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PACIFIC BULLY AND INTERNATIONAL OUTCAST

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**How Australia's Climate Policies
Isolate It from the Pacific and the World**

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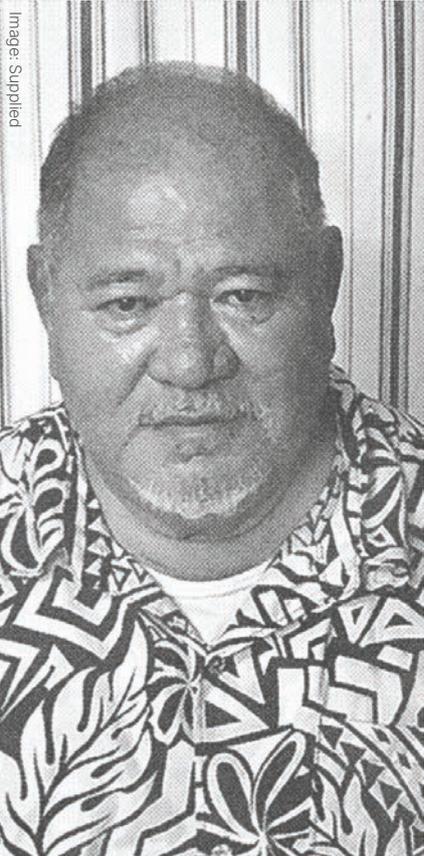
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FOREWORD

The Rt. Hon. Bikenibeu Paeniu and
The Rt. Hon. Anote Tong



The Rt. Hon. Bikenibeu Paeniu, Former Prime Minister of Tuvalu

I am grateful to Greenpeace Australia Pacific for allowing me the honor to write a foreword for their report on Australia's position in climate change negotiations and commitments relating to the Pacific island countries (PICs). I am actually writing this from my home situated at the northern end of Fongafale Islet, Funafuti, the seat of Tuvalu's capital looking to the horizon through the glistening clean water of the beautiful Funafuti lagoon! And I ask myself, is it indeed the case that my children and their children will not continue to live here in our beautiful home in years to come?

Australia? Australia's position on climate change has not changed and may even be getting worse when it comes to climate change in support of the Pacific island countries. I say so as the first Leader to sign the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and having staunchly stood against the various Prime Ministers of Australia in my 3-times as Prime Minister of Tuvalu when debating on the final outcome document of PICs' climate change position. In those days I used to think of Australia's climate change diplomacy as highly un-human – in other words, it had no Pacific human face in it. Sadly, it is still the same today.

Australia's tactic of manipulating the position of the Pacific island countries on climate change through the Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific Community, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the rest of regional smaller institutions, has not changed to this day. Pacific island countries will go to international forums, including COP summits, with a compromised position on climate change divesting its true platform of demands to ensure our security,

resilience and prosperity. This is really sad. But Australia doesn't seem to care! Rather, the interest of Australia has become the fighting platform of most Pacific island countries. This is due to Australia's sad style of climate change diplomacy in our Pacific region. Then I say, 'why?'. Why is Australia doing this? I am confident the majority of Australian citizens including Indigenous Australians do not identify themselves with Australia's position on climate change.

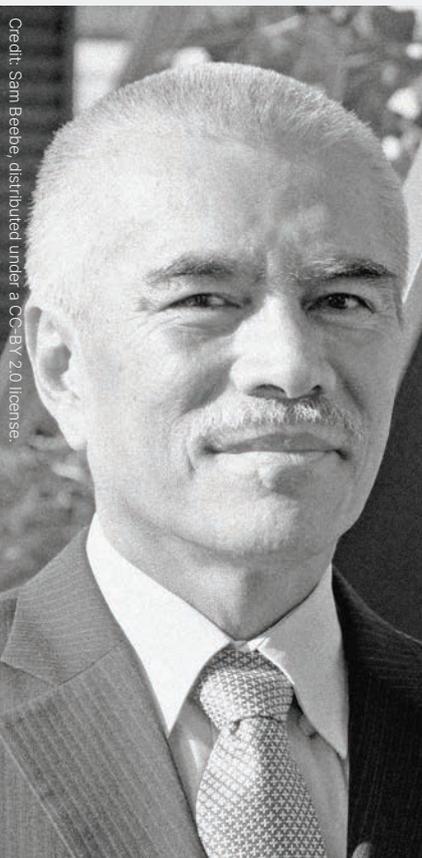
I sincerely hope Australia and moreover her leaders will come to their human senses and show greater love and responsibility to its Pacific neighbors. Australia should take the Pacific as its main target by availing billions of dollars to help us in the Pacific to undertake large scale mitigation and adaptation activities to ensure we the people of the Pacific and more so those of us living on the atolls continue to stay and not be displaced. This can only happen if leaders of Australia commit to change. It's been 30 years since Rio and Australia's position continues to fail Pacific island countries. Those former Prime Ministers of Australia and leaders who had perpetuated Australia's un-Pacific commitment on climate change - I am sure right now, if they are still living, they do not have inner peace in their beings!

Greenpeace Australia Pacific, we in the Pacific stand for your efforts and I personally have come to recognise that together and trusting in God we can change Australia's position on climate change.

If this COP26 is going to be truly life-saving for us in the Pacific, we can only hope that Australia will implement stronger 2030 emissions reduction targets and increase its climate finance contributions. Otherwise, I pray for a miracle from God to make Australia listen to her people and to her Pacific neighbors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line with a loop at the top, and several horizontal and curved strokes below it, all contained within a roughly circular scribble.

Rt. Hon Bikenibeu Paeniu, PC
Former Prime Minister of Tuvalu



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The Rt. Hon. Anote Tong, Former President of Kiribati

The suggestion that our global climate is being affected by human activity, but especially the substantial increase in emissions of greenhouse gases from burning of fossil fuels, is not a new one. Successive attempts at the international level - initially through the Kyoto Protocols and now the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - reflect the nagging concern that climate change is a matter warranting serious attention. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) started producing its reports, it became increasingly clear that climate change is a serious global challenge.

For those of us living on the low lying atoll islands in the Pacific, the very mention of “climate change causing a rise in sea level” was sufficient to cause panic. From the very early meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COPs) and the UNFCCC, successive Pacific island leaders had been expressing their concerns over the changing climate. However, their voices were quickly smothered under the very intensive lobbying efforts of the powerful fossil fuel industry to invalidate the science coming out of the IPCC reports.

When I came into office in 2003, the IPCC had by then released its 3rd Assessment report and like my predecessors I believed the report’s projected rise in sea levels posed a real threat to the survival for those of us on the frontline. Accordingly, in my very first address at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2004 I drew attention to the dangers posed by climate change, especially to small island nations like Kiribati and other Pacific island countries. The fact that no other leader made any reference to it in their statement worried me and I wondered whether I might be making a fool of myself, especially when the focus of international attention at the time was on a more real and present threat like terrorism. Thankfully by the next UNGA, in 2005, other Pacific island leaders in their statements joined the call for action on climate change. This has gathered great momentum in the years since.

The intense lobbying efforts of the fossil fuel industry to discredit the IPCC's reports did not ease up until after the 4th Assessment Report had been released in 2007. However, that did not mean they had given up on their mission to perpetuate the use of fossil fuels. They simply changed strategies, focusing their lobbying instead on manipulating political leaders into making climate change into a partisan issue on which politicians could be ideologically divided. It was therefore no surprise to hear this month, just before COP26, that the Australian government has recently tried to lobby the IPCC to water down the language of the latest report before its release. Today not only is the science on climate change rock-solid but countries which in the past did not regard climate change as relevant to their lives are now beginning to experience unprecedented bushfires, deadly heat waves, more powerful storms, unprecedented melting of the polar regions and glaciers, among other impacts. This is incontrovertible evidence on the ground that climate change is indeed global in nature and no longer a distant reality. Pacific leaders have, over the past two decades, consistently drawn attention to the existential threats faced by our people, but especially those in the low lying atoll islands from climate change. Now it is becoming increasingly clear that unless we as a global community can collectively rally to radically reduce our emissions, the future existence of all humanity on this planet is at risk.

The Pacific Region, with the largest number of vulnerable island nations most at risk, has consistently been at the forefront of the campaign on climate change and the political and community leaders of the Pacific islands can be credited for much of the progress made in multilateral climate negotiations.

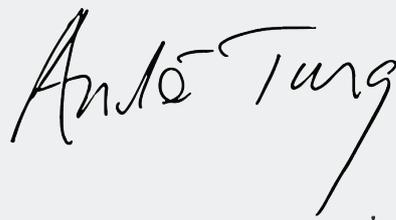
The one weakness in the force of our campaign has been the lack of unity in purpose with the larger members of our Pacific family. It has been a huge source of disappointment for us to witness the constant changes of climate policies with the eddies of political parties in power, in both Australia and New Zealand. It has always been, and continues to be, our hope that Australia - with its higher international profile - would provide us and the international community with the leadership we need on an issue of such critical importance to our people, our Pacific family.

The withdrawal of Australia's support to climate financing through suspending its contributions to the Green Climate Fund was a huge blow to our expectations of building much needed climate resilience here in the Pacific islands. The recent

announcement by the Australian Prime Minister, on the evening of his departure for COP26, of his Government's revised climate policy does not indicate a change of position on climate financing nor does its emission targets reflect a genuine or meaningful contribution to addressing this existential threat. Australia has not made any changes to its weak 2030 emissions reduction target and remains well short of the commitments made by other members of the G20.

The burning question is: "With all of the science available to us today and with all of what we are witnessing happening in different parts of the world, why do we still not take the action needed to avoid the projected cataclysmic end to humanity?"

The answer to that question remains elusive and it is my sincere hope that as you turn the pages of this report you will take the opportunity to join us in the search for the answers. Australia can and must be bolder on climate action, through strengthening its emissions reduction targets and increasing its climate finance contributions. Pacific peoples and Australians alike, as part of a Pacific family, depend on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anote Tong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

The Rt. Hon. Anote Tong
Former President of the Republic of Kiribati

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KEY FINDINGS

The Australian government has used bullying tactics in regional negotiations on climate change, according to former Pacific island leaders interviewed by Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

- The threat that climate change poses to the Pacific islands has been raised by Pacific islands leaders at the annual Pacific Islands Forum (then the South Pacific Forum) since 1988. In 1997, the Australian government under John Howard coerced members of the South Pacific Forum to remove its concern about climate change risks and its support for emissions reduction measures from the Forum's official communiqué.
- At the Pacific Islands Forum meetings in 2015, 2016 and 2019, the Australian government again attempted to use its power and its aid money to dilute the Forum's official communiqué and block regional consensus on emissions reduction.
- In 2015, the Australian government blocked a Pacific region consensus on supporting a 1.5 degrees warming limit at both the Pacific Islands Forum and the Commonwealth Heads of Government in the immediate months before COP21 in Paris. The Pacific-led 'High Ambition Coalition' managed to win the support of other nations at COP21 in Paris and the landmark Paris Agreement was reached with only belated support from Australia.
- In 2018, the Australian government, represented by Marise Payne, tried to change the first clause of the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, objecting to the wording that "climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific".
- In 2019, the Australian government tried to coerce Pacific islands leaders into changing the wording of the 'Kainaki II Declaration on Urgent Climate Action Now'. According to Pacific island leaders, Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison used financial assistance in an attempt to curb insistence on stronger language in the text of the Kainaki II Declaration.

Australia's aid to the Pacific has been greenwashed, with some of the largest and most expensive 'climate adaptation' projects not having any link to climate change or increasing the climate resilience of Pacific peoples.

- The Australian government likes to advertise the climate aid it gives to the Pacific; however, a closer inspection reveals that its climate aid lacks the generosity of comparable OECD countries. Based on 2016-2018 averages, Australia spends about 1% of its foreign aid on climate adaptation projects. Comparable countries such as Canada and Sweden allocate 10% and 6% of their foreign aid, respectively, on climate adaptation projects.
- In 2018, Australia halted its contributions to the UN Green Climate Fund despite the need of the Pacific islands for multilateral climate finance.
- By far the largest portion of Australia's climate adaptation aid goes to projects tagged as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation rather than 'principally focused' on climate adaptation. Many projects marked as 'significantly focused on climate adaptation' have no relevance to climate change.
- Several of the Australian government's most expensive 'climate adaptation aid' projects are greenwashed in this way. This includes a multi-million dollar 'governance facility' in Papua New Guinea on which Australia spent \$80.67 million (USD) in 2018 and 2019. Neither the long description of the project on the OECD's database, nor a 113 page evaluation report of the project commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), contain mention of climate adaptation.
- Two workforce skills programs, costed at \$9.52 million (USD) and \$8.24 million (USD) over 2018-2019, were also counted as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation.
- Former President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that many aid projects described as climate related do not improve the climate resiliency of Pacific peoples. For example, a 2013 Australian funded road project in South Tarawa, Kiribati, has since become damaged by erosion and is flooded during king high tides, yet this project was tagged as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation.

The Australian government's climate position spells danger for its international relations and its economy if it continues to lag behind comparable developed countries on climate policies.

- Former Australian Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister, Gareth Evans, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that Australia's "credibility in all sorts of ways depends on our being seen to be responsible, good international citizens and Australia is putting that reputation very much at risk on the climate front".
- Prime Minister Scott Morrison is now attending COP26 in Glasgow, and has committed to net zero by 2050. However, key allies such as the EU, UK, the US and the Pacific islands want to see Australia increase its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for emissions reduction under the Paris Agreement, which remains unchanged from 2015.
- Australia's key allies and many of its main trading partners have increased the ambition of their NDCs, while Australia lags behind. From a 2005 baseline, the US has committed to 50-52% emissions reduction by 2030, the UK a 63% emissions reduction by 2030 and the member states of the EU a 51% emissions reduction by 2030. Australia's NDC is only a 26-28% reduction in emissions by 2030.
- Ambassadors, high commissioners and deputy heads of mission in the UK, US, EU, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Sweden have been meeting in Canberra throughout 2021 to discuss how to engage in dialogue with Australia about lifting its level of climate ambition.
- Other countries' updated climate commitments and new policies implemented to reach them will have negative impacts on Australia's economy unless Australia rapidly transitions from fossil fuels and diversifies its exports.
The EU has agreed to implement a trade sanction in the form of a carbon border adjustment mechanism, which places a tax on fossil fuel intensive imports.
- Japan and Canada are currently working on similar carbon border adjustment mechanisms to the EU's. In 2018-2019, Japan was Australia's second largest export market - including second largest for Australian aluminum (a fossil fuel intensive product).
- Key trading partners' 2030 and mid-century emissions reduction commitments, involving a rapid renewable energy transition, will significantly reduce demand for Australia's exports of coal and gas, which currently make up 50% of Australian exports.

