): <https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-justice/research-and-projects/all-projects/in-broad-daylight>

20 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Pacific Women Lead design framework, 2021*: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/pacific-women-lead-design-framework>




**“We, the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, meeting in Tuvalu see first-hand the impacts and implications of the climate change crisis facing our Pacific Island Nations... Right now, climate change and disasters are impacting all our countries. Our seas are rising, oceans are warming, and extreme events such as cyclones and typhoons, flooding, drought and king tides are frequently more intense, inflicting damage and destruction to our communities and ecosystems and putting the health of our peoples at risk.”**

Kainaki II — Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now — Securing the Future of our Blue Pacific, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ Meeting, Tuvalu, 2019

**“Australia’s climate inaction has not only damaged its relationships with the Pacific but has also led to doubts about Australia’s place in the regional political order.”**

Salā George Carter, The Pacific should persist with Australia on climate change, East Asia Forum, September 2019



# Pathways

## DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT

The Australian Government changes its declaratory policy on climate, signalling a shift to a new approach. This would include reaffirming the Boe Declaration<sup>21</sup> and Kainaki II Declaration<sup>22</sup>, which both assert that climate change is the single greatest threat to the Pacific region.

## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DIPLOMACY

Australia and Pacific island countries co-host a Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting as a demonstration of Australia's commitment to the targets set by the Paris Agreement, as well as affirmation that Australia is a dedicated member of the Pacific family.

Australia works with Pacific island countries to undertake meaningful collective diplomacy on climate change, working as an ally for climate action on the global stage. It supports the Friends of Climate and Security Group in the United Nations Security Council. This should include issuing a regional declaration at the Pacific Islands Forum calling on all countries to submit nationally determined contributions consistent with limiting warming to 1.5C.

## CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY

Australia announces an ambitious emissions target for 2030, in line with key partners including the United States, Europe, United Kingdom and the G7. Australia adopts climate and energy policies that gives market operators certainty about Australia's climate ambitions and sends a strong signal to the market that investment in renewables is viable and profitable.

Australia establishes regional targets for decarbonisation in 2030 and 2050 as part of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific. This would involve a timeline to phase out coal as a domestic energy source, as well as a recognition that coal will have a limited lifespan as an export commodity.

## DIALOGUE AND LINKS

Australia establishes an annual discussion within the Pacific (distinct from the Pacific Islands Forum) with a specific climate focus: "a 1.5 Track Dialogue for 1.5 Degrees".

The relationship with Pacific peoples is a key focus of Australia's First Nations Foreign Policy.

Australia builds on the good practice relationships that exist between Australia's climate science organisations and Pacific equivalents – including CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and the Bureau of Meteorology – and through higher education and technical training.<sup>23</sup> With so many projects, there can be a problem of coherence, meaning that there is a potential role for a regional knowledge broker bringing together ad hoc investments into an integrated response.<sup>24</sup> Australia should investigate creating a knowledge bank that brings together and synthesises the data on Australia's investments in community climate resilience.

21 Pacific Islands Forum, Boe Declaration on Regional Security, September 2018 <https://www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>  
22 Pacific Islands Forum, Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now, August 2019 <https://www.forumsec.org/2020/11/11/kainaki/>  
23 Australia Aid, *Australia Pacific Climate Partnership* <https://apclimatepartnership.com.au>  
24 Pacific Fusion Centre <https://www.pacificfusioncentre.org>, and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme <https://www.sprep.org>

## DISASTER RISK AND RESPONSE

Australia should conduct a national review of climate risks, following the lead of others including the United States and New Zealand.<sup>25</sup> This should subsequently be extended by collaborating with Pacific island countries and New Zealand on a regional climate risk assessment.

Within these risk assessments Australia should develop a greater understanding of what humanitarianism means in relation to climate change and the increasing impact and frequency of climate related emergencies.

In a climate change world, there will be a concatenation of natural disasters as well as unknown effects on natural systems like growing cycles and fisheries incubation. Australia is already stretched in terms of humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR), including domestic response. Australia needs to build local disaster response capacity given that longer and larger disaster seasons are going to challenge the region. Localisation will be an imperative.

