

**\*\*MEDIA RELEASE\*\***

## **Caritas Australia welcomes the new International Development Policy's focus on climate action and gender equality**

8 August 2023

Caritas Australia welcomes the Australian government's commitment to climate action and gender equality as key drivers of the new International Development Policy released today.

The announcement of the new long-term policy, the first in almost a decade, was accompanied by the release of a new Performance and Delivery Framework and the Development Finance Review.

"We welcome the introduction of a new framework that requires both climate and gender objectives in much of its foreign aid spending. This will make a huge difference in the lives of vulnerable communities in our region", said Kirsty Robertson, Caritas Australia's CEO.

In recognition that climate change is 'the greatest shared threat to all countries', Caritas Australia encourages the Australian government to meet its fair share of international climate finance targets, and to take a leadership role in supporting locally-led climate resilience initiatives across the Indo-Pacific region.

"We urge the government to keep providing development funding for climate resilience as grants not loans, to avoid pushing our Indo-Pacific neighbours further into debt. We also encourage the government to support the actions under the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, endorsed by Pacific communities, leaders and civil society organisations".

Building new and innovative streams of finance has become crucial in tackling poverty and inequality in our region. "We welcome the scaling up of Australia's blended and climate finance mechanisms, which will provide up to \$250 million as a catalyst for private impact investment in the Indo-Pacific. Caritas Australia has a significant role to play in unlocking private capital for the achievement of our mission, and will be further progressing our work on innovative finance and impact investment".

Working alongside our partners, we witness the crucial role that civil society plays in building strong resilient communities. Caritas Australia welcomes the establishment of the new Civil Society Partnerships Fund, prioritising the strengthening of vibrant civil society networks in our region.

"In a time of increasing complexity and uncertainty, we look forward to engaging with the development of a separate Humanitarian Strategy, which recognises the urgent need for strong coordinated humanitarian action to respond to disasters and crises".

The new policy makes clear that Indo-Pacific remains the focus of Australia's development program, and for the first time it recognises the need to incorporate First Nations' perspectives and experiences. "We urge DFAT to prioritise engagement, linking

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and learning between First Nations people in Australia and internationally, to help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians”.

“The implementation of the new policy will be dictated by the resourcing made available. We urge the Australian government to outline a roadmap and timeframe for how it will reach its commitment to increasing the aid budget, and we look forward to seeing actions to its commitments to increasing transparency”.

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