- On September 9, 2021, Prime Minister Scott Morrison told a press conference outside parliament that the mining sector “is absolutely critical to Australia’s future”, and that developing countries will continue to import Australian coal.
- Japan, China and South Korea all have net zero by 2050 or near mid-century targets.
- In 2020, the combined value of Australian coal exports to Japan, China and South Korea was over 3 times greater than coal exports to India and over 6.5 times greater than the combined value of coal exports to South East Asian countries. Developing countries will therefore not come close to filling the demand gap left by countries with mid-century net zero targets. On an economic level alone, the government’s decision to continue its support and subsidies to the fossil fuel industry will have negative repercussions for Australians.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Australian government must set a stronger, science-based 2030 emissions reduction target of 75% in order to meet its responsibilities under the Paris Agreement and to ensure the security and survival of the Pacific, and commit to net zero emissions by 2035.
2. To support its Pacific island neighbours, the Australian government needs to significantly increase its provision of climate finance. Between 2021 and 2025, it should commit to immediately doubling its climate finance contributions to \$3 billion annually. By 2030, this must increase to \$12 billion annually to meet its fair share. This should be scaled up climate finance separate to the foreign aid budget rather than a reallocation of it.
3. Australia should recommit to the UNFCCC's Green Climate Fund to show its support for multilateral climate finance and to ensure developing countries have direct access.
4. The Australian government must stop greenwashing its aid. It can do so by improving the accuracy and transparency of its climate aid reporting. Its reports to the OECD should include clear and honest descriptions of the cost of each project's climate related component, as well as an explanation of how that climate component has been calculated.
5. For the good of Australia's economy, soft power and international reputation, Australia must undertake a swift transition to renewable energy and diversify its export market by replacing its reliance on fossil fuel exports (and fossil fuel intensive exports) with goods and services that have a long-term future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The island nations of the Pacific are on the front lines of the climate crisis.

Yet, despite the very existential crisis that their people face, Pacific island countries (PICs) have exercised a powerful leadership role in driving ambition in global climate negotiations. Pacific island countries have made it clear they will not allow their countries to flood and be cyclone-battered without a fight. Without the leadership and lobbying efforts of the Pacific islands, the Paris Agreement would not contain reference to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. The 'loss and damage' clause in Article 8 of the Paris Agreement would also not have been incorporated if it weren't for the Pacific islands' efforts. The loss and damage clause recognises the importance of averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

This fight is taking place in the face of powerful opposition by the fossil fuel industry and its champion governments around the world.

DESPITE CLAIMING TO BE PART OF A 'PACIFIC FAMILY', THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THAT RECALCITRANT GLOBAL TENDENCY. AUSTRALIA IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST COAL EXPORTER, THE SECOND LARGEST GAS EXPORTER, AND THE BIGGEST PER-CAPITA GREENHOUSE GAS EMITTER IN THE OECD.

Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for emissions reduction under the Paris Agreement, if extrapolated to all nations around the world, would lead to between three and four degrees of warming: a death sentence for the Pacific and its people.

Moreover, not content to drag its own feet on emissions reduction, the Australian government has engaged in a prolonged campaign of intimidation against PICs in an attempt to blunten their climate advocacy on the global stage. This has included linking promises of aid to silence on climate action, hampering the Pacific's fight for greater ambition in the Paris Agreement, and personally undermining Pacific leaders at regional summits. Former leaders of Pacific island countries told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that Australia acted to

dilute regional climate declarations at Pacific Islands Forum meetings in 2015, 2018 and 2019, preventing any mention of phasing out coal power and limiting warming to 1.5 degrees through reducing greenhouse gas emissions. At the 2018 Pacific Islands Forum, Australia attempted to amend a clause in the Boe Declaration on Regional Security that climate change is the single greatest security threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the Pacific. This coercive behaviour from Australia at Pacific Islands Forum meetings was first reported in 1997 but nothing has changed. These efforts have been described as unhuman, disappointing and disrespectful by former Pacific islands heads of state interviewed by Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

Australia's one, often-lauded, saving grace is the alleged generosity of its climate aid to the Pacific. However, this investigation demonstrates that hundreds of millions of dollars in Australia's aid budget have been counted as 'climate adaptation' aid despite these funds being allocated to projects with no link whatsoever to climate change. This includes a multi-million dollar 'governance facility' in Papua New Guinea which Australia spent \$80.76 million USD on in 2018 and 2019, and labelled it as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation. Neither the long description of the project on the OECD's database, nor a 113 page evaluation report of the project commissioned by DFAT, contain mention of climate change, climate adaptation or climate resiliency. Various workplace skills programs, including a \$9.52 million (USD) region-wide 'Australia Pacific Training Coalition' and a Kiribati employment program (\$8.24 million USD in 2018 and 2019) were also counted as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation without any mention or explanation of their relevance to climate change. Australia has therefore been using accounting tricks to make it look like it has been generous on climate finance to the Pacific.

Australia's role as a global climate action blocker is dangerous for a healthy planet. But it also has serious implications for Australia's own diplomacy, reputation and economy. Key allies and trading partners - including the Pacific islands, the EU, the US and the UK - have called out Australia's stance, pushing it further into pariah status over its embrace of coal and gas.

FORMER AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, GARETH EVANS, TOLD GREENPEACE AUSTRALIA PACIFIC THAT AUSTRALIA'S "CREDIBILITY IN ALL SORTS OF WAYS DEPENDS ON OUR BEING SEEN TO BE RESPONSIBLE, GOOD INTERNATIONAL CITIZENS AND AUSTRALIA IS PUTTING THAT REPUTATION VERY MUCH AT RISK ON THE CLIMATE FRONT".

Australia will suffer diplomatic and soft power losses if it continues to be a bad international citizen on the major transnational issue of climate change. Moreover, with countries increasingly imposing global trade penalties on nations who fail to do their fair share on climate mitigation, including carbon border tariffs and exclusion from free trade agreements on the basis of poor NDC goals, Australia will soon see its economic interests directly threatened if it does not change course.

A Greenpeace Australia Pacific analysis of Australia's main export markets for coal found that developing countries will not come close to filling the demand gap left by countries with mid-century or near mid-century net zero targets, such as Japan, South Korea and China. These findings provide a direct challenge to Prime Minister Scott Morrison's recent claims that the mining sector is "absolutely critical to Australia's future" because developing countries will continue to want our coal. Australia's fossil fuel - and fossil fuel intensive - exports make Australia economically vulnerable.

If Australia is to regain its place as a respected player in the Pacific region and on the world stage, it must immediately adopt serious climate targets, including significantly increasing its NDC, committing to a science-based emissions reduction target of 75% by 2030, and adopting a target of net zero emissions by 2035.

Australia must also do all it can to help its Pacific neighbours in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, not only because it is in its self-interest to do so but because it is the right and just course of action.

INTRODUCTION

Australia is a climate laggard and is seen as such on the world stage.

Pacific Bully and International Outcast details the impacts of Australia's climate position on its regional relations with Pacific island countries. It also assesses the wider impacts for Australia's international diplomacy, reputation and trade if the Australian government continues to drag its feet on climate action.

In the course of this investigation, Greenpeace Australia Pacific interviewed 14 experts and four former political leaders - former President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, former Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Bikenibeu Paeniu, former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Vanuatu (and current Leader of the Opposition), Ralph Regenvanu, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade for Australia, Gareth Evans.

The investigation begins by uncovering Australia's treatment of Pacific island countries during recent regional climate negotiations and in the lead up to the 2015 Paris Agreement (Chapter 1). It demonstrates how Australia's climate policies affect the security and survival of the Pacific islands, and how Australia's stubborn and coercive climate diplomacy has stymied regional climate action.

The investigation then uncovers the problems and pitfalls of Australian climate aid to the Pacific islands. It puts under the microscope the Australian government's loudly advertised claim that Australia gives generous amounts of climate aid to the Pacific (Chapter 2). It finds that some of the most expensive projects tagged as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation in the Pacific islands have no link to climate change adaptation or improving the climate resilience of the Pacific. The lack of accuracy and transparency in the government's climate aid reporting has led to a significant overestimation of how much funding Australia actually gives in climate aid to the Pacific islands.

Finally, the investigation details indirect and direct attempts by international allies and key trading partners such as the UK, US and EU to persuade the Australian government to increase its climate ambition (Chapter 3). It considers Australia's reputational, soft power and economic losses if it continues to support and subsidise the fossil fuel industry. The investigation crunches the numbers on how other countries' climate policies will affect Australia's export market for coal and gas, showing what the decreased demand from countries with stronger climate policies will mean for the Australian economy. These findings provide a direct challenge to Prime Minister Scott Morrison's recent claims that the mining sector is "absolutely critical to Australia's future", showing that developing countries will not come close to filling the demand gap left by countries with mid-century net zero targets.

01 .

AUSTRALIA: THE PACIFIC FAMILY'S BULLY

1.1 How Australia's Climate Policies Risk the Pacific's Security and Survival

Nations in the Asia Pacific region are among the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world; Pacific island countries (PICs) are collectively responsible for only 0.23% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Australia is the 15th largest emitter globally, responsible for 1.27% of CO₂ emissions despite homing just 0.3% of the world's population.² According to 2019 research by the Australia Institute, Australia's per capita emissions are the highest in the OECD "and globally behind only smaller petrostates like Qatar".³ Moreover, these figures only account for domestic emissions. The CO₂ potential of Australian fossil fuel exports is "more than twice as much as the greenhouse gas emissions Australia emits domestically".⁴

WHEN AUSTRALIA'S DOMESTIC EMISSIONS AND THE CO₂ POTENTIAL FROM ITS FOSSIL FUEL EXPORTS ARE COMBINED, THE COUNTRY RANKS AS THE WORLD'S 5TH HIGHEST CO₂ EMITTER.⁵

Australia therefore bears substantial responsibility for climate impacts felt in the Pacific islands.

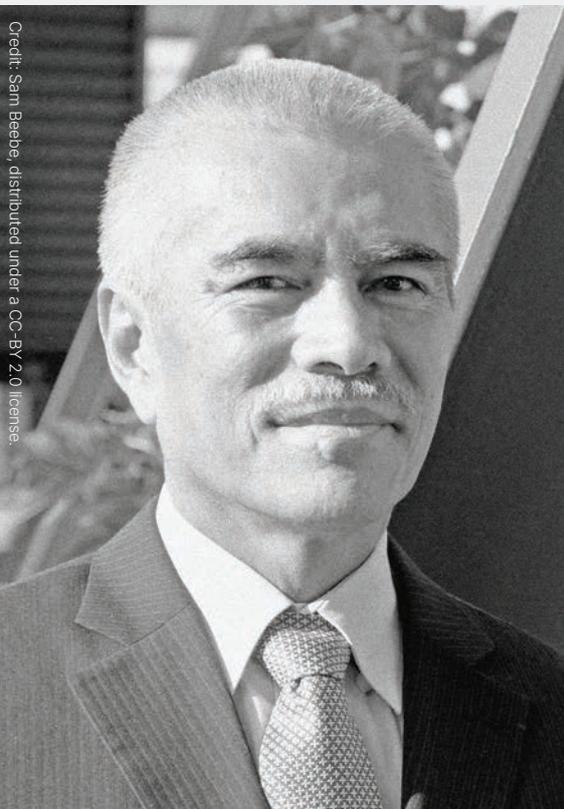
The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that limiting global warming to at least 1.5 degrees is necessary for the survival and security of the Pacific islands. In October 2021, Greenpeace UK's investigative arm Unearthed revealed that the Australian government has tried to lobby the IPCC to change the conclusions of its report prior to its release, including objecting to uncontroversial statements that retiring old coal plants and halting the construction of new ones is needed to eliminate CO₂ emissions.⁶

Despite Australia's attempts at interference, the IPCC has already detailed the climate threats facing the Pacific islands if global warming is not limited to at least 1.5 degrees.⁷ The most pressing climate impacts for Pacific island states are sea level rise and the growing intensity of tropical cyclones. Sea level rise in the Pacific has many knock-on effects including flooding, permanent inundation leading to saltwater intrusion in agricultural land and aquifers, erosion and pressure on ecosystems.⁸ IPCC scientists have stated with high confidence that by 2050 the frequency of extreme water-level events - such as those seen during king high tides - is expected to double.⁹ The interactions between sea level rise and wave dynamics over reefs "will lead to annual wave-driven overwash of most atoll islands by the mid 21st century"; according to leading climate scientists.¹⁰ Inundation of some Pacific island countries can be partially avoided by limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, as compared to 2 degrees where 60,000 people will lose their homes by 2150.¹¹

Climate hazards will lead to the loss of lives, livelihoods, property, place, culture and identity in the Pacific islands. Human wellbeing in the Pacific islands is greatly endangered by climate change, including through loss of lives in natural disasters, threats to food security, higher malnutrition, increase in non-communicable diseases and impacts on the livelihoods of farmers and fisherfolk due to declining fish stock and salt water inundation on agricultural lands. Climate-induced migration, as a result of these climate hazards, may become the only option for Pacific communities unless global warming is kept to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. Migration itself will cause loss of identity and culture for Pacific communities who have strong spiritual and functional connections to land. The psychosocial impacts of climate-induced migration will be severe and are difficult to comprehend.

According to Climate Analytics' *Climate Action Tracker* research, Australia's 2030 domestic emissions reduction target of 26-28% from 2005 levels, if extrapolated out to all nations, is consistent with between 3 and 4 degrees of global warming.¹² Under Australia's current climate policies, "emissions will continue to rise and are consistent with more than 3 degrees of warming".¹³

The Hon. Anote Tong, President of Kiribati (2003-2016), told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that 3 degrees of global warming would devastate the 33 atoll islands of Kiribati. Already Kiribati is experiencing the impacts of climate change. Anote Tong explained:



THE HON. ANOTE TONG
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI 2003-2016

“Any marginal increase in sea level rise would have significant impacts. Already we are suffering with extra high tides [...] Everybody lives on the seaside here in Kiribati - we are never too far away from the coastline. Homes are always being threatened, there are homes that have been eroded and we have people who’ve been displaced. Obviously that will get worse. We have a line of coconut trees - what we call the ‘frontline’ - and they keep falling line after line. Just last week, I was on the ocean side of the island on a boat and we’re seeing these lines of trees falling one after the other.”¹⁴

Source: Interview with The Hon. Anote Tong, October 15th, 2021.

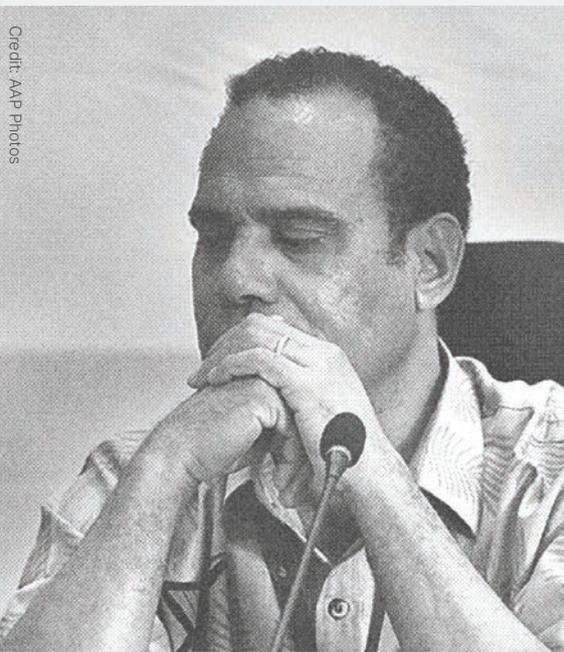
Pacific island leaders have long requested that Australia recognise its responsibility for climate change as a major emitter, and strengthen its emissions reduction targets accordingly. The threat of climate change to the Pacific islands has been raised at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meetings since 1988.¹⁵ In 1997, the Australian government under John Howard forced members of the Pacific Islands Forum (then the South Pacific Forum) to remove its concern about climate change risks and its support for emissions reduction measures from the Forum's official communiqué.¹⁶ This coercive and stubborn behaviour from Australia has continued since 1997. In the last 6 years, since 2015, there have been numerous reports of the Australian government diluting the Forum's official communiqué and ignoring the impassioned requests of Forum members for Australia to curb its greenhouse gas emissions and transition away from fossil fuels.