Development has a key role in planning for disaster resilience. When societies have to withstand shock after shock, their resilience depends on equity and inclusion. Societies need to be strong, inclusive and equitable to deal with persistent major weather events and their widespread social knock-on effects.

Defence can promote greater civil-military cooperation and involvement of first responders including fire and emergency services. It should promote greater climate disaster response interoperability between Australia and the Pacific, as has occurred with the FRANZ arrangement.<sup>26</sup> If the Australian Defence Force or any other body develop a standalone disaster preparedness unit, this could be expanded to a regional unit, as has been endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum, through creation of a new joint disaster response unit between Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries.

Australia can further promote and engage with international frameworks including the Women, Peace and Security Humanitarian Action Compact,<sup>27</sup> and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.<sup>28</sup>

25 Ministry for the Environment, *National Climate Change Risk Assessment for New Zealand (NCCRA)*, August 2020: <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Files/national-climate-change-risk-assessment-main-report.pdf>

26 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *The FRANZ Arrangement*, October 2014 <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid-Prog-docs/NZDRP-docs/Franz-Arrangement-Brochure.pdf>

27 United Nations Women, *Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact*, July 2021 <https://wpshcompact.org/>

28 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 2015: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)



## CLIMATE FINANCE

Australia rejoins the Green Climate Fund (GCF) which has become a major funder of climate projects in the region. As well as increased finance, this also provides the opportunity for Australia to advocate for reform to GCF governance as it applies to Pacific island countries. Currently, the preferred ways of working of Pacific countries in relation to climate change, particularly in support of direct access pathways to climate finance, is not well supported by GCF rules and regulation. Australia could use its diplomatic influence and development financing expertise to reform these practices, as it has done with other multilateral institutions working in the Pacific such as the Asian Development Bank. This could be through seconding Australian climate finance experts into the GCF, offering financial and administrative support to Pacific island countries to address regulatory barriers and through subsidising the management costs of GCF access.

Ultimately, given Pacific countries' huge needs for climate finance, Australia should support a range of financing modalities. This should include the Pacific Resilience Fund recently established by the Pacific Islands Forum, which has a strong focus on community-based resilience and small-scale grants. These are projects which currently fill in the gaps of external funding. There is a role for Australia to help finance this Pacific-led program and more broadly help develop climate financing more suitable to the needs of Pacific island countries, including through the Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Hub.

## MIGRATION

Australia needs to prepare for the future in its migration policies, tackling the problem of climate mobility as a serious issue given the need for people movement to major economies and within the region. Safe migration pathways need to be discussed and a new regional convention of refugees may be needed. The desire to maintain community bonds and culture may require a new model that allows Pacific communities to retain nationhood within Australia's political structure. Australian leaders should plan for the need to prepare the domestic population for an influx of people from the Pacific.

## LOSS AND DAMAGE

Australia should continue to engage with Pacific island countries in the emerging debate calling for reparation for loss and damage caused by carbon emitters. There are likely to be continuing calls as a question of climate justice. With outstanding issues following the Glasgow Conference of the Parties (COP), there is an opportunity for Australia-Pacific collaboration to be part of this debate.



## CASE STUDY:

### ASIA-PACIFIC MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (APMCDRR)

Australia's hosting of the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Brisbane in the second half of 2022 is a good example of Australia leading with international leadership and diplomacy on climate action.

Australia will host a range of ministerial meetings, thematic sessions and partnered public forums to promote coordination and cooperation and assess regional progress made in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the global blueprint to reduce disaster risk and losses.<sup>29</sup>

The APMCDRR also provides great potential for sharing new technologies for weather prediction, modelling and geo-spatial mapping of hazards developed by Australian institutions such as the CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology. It is an opportunity for Australia to showcase these collaborations and share knowledge and learning with Pacific counterparts.



**“Australia tends to assume it is the regional leader in the Pacific. On the issue of climate change, however, the tables are turned. Pacific island countries are global leaders, while Australia is isolated from the international consensus.”**

Wes Morgan, *The Ripple Effect: the cost of our pacific neglect*, Australian Foreign Affairs, July 2021

**“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... 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.”**

Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong, May 2022



# Contributions

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