1.2 Bullying Behaviour at Regional Climate Negotiations

At regional negotiations, most notably the annual Pacific Islands Forum, the Australian government has repeatedly ignored the calls of Pacific island leaders to strengthen its climate policies and increase the ambition of its emissions reduction targets. The Australian government has used its power to stymie regional climate action and water down the Forum's official communiqué, with reports from Pacific island leaders - including those interviewed by Greenpeace Australia Pacific - suggesting that the Australian government uses its aid money to the Pacific as a bargaining chip to buy the silence of Pacific island leaders on climate change.

PACIFIC ISLAND LEADERS SAY THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT USES ITS AID MONEY TO THE PACIFIC AS A BARGAINING CHIP TO BUY SILENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

At the 2018 Forum hosted by Nauru, the Australian government attempted to wield its power in climate negotiations. At this Forum, Pacific island leaders negotiated the terms of the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. The first clause of the declaration is that Forum Members "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 the implementation of the Paris Agreement".¹⁷ The Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu's Minister of Foreign Affairs (2017 - 2020), was present at the Pacific Islands Forum that year. In an interview with Greenpeace Australia Pacific, Regenvanu stated that "Australia did not like that wording at all".¹⁸



THE HON. RALPH REGENVANU
 MP AND LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN VANUATU
 PREVIOUS MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017-2020

“I know because I was the one who proposed that wording, that specific sentence, and we had our people push to keep that wording in there and Australia was very against it. But in the end we said this wording has to be there and there’s no way we’re going to compromise on this.”¹⁹

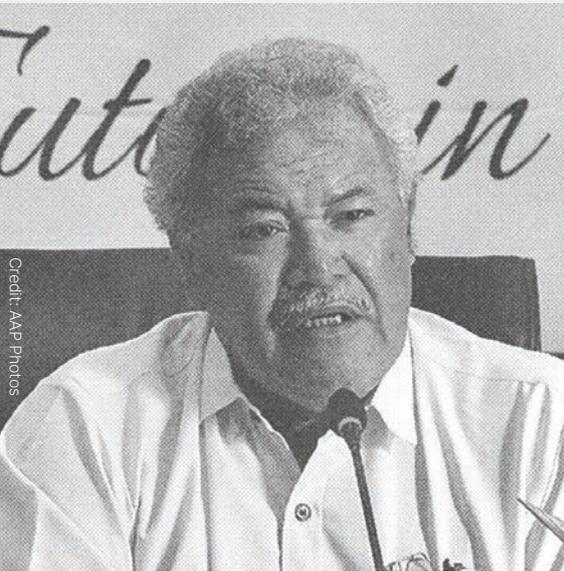
Source: Interview with Greenpeace Australia Pacific, October 6th 2021.

The following year, at the Pacific Islands Forum in 2019, again Australia acted with determination to dilute the Forum’s official communiqué on climate change - in particular the ‘Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now’. Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and then-Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Alex Hawke, drew several red lines during negotiations. These red lines included removing any mention in the communiqué of ending coal production, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies or setting a clear plan for net-zero emissions by 2050 through more ambitious 2030 targets.²⁰

Indeed, the final text of the ‘Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now’ states that emissions reduction strategies “may include” net zero carbon by 2050 commitments, suggesting that there are other ways to reduce emissions. This is presumably a reference to the use of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) projects, which are widely promoted by the Morrison government but have repeatedly underperformed.²¹ The biggest CCS project in the world (Chevron’s Gorgon Gas Plant in Western Australia) led to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.²² It is fair to say that an optional net-zero by 2050 target, with no commitment to stronger 2030 emission reduction targets, does not meet the requirements of ‘urgent climate action now’; however, the Pacific islands could not get Australia’s support thereby preventing more ambitious regional commitments.

Fiji’s Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama took to Twitter to express his disappointment with Australia’s influence on the 2019 Pacific Islands Forum negotiations, tweeting that “watered-down climate language has real consequences - like water-logged homes, schools, communities and ancestral burial grounds”.²³ The Australian government’s refusal to budge on climate change mitigation meant that the meeting lasted close to 12 hours, leading to several cancelled sessions and press conferences, and almost broke down entirely on two occasions.²⁴ Ralph Regenvanu stated that, at one point, the impasse was only resolved by Morrison agreeing to declare a climate crisis for the Pacific island countries but not the Pacific region which includes Australia. Meanwhile, the deadly 2019-2020 Australian bushfire season was already underway - starting in June, much earlier than usual bushfire seasons, because of hotter and drier conditions, exacerbated by climate change.²⁵

The Australian government's use of aid funding as a bargaining chip in negotiations, discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, came under the spotlight at the 2019 Forum. Then-Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga, who hosted the Forum in 2019, stated that Australia's pledge of \$500 million (AUD) in climate aid felt like Pacific island leaders were being asked to "take the money and shut up."²⁶ Sopoaga told Australia,



THE HON. ENELE SOPOAGA
PRIME MINISTER OF TUVALU 2003-2016

“No matter how much money you put on the table, that doesn't give you the excuse not to do the right thing - that is cutting down your emissions, including not opening your coal mines. That is the thing we want to see.”²⁷

Source: Melissa Clarke (August 13, 2019), “Tuvalu's PM says Australia's Climate Funding for Pacific 'Not an Excuse' to Avoid Emissions Cuts”, ABC News, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-13/australias-climate-funding-pacific-islands-forum-tuvalu/11408930>

Sopoaga added, in an interview with SBS, that “putting this money on the table - \$500 million - and then expecting Pacific island countries like Tuvalu to say ‘OK, we'll stop talking about climate change’ is not on - it's completely irresponsible”.²⁸ Ralph Regenvanu who also attended the 2019 Pacific Islands Forum as then-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu confirmed this, stating:

THE HON. RALPH REGENVANU
MP AND LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN VANUATU
PREVIOUS MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN VANUATU 2017-2020

“I was very reliably informed of statements made by the Prime Minister of Australia concerning financial assistance to be given to the region as a way of trying to curb insistence on stronger language in the text [of the Kanaiki II Declaration].”²⁹

Source: Interview with Greenpeace Australia Pacific, October 6th 2021.

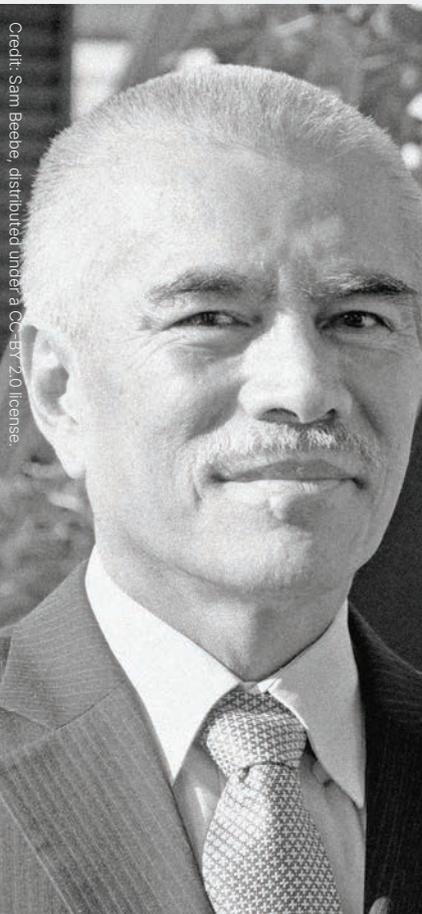
This was not the first time that Pacific island leaders have raised the issue of Australia hoping to exchange aid money for concessions on climate. Australia also behaved this way in 2015, in the lead up to the Conference of the Parties meeting in Paris (COP21).

1.3 Refusal to Support the Pacific's Fight for the Paris Agreement

The 2015 Pacific Islands Forum, held 8-10 September at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, took place only 3 months prior to COP21 in Paris (where the landmark Paris Agreement was reached). At the Pacific Islands Forum, Australia was asked to strengthen its climate ambition to support a 1.5 degree global warming limit. President of Kiribati at the time, Anote Tong, told Tony Abbott: "we cannot negotiate this, no matter how much aid. We cannot be bought on this one because it's about the future". When asked about his comments at the 2015 Forum, Anote Tong told Greenpeace Australia Pacific:

"Sometimes we tend to trade off aid for something much larger. When it comes to the threat of climate change, the climate change impact is far too high a price to pay and therefore not a matter to be negotiated with."³⁰

At the 2015 Forum meeting, Pacific islands members also discussed kicking out Australia and New Zealand (under the National Party Government) from the Forum because they were obstructing much-needed consensus to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. According to Anote Tong:



"The Forum meeting followed a meeting we had in Suva, Fiji, with the Pacific Islands Development Forum where the Pacific islands leaders made a declaration that we should go to Paris with a united front. We needed a declaration, which we were hoping to have endorsed by the PIF meeting in Port Moresby. We had difficulty trying to get consensus because essentially the Australian and New Zealand position was not in harmony with the rest of the Pacific island countries who were determined to go for a global rise in temperature of less than 1.5 degrees. It was really clear from the Australians that they saw 1.5 degrees as too much of a sacrifice on their part and would have preferred to see something like 2 degrees rise in global temperature because anything less they thought would be detrimental to their economic performance. So there was a vast gap in expectations between the Pacific island countries and the two metropolitan powers in the forum."³¹

The Australian government's stubbornness on a 1.5 degree limit continued as COP21 in Paris drew closer, even after the Liberal Party's leadership spill and change of Prime Minister from Tony Abbott to Malcolm Turnbull. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta on 27-29 November 2015, only two weeks before COP21 in Paris, the new Turnbull Government again refused to support a 1.5 degree limit in global warming. Aote Tong was there and told Greenpeace Australia Pacific,

“In Malta, there were a number of Commonwealth countries who came around to supporting the 1.5 degrees limit - one was Canada. We were looking to Australia to see if they would read the flow, to read where the current was going, and go along with 1.5 degrees as part of the grouping of Commonwealth countries. It did not, and that was a disappointment.”³²

Then-Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, disputes President Tong's version of events.

During this time the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) - convened by Pacific island country the Marshall Islands - had been busy securing the majority support of UN members to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. By the time Julie Bishop, Australia's then-Deputy Prime Minister, attended the COP, the High Ambition Coalition had gained enough momentum without Australia's support. Only at this point, amidst the Paris negotiations and realising the huge weight of numbers behind the HAC, did the Australian government belatedly agree to a limit of well below 2 degrees of global warming and preferably below 1.5 degrees.

1.4 From Regional Bully to Respectful Partner?

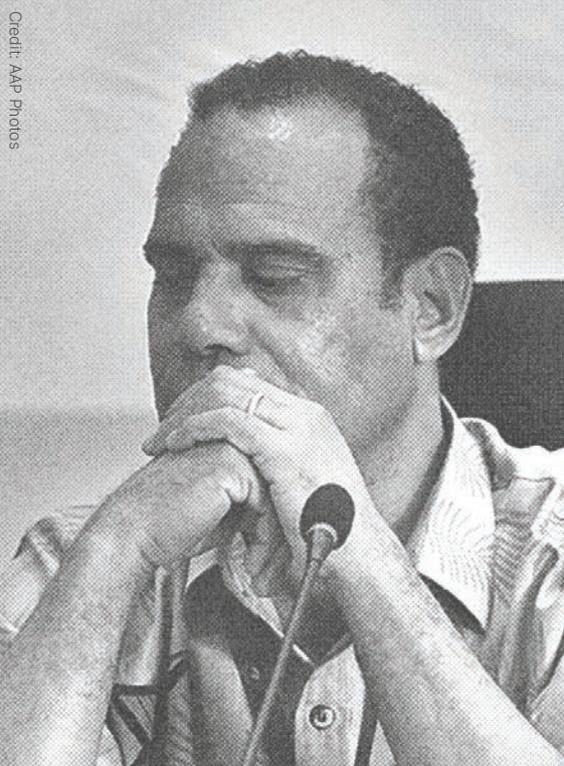
Pacific island countries have successfully banded together to achieve climate action in multilateral forums including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) annual Conference of the Parties. As Dr. Wesley Morgan, Research Fellow at Griffith University puts it, “the Pacific has developed unique norms of regional cooperation, regional diplomacy and acting together as a bloc”.³³ Dr. Joanne Wallis, Professor of International Security at the University of Adelaide, likewise explains that “Pacific island states are able to exercise an amazing amount of agency, considering what International Relations Theory would predict given their size, particularly on climate”.³⁴ Marshall Islands Foreign Minister Tony de Brum was instrumental in forming the High Ambition Coalition, which successfully lobbied for the 1.5 degree temperature limit to be included in the Paris Agreement. The ‘loss and damage’ clause in Article 8 of the Paris Agreement would also not have been incorporated without the Pacific islands’ efforts. Vanuatu was the first country to call for loss and damage under the UNFCCC in the early 1990s, and is now working to get an International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the duty of care each country owes to present and future generations to protect them from the adverse effects of climate change.³⁵

However, despite the agency of Pacific island countries and their undeniable climate achievements when they cooperate as a bloc, these island nations remain vulnerable to the climate policies and geopolitical ambitions of wealthier and more powerful nations. As Wallis points out, “overlaying on the Pacific’s climate leadership, there is the role of external powers in the region and this can be quite divisive”.³⁶ As a transnational problem, tackling climate change requires international action.

THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES ARE WORLD-LEADING VOICES IN THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT, BUT THEIR SECURITY AGAINST THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE REMAINS IN THE HANDS OF MORE POWERFUL STATES, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA.

Australia has been able to continually ignore and even coerce Pacific island countries on the issue of climate change because it is uniquely powerful in the Pacific region - economically, militarily and in its soft power. Australia is the largest and wealthiest member of the Pacific Islands Forum,³⁷ and the largest aid donor to Pacific island countries by a wide margin - giving approximately six times more in annual aid than China.³⁸ Furthermore, Australia is recognised by the United States as jointly responsible for ensuring military security in the region,³⁹ and the two countries share the same anxieties about a ‘rising China’ even though Pacific island leaders themselves have not expressed the same level of concern about Chinese influence.⁴⁰ The Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) strategic defence alliance announced on 15 September 2021 is recent evidence of this security arrangement in the Pacific, but such an arrangement dates back much further to the 1951 Radford-Collins naval agreement.⁴¹

Ralph Regenvanu explains that Pacific island countries have little power in negotiations with Australia, and so they struggle to stand up to Australia on climate change. While Australia can use aid funding and labour mobility arrangements as bargaining chips, “we’ve got very little we can go back with, partly because the Pacific hasn’t been able to extricate itself from Australia and New Zealand”.⁴² He added,



THE HON. RALPH REGENVANU

MP AND LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN VANUATU

PREVIOUS MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017-2020

“Vanuatu objects obviously to Australia’s climate policies but what can we do beyond saying what we say and the agreements we make and take to international meetings and the Pacific Islands Forum? Given there’s very little we can do, beyond not signing up to the PACER Plus [free trade agreement], we have to maintain a good relationship mostly because we have a lot of partnership on development projects being funded by Australia.”⁴³

Source: Interview with Greenpeace Australia Pacific, October 6th 2021.

Using its power to ignore and coerce, the Australian government does not engage the Pacific islands as equals, despite them being sovereign nations. Anote Tong told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that he hopes Australia will engage respectfully with the Pacific islands:

“The question is ‘how do we view each other?’. Do we respect each other or are we just pawns in this whole game? I cannot read into the minds of Australian leaders but it’s always been my hope that we would treat each other with mutual respect, but I’m not sure this has always been the case. Of course, that is to be expected between a very large and highly developed country like Australia compared to a very small country struggling to develop like Kiribati. But we should be partners in every respect and not when it is convenient to one party but not the other, for example on climate change. We expect Australia to be stepping forward because climate change is very important for us and we’re meant to be part of this family. It had always been my expectation, my hope, that Australia would provide the leadership we desperately need on climate change.”⁴⁴

Anote Tong's mention of a Pacific 'family' is a direct reference to rhetoric adopted by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in recent years.⁴⁵ At two separate addresses in 2019, Morrison used Pacific languages to describe Australia as part of the Pacific family, referring to "our Vuvale, our wantok, our Whanau".⁴⁶

Morrison has been at pains to point out that within families there are disagreements;⁴⁷ however, core disagreements over the region's primary security threat are already undermining the strength of regional relations. When Australia signed its nuclear-powered submarine deal with the US and UK on 15 September 2021- which it justifies as a necessary military capability against the threat of China - Pacific island countries were quick to express their concern and point out that they had not been consulted prior to the announcement of the deal. Political and community leaders in the Pacific, including the current President of Kiribati, Taneti Maamuu, reiterated that climate change is their core security concern and not China's growing power.⁴⁸ This is a widely held view among Pacific island leaders who are willing to engage in bilateral relations with Australia, the US and China. As then-Prime Minister of Samoa Tuilaepa Malielegaoi stated in 2019, "[Australia's] friends are our friends but their enemies are not our enemies".⁴⁹

Given the submarines are to be sailed in the Pacific, a region that has historically suffered the worst effects of nuclear testing, the lack of consultation was not received well. The projected cost of over \$90 billion also left the Pacific reeling. Ralph Regenvanu states that, with that amount of money the "entire Pacific could have cyclone proof infrastructure that lasts, which is what we want" - protection against a more relevant and tangible threat in a region that has experienced six category 5 tropical cyclones since 2015.⁵⁰ Australia's relations in the Pacific have been undermined by its continued refusal to listen to Pacific island countries when they say climate change is the biggest security threat facing the region.

The Australian government's rhetoric of the Pacific 'family' means little when it refuses to do its part in mitigating climate change. Region experts told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that Australia is undermining good relations with Pacific islands because of its stubborn refusal to tackle climate change, an existential threat that risks the security and survival of Pacific peoples. To restore relations in the Pacific, Australia must respect Pacific island countries and act on the primary security threat they have repeatedly identified and sought more ambitious action on: climate change. As Hilda Heine, President of the Marshall Islands, told a packed lecture theatre at the Australian National University in 2017:



THE HON. HILDA HEINE
PRESIDENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS 2016-2020

“While some in Australia may think that your approach to climate change cannot influence the views of others to do more, I can assure you that it does influence the way in which Australia is viewed in the Pacific. Many of the 3.4 million people in the Pacific islands think of Australia as a big brother or sister. Imagine how you would feel if your big brother or big sister was not only openly mocking the science, but even occasionally mocking your very own plight. This not only does your country a disservice, it openly weakens your ability to be a force for good on the world stage especially in our shared neighborhood.”⁵¹

Source: H.E Hilda Heine, Lecture at ANU, “Climate Change Crisis: An Examination of the Turbulent History and Modern Day Consequences of the Vulnerability of the Marshall Islands”, May 16, 2017 (14:20-15:39): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9Q0cdWkOME>

With Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison unlikely to increase the ambition of Australia's 2030 emissions reduction targets ahead of the UN Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow this year, Pacific island countries are once again let down by the country that calls itself their 'big brother' yet is willing to jeopardise their survival.

02.

**THE PROBLEMS
AND PITFALLS
OF AUSTRALIAN
“CLIMATE AID”
TO THE PACIFIC**

2.1 The \$500 Million Climate Aid Pledge

The Australian government arrived at the 2019 Pacific Islands Forum with no update to share on its emissions reduction targets or level of climate ambition. Instead, Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and then-Minister for International Affairs and the Pacific, Alex Hawke, announced a pledge of \$500 million in climate aid to the Pacific islands to be spent between 2020 and 2025.⁵² It was likely hoped that the pledge would detract attention from Australia's weak climate mitigation policies. However, the pledge was met with mixed reactions by the region, with Pacific island leaders stating that this was yet another example of Australia offering financial assistance in exchange for the Pacific islands' silence on climate change.

Australia has a history of using its position as the largest aid donor in the region to influence bilateral and multilateral negotiations on climate change in the region, as detailed in the previous chapter. Dr. Vijay Naidu, Professor of Development Studies at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji states that, "because Australia is the most powerful actor and can be labelled the regional bully, it managed to push small islands states in the region for a long time to accept its agenda on greenhouse gas emission limitations - it pushed for 2 degrees warming rather than 1.5 degrees".⁵³

This relationship of aid dependency between Pacific island countries and Australia may be exacerbated by climate change in coming years, as extreme weather events like severe tropical cyclones cost hundreds of millions of dollars - sometimes billions - in economic damage each time they make landfall in the Pacific islands.⁵⁴ Pacific island countries may need to rely more heavily on external humanitarian assistance as a result. Dr. Naidu also warned that during the Coronavirus pandemic, Pacific island countries are in a state of increased aid dependency due to the severe impacts of Covid-19 on their economies and their need for vaccine doses, and so will be particularly cautious about their relations with Australia.⁵⁵ Through the course of this investigation, Greenpeace Australia Pacific found that while former leaders and opposition members responded to our queries and interview invitations, government officials currently in power did not.

SPEAKING OUT ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S CLIMATE POLICIES CARRIES A DEGREE OF POLITICAL RISK, AS AID MAY NOT BE RECOMMITTED IN FOLLOWING YEARS.

The announcement of the \$500 million climate aid pledge also came as Australia shirked its international responsibility to climate justice, wherein developed countries acknowledge their culpability for 'legacy' greenhouse gas emissions and provide climate finance to developing countries that have been the first to experience climate change impacts. In 2018, the Australian government withdrew its support for the UNFCCC's Green Climate Fund, a climate finance instrument that is, firstly, multilateral (meaning the donor cannot choose the recipient country or organisation, and remains anonymous to them) and, secondly, requires financial contributions to be additional to existing foreign aid.

Morrison told The Alan Jones Breakfast Show:



08/10/2018 – AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER SCOTT MORRISON ON THE ALAN JONES BREAKFAST SHOW (2GB)

“No, we’re not held to any of them [Paris signatories] at all Alan, nor are we bound to go and tip money into that big climate fund, we’re not going to do that either. So I’m not going to spend money on global climate conferences and that sort of nonsense”.⁵⁶

Source: <https://www.2gb.com/its-not-as-though-theyre-painting-it-on-there-pm-supports-opera-house-promotion/>

The Minister for the Pacific Alex Hawke provided a more measured defence of Australia’s withdrawal from the Green Climate Fund, stating to *ABC Radio National* that:

14/08/2019 – ALEX HAWKE, MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC ON ABC RADIO NATIONAL

“We think our know-how and experience and relationships in the [Pacific] region mean that when we put up a fund it will have a greater impact faster than the Green Climate Fund”.⁵⁷

Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/alex-hawke-deflects-tuvalu-calls-for-australian-climate-action/11412092>

Hawke did not mention, however, that giving aid bilaterally allows Australia to gain leverage in the region or attach either implied or explicit terms to that aid. The Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, Leader of the Opposition in Vanuatu and former Minister of Foreign Affairs told Greenpeace Australia Pacific: “where its sphere of influence is concerned, Australia can be much more influential bilaterally than it can multilaterally - there is leverage in bilateral aid that isn’t available through the multilateral funding”.⁵⁸

Further, if Hawke and the Coalition government were genuinely concerned about the Green Climate Fund’s bureaucratic accreditation process, aid funding could be allocated to assist Pacific states and local organisations with the process. With this accreditation, Pacific island countries and local organisations would then have direct access to this multilateral avenue of climate finance.⁵⁹ An anonymous source told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that at the COP25 climate negotiations in 2019, Australia also pushed hard against the creation of a technical support arm (through the ‘Santiago Network’) for developing countries to

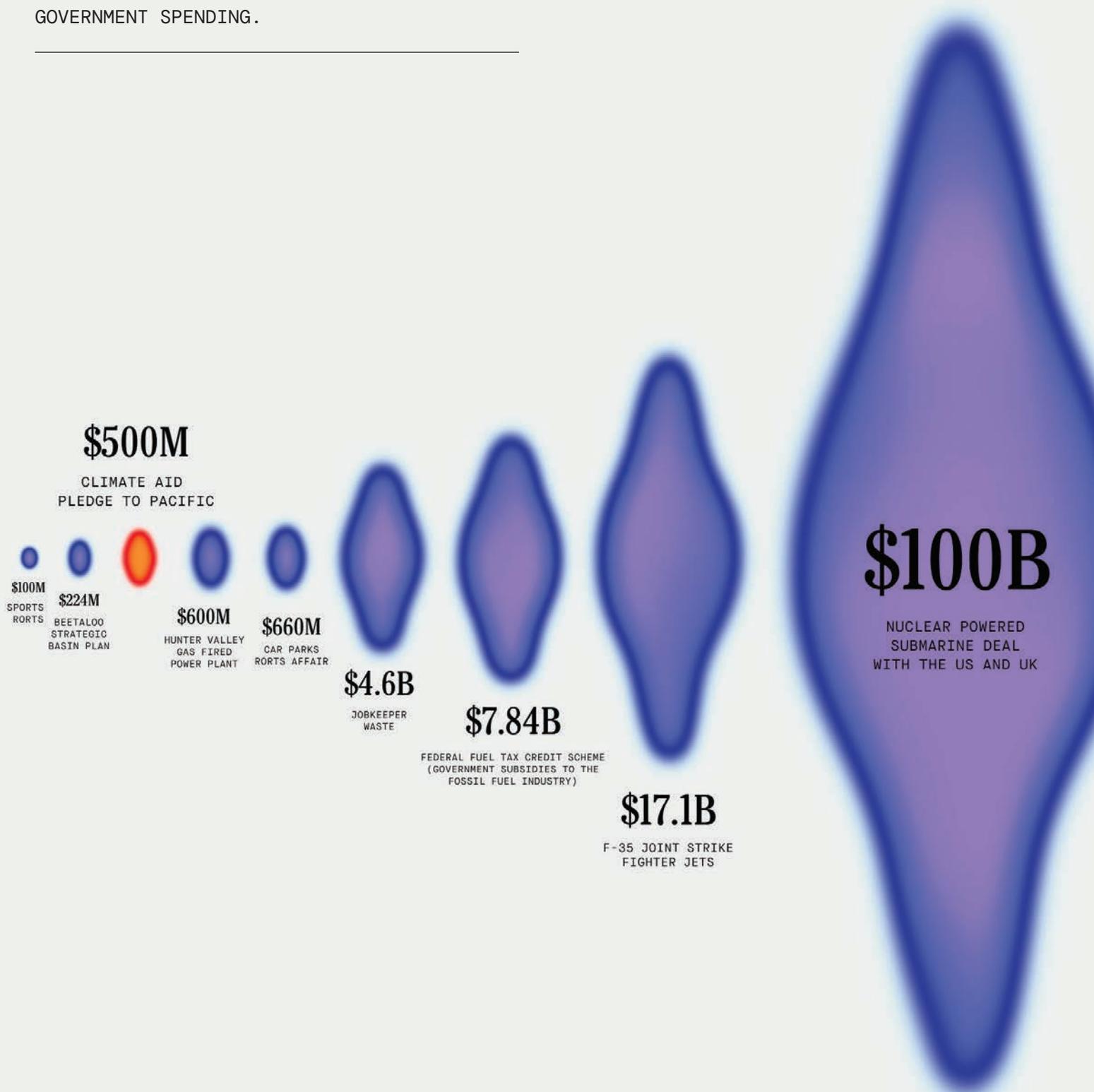
access 'loss and damage' financial assistance for climate impacts, even when the entire Pacific bloc called for its establishment. This once again suggests that Australia's offers of climate finance to the Pacific islands are self-interested and given only when Australia knows it will gain bilateral leverage over Pacific island countries.

The \$500 million climate aid pledge in 2019 was also taken with a grain of salt, as the commitment was not for additional funding but a reallocation of Australia's existing aid budget. While Prime Minister Scott Morrison made his way to the Pacific Islands Forum in Tuvalu, a representative of his Office was evidently concerned that the listeners of The Alan Jones Breakfast Show on 2GB talkback radio had misunderstood this detail. Phoning into the show, the Prime Minister's Office clarified that the \$500 million pledge did not represent any additional contribution to the existing foreign aid budget.⁶⁰

Australia's aid budget is at a historic low and not considered generous by international standards. In 2020, comparable countries such as Canada and Sweden spent \$4.9 billion and \$6 billion on overseas development assistance (ODA) compared to Australia's \$2.5 billion.⁶¹ When ranked by Gross National Income (GNI) Australia came in 21st in the OECD on generosity, contributing 0.19% of its gross national income to foreign aid compared with Canada giving 0.31% and Sweden and 1.14% of Gross National Income.⁶² According to ANU's Development Policy Centre, the internationally agreed aid-to-GNI target is 0.7%.⁶³ Pacific island leaders have responded with disappointment to cuts and freezes of Australian foreign aid in recent years. In 2017, the Hon. Dr. Hilda Heine (then-President of the Marshall Islands) reacted to news of the foreign aid budget freeze by saying that "no matter how much [aid] is concentrated in the Pacific, it will impact all of us".⁶⁴ Australia has redirected much of its foreign aid to concentrate on the Pacific; however, the downward trend of Australia's overall foreign aid budget affects both the amount of funding available to the Pacific and developing countries outside the region.

When compared to other Australian government spending, the \$500 million pledge is dwarfed - particularly in comparison with spending on projects and programs that Pacific island countries have expressed concern over due to their regional and international implications. For instance, in the 2020-2021 financial year, the Australian government gave \$7.84 billion (AUD) in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry through the Federal Fuel Tax Credit Scheme.⁶⁵ The nuclear powered submarine deal with the US and UK is estimated to cost around \$100 billion (AUD), with Australian Finance Minister Simon Birmingham confirming on ABC Radio National that the new deal is likely to cost more than the previous \$90 billion (AUD) deal Australia had made with France for non-nuclear powered submarines.⁶⁶

VISUALISATION OF HOW AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE AID FUNDING COMPARES TO OTHER FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING.



THE CLIMATE ACTION TRACKER RATES AUSTRALIA’S CLIMATE FINANCE AS “CRITICALLY INSUFFICIENT”, NOTING THAT “AUSTRALIA’S CLIMATE FINANCE CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE BEEN LOW AND ARE NOT IN LINE WITH ANY INTERPRETATION OF A FAIR APPROACH TO MEETING THE PARIS AGREEMENT’S 1.5 DEGREE LIMIT”.⁶⁷

Due to inadequate climate finance in the Pacific, the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS) and the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN, a consortium of civil society groups in the Pacific) are going to COP26 in Glasgow with a set of climate finance demands supported by Greenpeace Australia Pacific. These demands include “new and additional climate finance” - scaled up and separate to foreign aid - “that is equivalent to real needs and is grant-based”.⁶⁸ This requires immediately doubling Australia’s current climate finance to \$3 billion annually between 2021-2025, and \$12 billion annually by 2030 to meet its climate finance fair share, and recommitting to the UNFCCC’s Green Climate Fund.⁶⁹ Without drastically upscaled finance, PICAN states, “the Pacific cannot meet its climate targets or sustainable development goals, enable adaptive action and resilience in our communities or respond to the devastating levels of loss and damage we face”.⁷⁰

2.2 Mitigation vs. Adaptation in the Pacific

Australian aid for climate change adaptation has also been met with cynicism by some Pacific island leaders and communities for addressing the symptoms of climate change but not the cause. Concern is raised about how long adaptation efforts will work in the region without a substantial drop in greenhouse gas emissions before 2030.

As the Chair of the Tuvalu Climate Action Network puts it,

“The more we mitigate, the less we have to adapt. The strip of land [of the Funafuti atoll] in Tuvalu is less than 400 metres wide, how far inland can we migrate against rising sea levels?”⁷¹

Professor of International Security at University of Adelaide, Dr. Joanne Wallis, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that focusing on the climate resilience of communities can divert attention from the fact that Pacific communities do not want to experience the effects of climate change in the first place.

“RESILIENCE IS ACTUALLY A REALLY PROBLEMATIC TERM BECAUSE IT’S OFTEN USED AS AN EXCUSE TO PUSH THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS ONTO THE AFFECTED POPULATION RATHER THAN ACKNOWLEDGING THE STRUCTURAL FACTORS THAT HAVE CAUSED THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE.”⁷²

Dr. Vijay Naidu states that Australia’s preference for offering adaptation aid over strengthening its domestic mitigation policies has affected the Pacific’s view of Australia:

“Australia is seen as a hypocrite by many Pacific island countries for failing to cut down on its emissions but trying to make up for its sins by offering aid for adaptation to island countries, and island countries know this.”⁷³

The single most effective climate action that the Australian government can take is a science-based 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, to ensure net-zero emissions by 2050.⁷⁴ This would have the most significant impact on ensuring the security and survival of Pacific communities.

Climate adaptation aid is, however, still much needed in the Pacific. The world is already experiencing the effects of climate change, and so mitigation and adaptation are both required. Even if the world is able to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which it is currently not on track to achieve, there are many climate impacts experienced at 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming.⁷⁵ This is especially true for the low-lying and cyclone-vulnerable states of the Pacific. The fate of low-lying atoll states (the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Tokelau) in the Pacific is widely known, but larger countries are also vulnerable to sea level rise. As Dr. Naidu puts it:

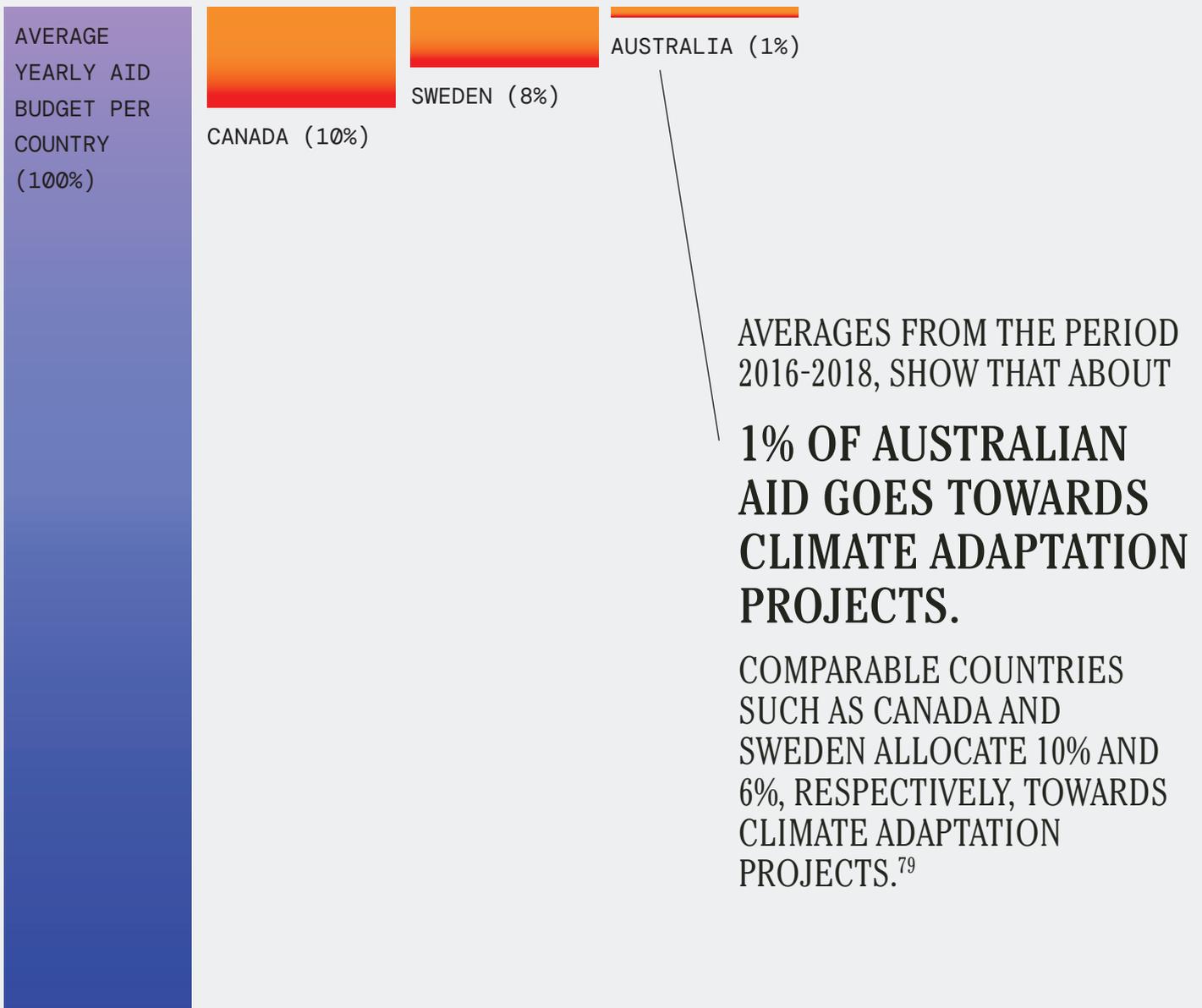
“Even in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomons, what we have is a situation where the majority of the population - nearly always over 70% but up to 80% - live along coastlines, in the coastal plains, or in the delta region of their large river systems, on land that is generally only 3 metres above sea level. The larger countries are therefore also prone to flooding and inundation.”⁷⁶

Sea level rise and related impacts such as flooding, permanent inundation (salt-water intrusion in fresh water aquifers and agricultural land) and erosion will “persist well beyond the 21st century even under 1.5 degrees of warming” according to the IPCC.⁷⁷ With every increment of global warming above 1.5 degrees, those climate impacts become more severe.

Climate adaptation is therefore needed alongside substantive emissions reduction policies to mitigate against climate change. However, while Australia may purport to give certain levels of aid to climate adaptation projects in the Pacific, a closer look reveals that these projects are at best only tangentially related to climate change.

2.3 Climate Adaptation Aid: What a ‘Significant Focus’ on Climate Really Means

Hundreds of millions of dollars in Australia’s aid budget have been counted as ‘climate adaptation’ aid despite those funds being allocated to projects with no link, or at best a tangential link, to climate change. Dr. Terence Wood, Research Fellow at the Development Policy Centre at the Australian National University, is an expert on Australian and New Zealand foreign aid. His co-authored report from this year (2021), *Change and continuity in Australian aid: What the aid flows show*, finds that when it comes to climate adaptation aid “Australia is well below the best performing OECD Development Assistance Committee countries, below the median and towards the tail”.⁷⁸



There is a significant discrepancy between Dr. Terence Wood's findings and those of the Donor Tracker's most recent report, which claims 20% of Australia's bilateral aid goes towards climate adaptation.⁸⁰ The reason for this discrepancy is telling, and goes to the heart of problems with Australia's climate aid reporting to the OECD. Dr. Terence Wood explains that projects can either be tagged as 'principally focused' or 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation. To understand Australia's true contribution to climate adaptation, Dr. Wood only uses data from the 'principal' category. This is because there is too much leniency in the OECD rules on the 'significant' category. Dr. Wood explains,

“It is too easy to claim that an aid project is ‘significantly focused’ on climate change adaptation when it has little or nothing to do with climate change.

When I examined the largest of Australia's 'significant' climate adaptation projects in the Pacific from 2018, I found that the 3 biggest projects were all to do with governance and had no obvious link to adaptation. Possibly some of the money associated with the work ended up assisting with climate adaptation, but it was clear adaptation was not a key focus.”⁸¹

Greenpeace Australia Pacific reviewed projects tagged as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation in the Pacific in 2018 and 2019 using the OECD's database. That review also found that the projects with the highest levels of funding had at best a tangential link to climate change and at worst no clear link. Indeed, many of the long descriptions of the projects contained no reference to the climate or environment.

GREENPEACE AUSTRALIA PACIFIC'S INVESTIGATION FOUND THAT THE PROJECTS WITH THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF FUNDING HAD AT BEST A TANGENTIAL LINK TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND AT WORST NO CLEAR LINK.

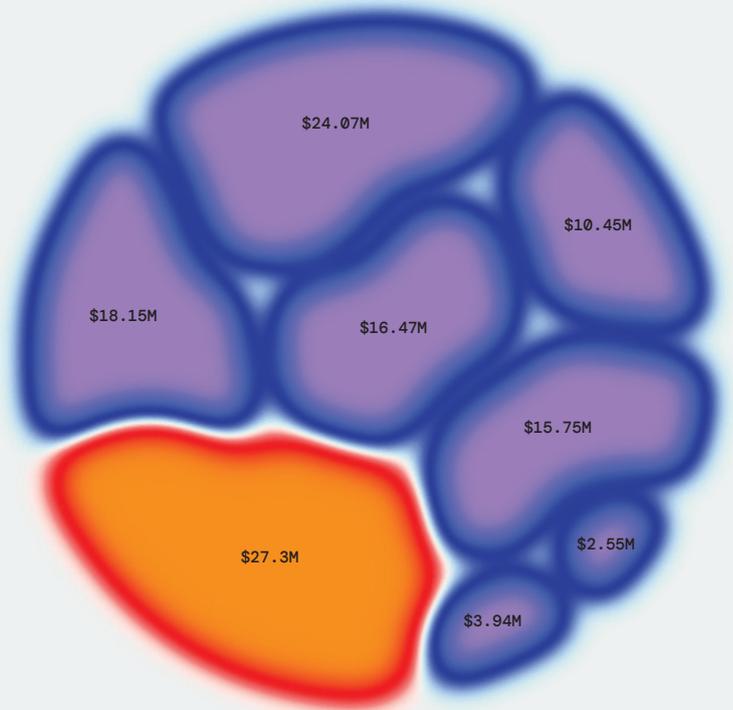
Prominent examples of projects tagged as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation include 3 large governance programs in Papua New Guinea mentioned by Dr. Terence Wood (costed at \$16.47 million, \$18.15 million and \$24.07 million USD each). These governance programs are described as an overall 'Governance Facility', encompassing "economic governance, private sector development, decentralisation and citizen participation", but no mention is made of climate change or the environment. A 113 page evaluation of the Governance Facility undertaken for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs in 2019 also does not mention climate change, and climate adaptation and resilience were not measures used to evaluate the project's effectiveness.⁸²

VISUALISATION OF EVIDENCE THAT AUSTRALIAN 'CLIMATE' AID OFTEN GOES TO PROJECTS UNRELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE, FOCUSING ONLY ON 2018 AND 2019 DATA (MOST CURRENT REPORTING).

2018

\$118.70M - Australia's 'significant focus' climate adaptation spending on the Pacific (in USD).

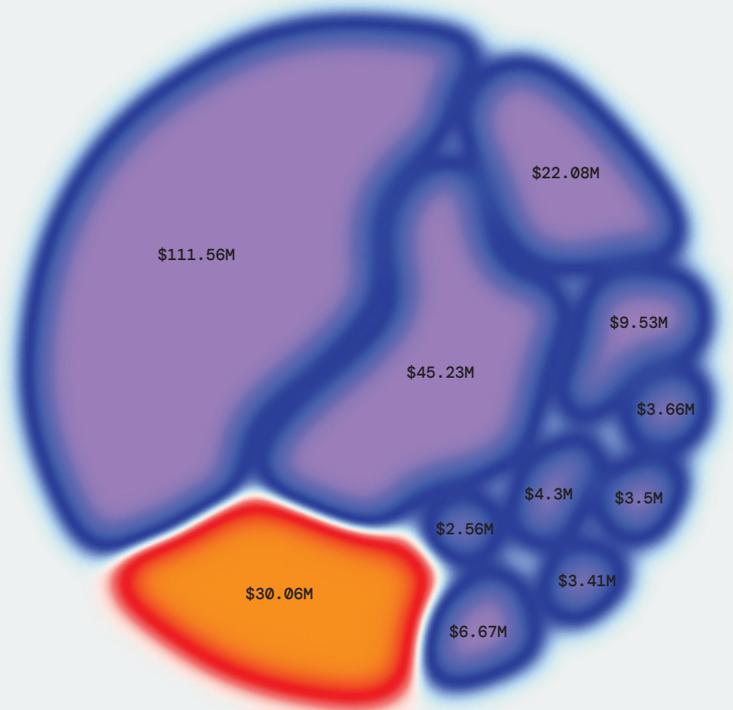
-  **\$91.4M** (77%) of that was spent on projects with no mention of climate or the environment.
-  **\$27.3M** (<23%) of that was spent on projects that actually mention the climate or the environment.



2019

\$242.56M - Australia's 'significant focus' climate adaptation spending on the Pacific (in USD).

-  **\$212.5M** (88%) of that was spent on projects with no mention of climate or the environment.
-  **\$30.06M** (<22%) of that was spent on projects that actually mention the climate or the environment.



Citation: OECD database : <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RIOMARKERS>

DATA BREAKDOWN

2018

\$18.15 MILLION (USD) - Papua New Guinea

“Public Sector Policy and Administrative Management”

Key work areas include economic governance, promoting private sector development, decentralisation for improved development, citizen participation and strengthening leadership and coalitions.

\$24.07 MILLION (USD) - Papua New Guinea

“Democratic participation and civil society”

Key work areas include economic governance, promoting private sector development, decentralisation for improved development, citizen participation and strengthening leadership and coalitions.

\$16.47 MILLION (USD) - Papua New Guinea

“Macroeconomic policy”

Key work areas include economic governance, promoting private sector development, decentralisation for improved development, citizen participation and strengthening leadership and coalitions.

\$10.45 MILLION (USD) - Secretariat of the Pacific Community “Rural development”

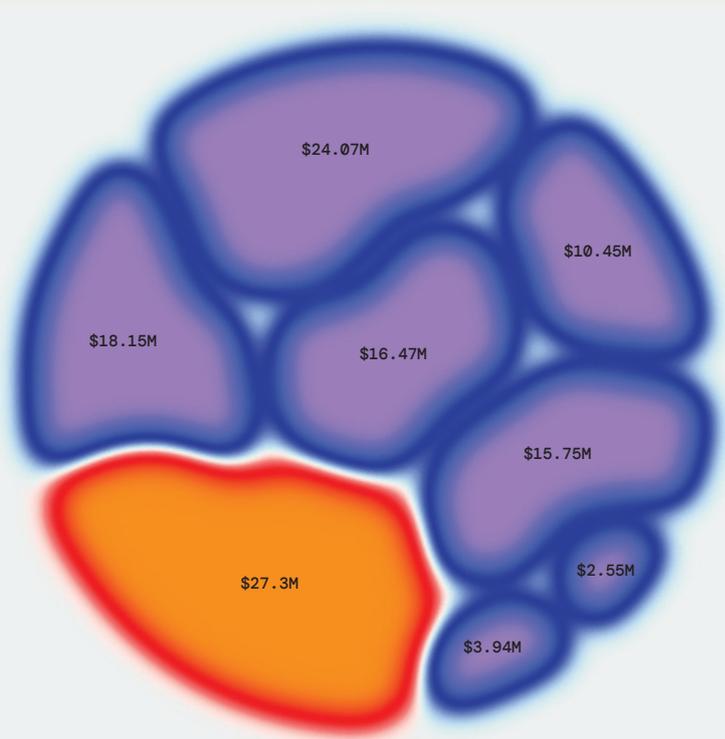
The Secretariat of the Pacific Community- Government of Australia Partnership for Pacific Regionalism and Enhanced Development is a ten year partnership 2014-2023. The Partnership sets out how SPC and Australia will work together to address major regional development issues in line with SPCs mandate.

\$3.94 MILLION (USD) - Kiribati “Workforce Skills Development” (2016-2019)

The Skills for Employment program referred to as the ‘Kiribati Facility’ will support the government of Kiribati to provide labour market demand driven skills to young people who seek to work in domestic and offshore labour markets.

\$2.55 MILLION (USD) - Vanuatu health sector support - Health policy and administrative management

Strengthening health delivery service and improvements to critical systems such as supply chain, workforce and facilities underpinned by better public administration, public finance management and strengthened health information.



\$1.55 MILLION (USD) - Samoa “Parliament Complex Redevelopment” (Part of this project - climate change assessment - is adaptation relevant but the rest clearly not)

Funding under this initiative will support the Government of Samoa to redevelop its parliamentary complex, specifically for design including climate change assessment, provision of architectural specials, project management feeds, demolition and construction, furniture and ICT supplies.

COMBINED TOTAL VALUE: \$15.77 MILLION (USD) - Misc. small value projects - 43 in total.

DATA BREAKDOWN

2019

\$3.66 MILLION (USD) - Fiji “Australia Pacific Training Coalition (Stage 3)”

Stage 3 delivers 3 pillars: embedding in national systems; increased co-investment; & labour mobility outcomes in these skills sectors across the Pacific.

\$22.087 MILLION (USD) - Papua New Guinea Governance Facility

Activities will be delivered at the national and subnational levels across key work areas including economic governance; promoting private sector development; decentralisation for improved development; citizen participation; and strengthening leadership and coalitions.

\$45.232 MILLION (USD) - PNG-AUS Transport Sector Support Program Phase 2

Funds under this investment provides capacity building and technical assistance for governance, providing support services for the transport sector coordination body (TSCMIC) and Secretariat, policy advice, strategic direction, financial and procurement oversight for the program, monitoring and evaluation.

\$9.532 MILLION (USD) - Regional Oceania “Australia Pacific Training Coalition (Stage 3)”

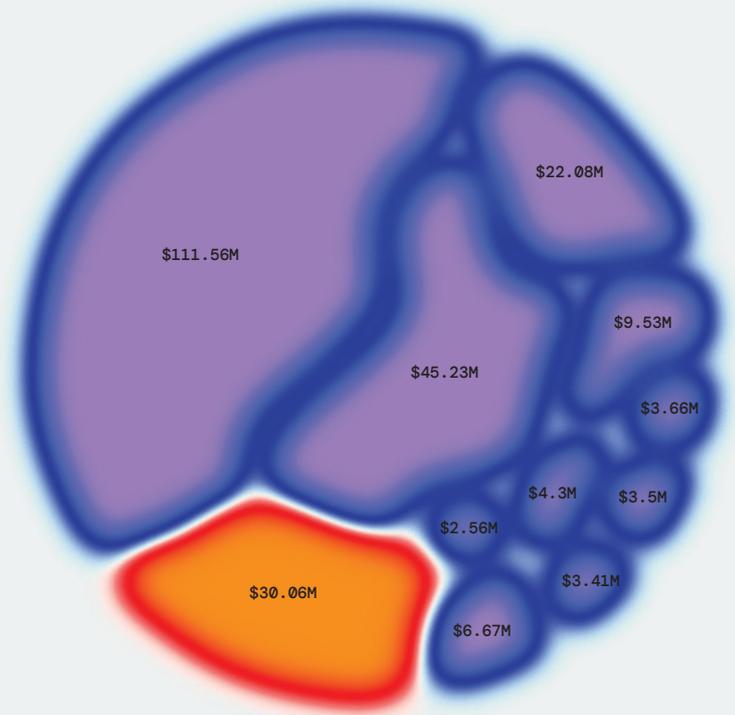
Stage 3 delivers 3 pillars: embedding in national systems; increased co-investment; & labour mobility outcomes in these skills sectors across the Pacific.

\$4.3 MILLION (USD) - Kiribati “Priority Outcome 2: Kiribati Facility”

The Skills for Employment Program (SfEP), referred to as the ‘Kiribati Facility will support the Government of Kiribati to provide labour market demand driven skills development to young people who seek to work in domestic and off-shore labour markets.

\$3.5 MILLION (USD) - Vanuatu “Roads for Development Transition Program”

Roads for Development Program Phase Two supports the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities and Public Works Department to positively influence road-funding outcomes and use enhanced institutional capacity to manage the road network of Vanuatu more effectively and efficiently. The total estimated value of this investment is \$35 million for implementation from 2019 to 2013.



\$3.41 MILLION (USD) - Papua New Guinea “Economic and Social Infrastructure Program”

The Program will improve infrastructure investment in PNG through the following key mechanisms: project management, budget and financing advisory services; technical assistance and capacity development for improved planning and prioritisation; and high level engagement in support of institutional and regulatory reform.

\$6.67 MILLION (USD) - Papua New Guinea “Institutional Partnership Program”

The Institutional Partnership Program (IPP) provides public service policy, strategic advice and capacity development including administrative leadership and management support to counterpart Papua New Guinea Government agencies. Areas targeted for assistance include: law and justice, transport and infrastructure, public leadership and policy, economic governance, and corporate support.

\$2.56 MILLION (USD) - Vanuatu “Roads for Development Program Phase Two”

The program supports the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities and Public Works Department to positively influence road-funding outcomes and use enhanced institutional capacity to manage the road network of Vanuatu more effectively and efficiently. The total estimated value of this investment is \$35 million for implementation from 2019 to 2013.

COMBINED TOTAL VALUE: \$111.56 MILLION (USD) - Misc. small value projects - 293 in total.

Various workplace skills programs, including a \$9.52 million (USD) region-wide 'Australia Pacific Training Coalition' and a Kiribati employment program (\$8.24 million USD in 2018 and 2019) were also counted as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation without any mention or explanation of their relevance to climate change. The Kiribati workforce skills program is aimed at supporting the Kiribati government to "provide labour market demand driven skills to young people who seek to work in domestic and offshore labour markets". This is no doubt a worthy program; however, its relevance to climate adaptation is unclear.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific asked The Hon. Anote Tong, former President of Kiribati (2003-2016), whether any Australian aid projects in Kiribati were misleadingly described as 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation. According to Tong, during his Presidency, in 2013, an Australian funded road rehabilitation project in South Tarawa, Kiribati, was labelled as a climate adaptation project. While the rehabilitation of the road was much needed, it did not have any relevance to climate change or increasing the resiliency of Kiribati's population. As Anote Tong put it:

"Climate change projects in my view should be about building resiliency so that when the next storm comes, or the next king high tide, we will remain above water and be safe. But that is not the case. We had an Australian funded road project in South Tarawa - a wonderful project as now our transportation is good.

But it hasn't done anything to help with climate change because already the road is being threatened by erosion on one side.

The water has been coming over the road in extra high tides and actually damaging it. And that road project was one of the 'climate change' projects."⁸³

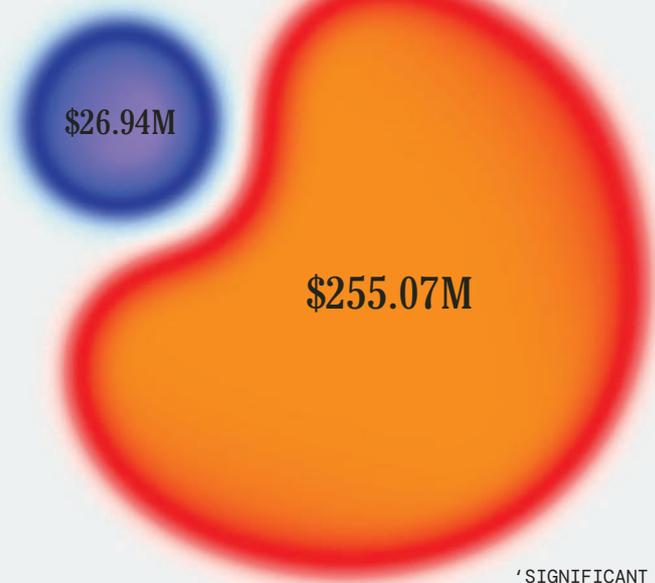
Greenpeace Australia Pacific was able to find this Australian funded road rehabilitation project on the OECD database for 2013. The long description of the project mentions road rehabilitation and transport, but it does not once mention climate change, climate adaptation or climate resilience - yet it is counted as aid that is 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation.

Further, Australia's spending on projects 'significantly focused' on climate adaptation significantly outweighs its spending on projects 'principally focused' on climate adaptation - such as sea walls, cyclone proofed infrastructure, and mangrove planting initiatives. In 2018, Australia's 'significantly focused' climate adaptation aid was \$255.07 million (USD) worldwide, compared to 'principally focused' spending of \$26.94 million (USD).

COMPARISON BETWEEN AUSTRALIA'S 'PRINCIPAL FOCUS' ON CLIMATE CHANGE SPENDING \$26.94M WORLDWIDE VS 'SIGNIFICANT FOCUS' ON CLIMATE CHANGE SPENDING OF \$255.07M WORLDWIDE (USD)

2018

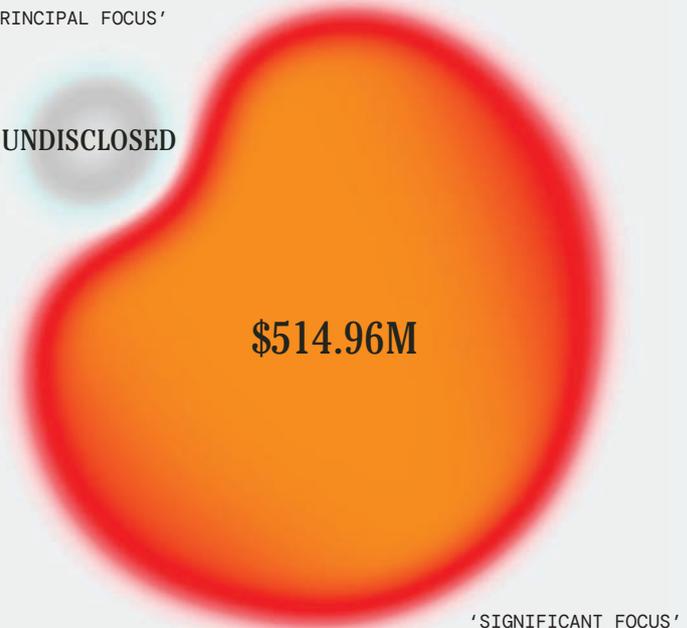
'PRINCIPAL FOCUS'



2019

'PRINCIPAL FOCUS'

UNDISCLOSED



In 2019, Australia spent \$514.96 million (USD) on 'significantly focused' climate adaptation aid and did not report on its 'principally focused' spending. When asked why there is nothing reported for 'principal focus' climate adaptation in 2019, Dr. Terence Wood replied that "it must be the result of a reporting error on Australia's behalf. I suspect that eventually some of the climate adaptation related spending tagged as 'significant' will be moved to 'principal'. My guess is that it won't be a lot given how little was tagged as 'principal' in 2018".⁸⁴ Greenpeace Australia Pacific made numerous attempts to contact DFAT about its 2019 climate aid reporting but the department did not respond before publication.

2.4 Walking the Talk on Climate Aid

There is significant room for improvement for the Australian government in both the generosity of its climate finance as well as the transparency and accuracy of its data on the alleged ‘climate focused’ projects it funds. Oxfam International’s *Climate Finance Shadow Report* urges governments to adopt best practice reporting of climate finance, including project-level reporting of full project value and the amount being counted as climate-related finance.⁸⁵ The UK and the US follow this process, calculating the value of a project’s climate change component on a project-by-project basis.⁸⁶ Oxfam recommends that project data is accompanied with honest explanations of how the climate finance component of the project costs was calculated, to ensure transparency and confidence in the data.⁸⁷ Australia would be wise to adopt these reporting procedures, in addition to increasing its allocation to projects with an obvious climate adaptation focus (such as sea walls, cyclone proofed infrastructure, and mangrove planting initiatives).

While the Australian government talks loudly about its climate aid to the Pacific, partners in the region have an understandable cynicism about what motivates these pledges and the loopholes that may be exploited in the delivery and reporting of the aid. A simple reallocation of the current foreign aid budget, which is at a historic low and lacks the generosity of many other OECD nations, is inadequate to meet the climate challenges faced by the Pacific. Further, tagging projects as ‘significantly focused’ on climate change when there is at best a tangential link has led to a significant over-estimation of Australia’s climate aid to the Pacific. This impedes a clear understanding of the work already undertaken to increase the Pacific’s climate resilience and the work that still needs to be done.

GREENPEACE AUSTRALIA PACIFIC SUPPORTS THE CLIMATE FINANCE DEMANDS OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK FOR DRASTICALLY UPSCALED CLIMATE FINANCE, WHICH IS ADDITIONAL TO THE FOREIGN AID BUDGET, EQUIVALENT TO REAL NEEDS, AND GRANTS BASED.

The Australian government should also recommit to multilateral climate finance instruments such as the UNFCCC’s Green Climate Fund, which allow climate vulnerable countries to directly access climate finance without the leverage or expectations implicit (or explicit) within bilateral aid arrangements. In addition, the Australian government needs to increase its contributions towards ‘principal focus’ climate adaptation projects and make significant improvements to its aid reporting procedures. Reports to the OECD should include clear and honest descriptions of the cost of each project’s climate related component, as well as an explanation of how that climate component is calculated. This will help ensure Australia’s aid to the Pacific is not greenwashed but actually supports the climate resilience of the Pacific islands.

03.

**OUT OF STEP
WITH THE REGION
AND THE WORLD
ON CLIMATE ACTION**

3.1 Key Allies and Trading Partners on Australia's Climate Recalcitrance

In recent years, and particularly since the Paris Agreement of 2015, key allies and trading partners worldwide have joined Pacific island countries in calling out Australia on its lack of climate ambition. The EU, the UK, and the US (under the Biden Administration), among others, have all been vocal about Australia's insufficient emissions reduction targets. While these interventions have largely been shrugged off by the government of the day, including the current Morrison government, it is increasingly clear that Australia's climate policies are putting the country out of step with key allies and trading partners across the region and the globe.

TIMELINE (2015 - PRESENT) OF INSTANCES WHERE KEY REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ALLIES HAVE ASKED AUSTRALIA TO IMPROVE THEIR CLIMATE POLICIES AND HOW AUSTRALIA HAS RESPONDED.

20TH APRIL 2015

CHINA, THE US, BRAZIL, AND THE EU LODGE QUESTIONS THROUGH THE UN FOR AUSTRALIA OVER ITS CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES.

[Source](#)

- The questions have been lodged with the United Nations for Australia to answer in the lead-up to the December climate summit in Paris, where the world is supposed to sign a global deal to combat climate change.
- China accused Australia of doing less to cut emissions than it is demanding of other developed countries.
- It comes as Australia is facing questions in diplomatic circles for not sending a minister or its chief climate change negotiator to a meeting of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in Washington DC, starting on Sunday.

6TH MAY 2015

FIJI PM FRANK BAINIMARAMA TO SHUN PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM OVER 'UNDUE INFLUENCE' OF AUSTRALIA, PARTICULARLY ON CLIMATE.

[Source](#)

- "We will continue to participate in all forum activities at the public service, technical and ministerial levels," he said.
- "As head of government, I will not participate in any forum leader's meeting until the issue of the undue influence of Australia and New Zealand and our divergence of views is addressed."
- He said Australia and New Zealand, PIF's major funders, are not island nations, but "more development partners".
- Australia in particular, he said, was at odds with what he called "the biggest threat to our security" - rising sea levels caused by climate change.
- "Rather than side with us, Australia in particular is siding with what I call the coalition of the selfish," he said.
- "Those industrialised nations which are putting the welfare of their carbon polluting industries and their workers before our welfare and survival as Pacific Islanders."

5TH JUNE 2015

AUSTRALIA'S COALITION GOVERNMENT DEFENDS CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES AFTER GRILLING FROM US, CHINA, SOUTH AFRICA AT UN MEETING.

[Source](#)

- Australia currently aims to reduce carbon emissions by 5 per cent from year 2000 levels by 2020, but Mr Hunt insists Australia will surpass that target.
- "Australia is one of the few countries in the world to have beaten our Kyoto 1 targets [and] to be on track to beat our Kyoto 2 targets," he said.
- "Our real target is the equivalent of minus 13 per cent on 2005 figures and we won't just meet that, we'll beat that.
- "We will make a strong, clear and ambitious contribution to the post-2020 target."
- At the conference, the US asked Australia's senior diplomats if the Government's flagship Direct Action policy — which involves paying emitters not to pollute — would get Australia to its 2020 targets.

10TH SEPTEMBER 2015

WE CANNOT BE BOUGHT ON CLIMATE CHANGE, PRESIDENT OF KIRIBATI ANOTE TONG WARNS AUSTRALIAN PM TONY ABBOTT.

[Source](#)

- Several small island states could walk out on the Pacific Islands Forum if Australia and New Zealand force them to compromise on a declaration demanding an ambitious target to combat climate change.
- The president of Kiribati, Anote Tong, issued the ultimatum on the eve of the summit of 16 Pacific Island leaders on Tuesday declaring: "We cannot negotiate this, no matter how much aid. We cannot be bought on this one because it's about the future."
- Mr Tong raised the prospect of either states walking out or Australia being asked to leave the forum if its two more powerful members forced a compromise on the commitment of island states to the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- "We expect them as bigger brothers, not bad brothers, to support us on this one because our future depends on it."
- Acceptance of such a compromise would be "a betrayal of our people", he said, insisting that even a 1.5 degree temperature rise would leave the most vulnerable states in deep trouble.

12TH DECEMBER 2015

MARSHALLESE FOREIGN MINISTER TONY DEBRUM INDICATES AUSTRALIA WILL NEED TO IMPROVE ITS CLIMATE POLICIES IF IT WANTS TO BE PART OF THE HIGH AMBITION COALITION.

[Source](#)

- Tony deBrum said that, "we're delighted to learn of Australia's interest [to join] and look forward to hearing what more they may be able to do to join our coalition of high ambition here in Paris."
- Foreign Minister Julie Bishop downplayed the significance of the group, saying it was not a negotiating coalition but simply a group of people who share a view on climate ambition.

21ST APRIL 2016

AUSTRALIA SNUBBED BY 'HIGH AMBITION COALITION' DUE TO UNAMBITIOUS CLIMATE POLICIES.

[Source](#)

- As 170 countries gather in New York to formally sign the Paris Agreement, Australia has been dropped from the 'High Ambition Coalition'.
- It is understood Australia has sought ongoing involvement in the coalition and had reached out to the countries involved through diplomatic channels but had so far been rebuffed.
- Asked why Australia had been uninvited an anonymous diplomatic source said it had not been involved in the main work of the coalition in Paris.

10TH OCTOBER 2017

TONY ABBOTT TELLS CLIMATE SCEPTICS FORUM GLOBAL WARMING MAY BE GOOD AND CLIMATE SCIENCE IS 'CRAP'.

[Source](#)

- And while that did not make the warnings about global warming false, "it should produce much caution about basing drastic action upon it", he (Abbott) said.
- He then raised the possibility that global warming might be beneficial if higher concentrations of carbon dioxide were "greening the planet and helping to lift agricultural yields".
- "In most countries, far more people die in cold snaps than in heatwaves, so a gradual lift in global temperatures, especially if it's accompanied by more prosperity and more capacity to adapt to change, might even be beneficial."
- Mr Abbott doubled down on his 2009 pronouncement that climate science was "absolute crap" and likened the current policy position to primitive people killing goats to "appease the volcano gods".

1ST NOVEMBER 2017

PACIFIC ISLAND COMMUNITIES CALL FOR AUSTRALIA NOT TO FUND ADANI COALMINE.

[Source](#)

- Erietera Aram, a resident of Kiribati who works for the Department of Fisheries, said he decided to visit Australia to ask its government to take action.
- "We talk about the Adani coalmine," he said. "That's a new one. I think it's not a good idea – it makes the world worse for all of us. It is inconsiderate of other humans on this planet."
- "We didn't think of Australia as a country that would do that. We looked at it as our bigger brother. Proceeding with that new mine is a sad move. We live together in the environment but it's like they are ignoring us."
- "We're two metres above sea level. With the sea level rise, most of our lands have been taken by coastal erosion. We love our country and we want our children to live there as well, hopefully forever. It's hard to talk about leaving the place where you belong."
- According to the report's authors, the impact of coastal erosion and flooding reached "severe" levels in 2016, upgraded from "high" the year before. Climate change also made it "increasingly difficult to maintain the health and integrity" of food and water sources. Water scarcity was deemed a "serious slow-onset problem throughout Oceania".

4TH JULY 2018

TONY ABBOTT WANTS AUSTRALIA TO PULL OUT OF THE PARIS CLIMATE DEAL HE SUPPORTED AS PM.

[Source](#)

- Tony Abbott has said Australia should withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement that he agreed to as prime minister three years ago. In 2015, Mr Abbott announced the target Australia would take to the Paris talks and called that pledge "responsible and achievable", saying it struck "the right balance between our economic and environmental responsibilities".
- But last night, the former prime minister said pulling out of the agreement would be "the best thing we can do right now".
- "If we had known then what we know now about America's withdrawal, about the economic damage that renewable energy in particular would do to our power system and to our industries, we would never have signed up," he told Sky News.
- "And now that we do know, we should get out, simple as that."
- The comments prompted a rebuke from Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, who said Australia would be sticking to the deal because it "plays by the rules".
- "If we sign an agreement we stick to the agreement," Ms Bishop told Sky.
- "Australia wants to be seen as a reliable and trusted global partner — we signed the Paris agreement, we can achieve the targets that we set, and they were deliberately set in a way that we could achieve them."

5TH SEPTEMBER 2018

AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PACIFIC ON CLIMATE CHANGE 'DYSFUNCTIONAL' AND 'ABUSIVE', ACCORDING TO PALAU'S NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATOR.

[Source](#)

- Australia's relationship with the Pacific region on the issue of climate change has been described as "dysfunctional" and "abusive" – providing aid to the region to deal with the effects of global warming but undermining attempts to halt its progress, according to a climate change representative for the Pacific nation of Palau.
- Xavier Matsutaro, the national climate change coordinator for Palau, a small nation in the north-west Pacific, said Australia's relationship with the Pacific was "dysfunctional", adding that Australia was also responsible for diluting the strength of previous regional declarations on climate change.
- "Australia is a bit of an anomaly, because on the floor [of climate summits] they're basically sometimes as far right as Trump in some of their views on climate change, at one point they even denied that it existed ... But then on a regional basis they've actually given a lot of support to our region," said Matsutaro.

7TH OCTOBER 2018

AUSTRALIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TRIES TO WATER DOWN THE BOE DECLARATION AT THE 2018 PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM IN NAURU.

[Source](#)

- As part of the Pacific Islands Forum, Australia was a signatory to the Boe declaration in Nauru on Wednesday which said climate change represented "the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific".
- But Australia attempted to water down the language of the declaration, other Pacific countries have said, resisting language around urgent action to cut emissions, and issued qualifications to part of the Pacific Islands Forum communique over the Paris climate agreement.
- The prime minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga, said the name of the country seeking qualifications "[started] with capital A": Australia is the only country in the PIF beginning with A.
- Several sources from the PIF forum have corroborated Australia's efforts to weaken the Boe Declaration. Vanuatu's minister for foreign affairs Ralph Regenvanu said: "I was there, and can confirm this is true. And unfortunate."
- Asked specifically by Guardian Australia whether Australia had sought to weaken the language of the declaration, Australia's foreign minister Marise Payne neither rejected nor confirmed the allegation.
- "The communique is an agreed document of the Leaders' Retreat. It is not appropriate to discuss the internal talks of the private Leaders' Retreat. Pacific Island Forum leaders' discussions are typically robust and frank and canvas a broad range of issues, including regional security, economic growth, climate change, fisheries and disaster response."
- Payne said Australia understood the centrality of the climate threat to many Pacific Islands, and "the importance that Pacific countries place on effective global action to combat climate change".
- Australia has pledged \$300 million for climate change action in the Pacific between 2016 and 2020, and has also contributed \$200 million to the Green Climate Fund.

8TH OCTOBER 2018

AUSTRALIAN PM SCOTT MORRISON RULES OUT PROVIDING ANY MORE MONEY TO UN GREEN CLIMATE FUND.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

- Scott Morrison has resisted conservatives' calls to withdraw Australia from the Paris climate agreement but ruled out providing more money to the global climate fund.
- Australia has contributed \$200million to the Green Climate Fund from 2015-2018 but the Coalition has come under pressure by One Nation to rule out making further contributions.
- The announcement came as a complete surprise to DFAT and was an "immense disappointment to Pacific neighbours" according to the Saturday Paper.

18TH MAY 2019

AUSTRALIA'S FEDERAL ELECTION SEES SCOTT MORRISON'S GOVERNING LIBERAL PARTY TAKE CLIMATE WRECKING POLICIES TO THE ELECTION, AND DEMONISES LABOR'S PRO-ELECTRIC VEHICLE POLICIES AS 'ENDING THE WEEKEND' AND THEIR MODEST CLIMATE ACTION TARGET AS 'UNECONOMIC'.

- Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Labour's modest climate policies would cost the economy \$35 billion dollars.
- Labour's election climate policies included a 45% emissions reduction by 2030 target - a target that the Liberal Party called uneconomic.
- Labour's electric vehicle policy included a target of 50% of all new car sales being electric vehicles by 2030. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that Bill Shorten wanted to "end the weekend" for Australians because "Australians love being out there in their four wheel drives".
- "He wants to say see you later to the SUVs", Morrison said of Bill Shorten's electric vehicle policy.

[Source 1](#), [Source 2](#)

15TH AUGUST 2019

NZ PRIME MINISTER JACINDA ARDERN SAYS THAT "AUSTRALIA HAS TO ANSWER TO PACIFIC" ON CLIMATE AT THE 2019 PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM IN TUVALU.

- New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern says "Australia has to answer to the Pacific" on climate change.
- She tried to dispel the suggestion New Zealand is playing the role of mediator at the negotiations, despite siding with the Pacific on calls for stronger climate action from all countries.
- Although New Zealand and Australia have typically been in lockstep at such global forums, the Kiwis have upped their renewable energy and emissions reduction targets.
- She also refused to comment on wording of the communique while negotiations continue, not saying if New Zealand would support Australia in stripping away mention of coal.

[Source](#)

16TH AUGUST 2019

AUSTRALIA ACCUSED OF PUTTING COAL BEFORE 'PACIFIC FAMILY', WATERING DOWN THE OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUÉ, AT 2019 PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM IN TUVALU.

- After marathon talks, Australia could not reach an agreement on the Tuvalu declaration made by smaller Pacific countries, one that called for a rapid phase out of coal.
- Fiji Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said he was disappointed in the outcome.
- Australia was considered responsible for watering down the wording of the official communiqué. Bainimarama stated that "watered down climate language has real consequences - like water-logged homes, schools, communities and ancestral burial grounds."

[Source](#)

22ND AUGUST 2019

AUSTRALIAN DEPUTY PM APOLOGISES FOR TELLING PACIFIC IT WILL SURVIVE CLIMATE CHANGE AS WORKERS 'PICK OUR FRUIT'.

- Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack has apologised for comments about Pacific islanders being able to survive the ravages of climate change by taking fruit-picking jobs in Australia.
- Mr McCormack made the comments last Friday as he sought to dismiss criticism levelled at Prime Minister Scott Morrison following the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), at which leaders claimed Australia was ignoring the threat climate change posed to the survival of vulnerable low-lying island nations.
- "[I] get a little bit annoyed when we have people in those sorts of countries pointing the finger at Australia and say we should be shutting down all our resources sector so that they will continue to survive," he said.
- "They will continue to survive, there's no question they will continue to survive, and they will continue to survive with large aid assistance from Australia.
- "They will continue to survive because many of their workers come here and pick our fruit."

[Source](#)

10TH DECEMBER 2020

AUSTRALIAN PM SCOTT MORRISON DENIED SPEAKING SLOT AT CLIMATE AMBITION SUMMIT, DUE TO LACK OF AMBITIOUS CLIMATE POLICIES.

[Source](#)

- Scott Morrison has signalled Australia will not be granted a speaking slot at a climate ambition summit this weekend, despite telling parliament a week ago he would attend to “correct mistruths” about the government’s heavily criticised record on emissions reduction.
- Morrison was asked on the final day of parliament by the independent Zali Stegall whether he’d been invited to the event which is being hosted by Britain, France and the UN in a bid to boost climate commitments ahead of a major conference in Glasgow next year.
- The organisers have made it clear countries will have to offer up substantial commitments to make contributions at the event, and Australia’s prime minister declared on Thursday he would not be changing domestic policy “to get to a speaking slot at some international summit”.
- Guardian Australia revealed on Tuesday there had been debate among the co-hosts as to whether Morrison should be approved to speak at the summit given the widespread view Australia was a laggard on climate commitments.
- Diplomatic sources have been signalling all week that Australia was unlikely to be granted a speaking role.
- Morrison’s comments in parliament on Thursday suggested Australia would not be invited to speak at the event. Faced with the near-certain snub, the prime minister declared whether or not he spoke at the summit was “not something that troubles me or concerns me one way or the other”.

11TH DECEMBER 2020

BRITISH FOREIGN MINISTER EXPLAINS WHY SCOTT MORRISON’S CLIMATE INVITATION WAS WITHDRAWN.

[Source](#)

- PM Morrison responds to Climate Action Summit snub, saying that Australia has a “great track record” on emissions reduction and that speaking in multilateral fora is not important.
- When challenged by independent MP Zali Stegall in parliament about the snub, Morrison replied: “The member seems to think that what’s relevant is whether you speak at summits. This is not something that troubles me or concerns me one way or the other. If people wish us to speak at them, we’re happy to come. If they don’t, then I’m not fussed.”

14TH JUNE 2021

AUSTRALIA LEFT ISOLATED ON CLIMATE AFTER G7 LEADERS PLEDGE TO END SUPPORT FOR COAL-FIRED POWER STATIONS.

[Source](#)

- Australia was attending the G7 meeting in Cornwall, England, as a guest.
- The G7 nations - the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan - agreed to “achieve an overwhelmingly decarbonised power system in the 2030s.”
- The G7’s resolution included an in-principle decision to introduce carbon border tariffs to stop goods from countries without carbon axes from undercutting jurisdictions with them.
- Speaking to Australian media, Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack noted Australia was not a signatory to the G7 resolution and said 55,000 people worked in the coal industry, which produced \$66 billion in exports.

15TH JUNE 2021

WHILE IN THE UK TO ATTEND THE G7 MEETING AND NEGOTIATE A US-AUS FREE TRADE DEAL, PM MORISSON GIVES A VIDEO ADDRESS TO THE AUSTRALIAN PETROLEUM PRODUCTION AND EXPLORATION ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE IN PERTH.

[Source](#)

- Morrison told the fossil fuel executives, “I want you to know we are backing you in to stay on top as one of the world’s leading exporters of LNG, and with a plan here in Australia that sees gas as a key to securing reliable, affordable energy in a transitioning energy market.
- He said that energy-intensive industries were the lifeblood of the economy, particularly in Australia.

28TH JUNE 2021

US, EUROPEAN AND UK DIPLOMATS MEET TO ENCOURAGE AUSTRALIA TO RAMP UP CLIMATE ACTION.

[Source](#)

- The most recent meeting, held on Thursday last week, brought together the ambassadors, high commissioners or deputy heads of mission of the UK, the US, the European Union, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, Sweden and Switzerland.
- The talks come as the Morrison government faces growing calls, both within Australia and internationally, to formally commit to net zero by 2050 and to strengthen its 2030 target, which remains at the Abbott government-era level of a 26-28% cut in emissions compared with 2005.
- Diplomatic sources in Canberra described the meetings as “networking and outreach events” among like-minded countries.

22ND JULY 2021

FOREIGN DIPLOMATS FROM UK, US, EUROPE AND CANADA MEET AND DISCUSS AUSTRALIA'S WEAK CLIMATE COMMITMENTS.

[Source](#)

- Ambassadors, high commissioners, or dept. heads of missions from: UK, US, EU, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, Sweden, and Switzerland.
- Australia is becoming increasingly isolated on the world stage because of its climate failings.
- US officials pressed Australian ministers on their country's climate record at a recent defense meeting (AUSMIN 2021) in Washington, mentioning the “urgency” of the “climate crisis” in a communiqué that Morrison [signed](#).
- Members of the EU Parliament have told CNN in recent weeks that Australia has one of the worst climate records of all developed nations and some expressed incredulity when it emerged that Australian negotiators had pressured the UK into dropping key climate commitments from their bilateral trade agreement.
- And comments from Australia's resources minister Keith Pitt dismissing the UN as a “foreign body” that should stay out of Australia's affairs has only worsened the country's image as an uncooperative player in climate action.

11TH AUGUST 2021

FIJI CALLS ON AUSTRALIA TO ‘WALK THE TALK’ BY ADOPTING MORE AMBITIOUS EMISSIONS TARGETS.

[Source](#)

- The Fijian government says it hopes “everybody can get on board” with a low carbon future, as pressure mounts on Australia to adopt stronger climate action in the wake of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report.

20TH AUGUST 2021

THE US, UK AND FORMER UN CHIEF BAN KI-MOON PILE ONTO AUSTRALIA'S APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE AT THE VIRTUAL ‘BETTER FUTURES FORUM’.

[Source](#)

- The US President's deputy special envoy for climate change, Jonathan Pershing, told the Better Futures Forum on Thursday that Australia's current emissions reduction commitments were not enough.
- “It would be really helpful to see Australia step forward with a more ambitious effort. I would submit that Australia could be much more aggressive”, Jonathan Pershing said.
- At the same conference, former UN Chief Ban Ki-Moon said not taking more action risked Australia's international standing.

9TH SEPTEMBER 2021

A LEAKED EMAIL TO SKY NEWS UK SHOWS THAT AUSTRALIAN MINISTERS PRESSURED THE UK TO DROP REFERENCES TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND LIMITING WARMING TO 1.5 DEGREES IN UK-AUSTRALIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT.

- Executive Director of Greenpeace UK, John Sauven, told the ABC he had seen the email.
- He said, "The Australian government said they would not sign a trade agreement if those [references] were in the trade deal."
- In order to get the trade deal over the line, the UK bowed to pressure from the Australians.
- Labour's Ed Miliband accused the British government of rolling over to one of the world's biggest polluters.
- When approached by the ABC, Australia's Trade Minister Dan Tehan, did not deny the reports. Speaking on 4BC radio, Mr Tehan said that climate references were never part of any Australian free trade agreements.

[Source](#)

29TH SEPTEMBER 2021

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER TO AUSTRALIA, VICKI TREADELL, SAYS THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT WOULD BE "VERY DISAPPOINTED" IF PM SCOTT MORRISON DOES NOT ATTEND COP26.

- Vicki Treadell told ABC radio that the UK government "very much would love" Mr Morrison to attend the climate summit and that the UK would be "very disappointed" if Morrison didn't attend.
- Treadell confirmed that the UK would ask Australia to commit to more ambitious targets regardless of whether or not Morrison attended COP26.
- Treadell said that if Australia implemented a net zero by 2050 target, there would need to be a "means to measure progress", including an emphasis on the "medium term 2030, 2035 targets".

[Source](#)

5TH OCTOBER 2021

ALOK SHARMA, BRITISH MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR COP26, URGES AUSTRALIAN PM SCOTT MORRISON TO ATTEND AFTER MORRISON INDICATES A NO-SHOW.

- Alok Sharma, the president of the United Nations Climate Change Conference framed Morrison's participation as a test of Australia's friendship with Britain.
- "I would dearly love the Australian Prime Minister to come", Sharma said in an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald*.
- "You're some of our closest mates in the world, and we need you by our side to demonstrate the unity of purpose that is going to be really essential at this summit"

[Source](#)

6TH OCTOBER 2021

FRANCE AND OTHER EU COUNTRIES OUTSPOKEN ON HOW FAR AUSTRALIA HAS FALLEN IN THE WORLD'S FAVOUR.

- "Australia is a really bad performer when it comes to climate policy," Kathleen Van Brempt, a Belgian member of the European Union trade committee, told the ABC.
- "It was hard to negotiate a [free] trade agreement with Australia before, and it's even harder now."
- "I do think Australia needs to step up their climate issues."
- Multiple members of the European Parliament have told the ABC that the EU is "all together" when it comes to its trade negotiations with Australia.
- The latest tensions will only harden resolve among MEPs to push for a tough chapter on climate change in any final Free Trade Agreement text.

[Source](#)

DR. MATT MCDONALD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND, REFERS TO AUSTRALIA'S CLIMATE POLICIES AS A "PERFECT STORM", WITH SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE COUNTRY'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IF THESE POLICIES REMAIN WEAK BY COMPARISON WITH SIMILAR DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.⁸⁸

Dr. McDonald explains that there have been numerous attempts - both indirect and direct - by other nations to bring Australia onside with stronger climate policies.

Indirect pressure includes other governments setting stronger targets and commitments for themselves and bringing these to international forums such as the annual UNFCCC Conference of the Parties. For instance, the United States is heading to this year's Conference of the Parties in Glasgow (COP26) with an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of a 50-52% reduction in emissions by 2030 (from 2005 levels).⁸⁹ From the same 2005 baseline, the UK's updated NDC is at least a 63% reduction in emissions by 2030.⁹⁰ In December 2020, the EU managed to get all its member states to agree to at least a 51% net domestic reduction in emissions by 2030.⁹¹ Australia's NDC remains unchanged since 2015, and is only a 26-28% reduction in emissions by 2030.⁹² As Dr. McDonald puts it, "even if it's not directly targeting Australia, the level of others' commitments [applies] a degree of pressure because you can't help but engage in comparisons".⁹³

Instances of direct pressure include recent attempts by the UK to try to ensure that its free trade agreement with Australia contained commitments to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees in line with the Paris Agreement. Ultimately the UK backed down after Australia drew a red line on climate action, emails leaked to the media revealed.⁹⁴ However, Dr. McDonald says this was "still an example of where the UK tied something that Australia really wanted - a free trade deal with post-Brexit Britain - to Australia's lack of climate ambition and in particular its lack of alignment with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees".⁹⁵

There have also been numerous and increasingly frequent instances of direct criticism of Australia's climate policies by key allies and trading partners, whether at climate negotiations or in the media in response to Australia's articulation of its climate policies. In the last month, as Prime Minister Scott Morrison expressed his uncertainty about attending COP26 in Glasgow, both Alok Sharma (the British Minister presiding over COP26) and Vicki Treadell (the British High Commissioner to Australia) told the media they would be disappointed if Morrison did not attend.⁹⁶ European, British and American diplomats have also met in Canberra several times this year to discuss how they can engage in dialogue with Australia after the US lifted its level of climate ambition.⁹⁷ A meeting in July (2021), brought together ambassadors, high commissioners and deputy heads of mission of the UK, the US, the EU, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Sweden.⁹⁸ Australia is becoming well-known among key allies and trading partners as a climate laggard and this has implications for the country's diplomacy, economy and reputation.

3.2 Implications for Australia’s Diplomacy and Reputation

In December 2020, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s speaking slot at the UN’s Climate Ambition Summit was withdrawn due to Australia’s lack of climate ambition. When challenged in parliament by independent MP Zali Stegall on the snub, Morrison retorted that “the member seems to think what’s relevant is whether you speak at summits. This is not something that troubles me or concerns me one way or another - if people wish us to speak at them, we’re happy to come. If they don’t, then I’m not fussed”.⁹⁹

While Morrison’s comments downplayed the significance of international forums, participation in these events is important for Australia’s diplomatic relations and reputation on the world stage.



Gareth Evans, Australia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1988 to 1996, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific that:

“[Australia’s] credibility in all sorts of ways depends on our being seen to be responsible, good international citizens and Australia is putting that reputation very much at risk on the climate front”.¹⁰⁰

Source: Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with The Hon. Gareth Evans, October 8, 2021.

Morrison portrays Australia’s participation in multilateral organisations as optional; however, according to Evans, multilateralism is required to address many of the issues Australia faces along with the rest of the world.

“Multilateralism is not seen by this government as in any way central, but that is extremely short-sighted. Many of the world’s problems, including the big three existential problems that go to life on this planet - climate, pandemics and nuclear war - those big existential issues are only capable of being addressed by cooperative multilateral action. It can’t be done unilaterally, it can’t be done bilaterally. There’s unregulated population movements, international sex trafficking, drug trafficking, terrorism, weapons proliferation - all of these issues Kofi Annan used to describe as ‘problems without passports’.”¹⁰¹

Australia is not immune from any of these trans-national issues and, indeed, is vulnerable in regards to several of them - including climate change.¹⁰² Australia will benefit from the more ambitious emissions reduction policies of other states, while not coming close to matching the commitments of comparable developed economies. This will be noticed by the international community. The weak commitments that Prime Minister Scott Morrison takes to COP26 in Glasgow - including no update to Australia's 2030 emissions reduction target - will be noticed, as the UK has already warned, and may well affect Australia's ability to work cooperatively with other states on other issues in Australia's national interest. As Gareth Evans puts it,

“A country's reputation for decency in these matters does really, really matter. There is a sort of give and take [in international relations]. If you are seen to be a responsible player on issues where you don't immediately gain in economic or security terms, then that is really money in the bank when it comes to getting other countries' support for issues which are less salient for them but very salient for us - issues that are in our hard-headed national interest.”¹⁰³

Australia's reputation in the Pacific region, in particular, may cause issues for Australia in the future. Pacific island countries are sovereign nations which, although small, each have their own vote and voice in multilateral forums like the United Nations. Gareth Evans explains, “you can't ignore the sheer weight of numbers of the Pacific island countries. If they turn against us, that's no help to us in achieving other multilateral objectives”¹⁰⁴ Former President of Kiribati Anote Tong told Greenpeace Australia Pacific, “when Australia was bidding for a seat on the UN Security Council [in 2012], I'm sure every Pacific President and Prime Minister voted in support of Australia on the basis that climate change would be classified as a security issue.”¹⁰⁵

Australia may lose support from the Pacific islands in future scenarios similar to the UN Security Council bid if it continues to disregard the wishes of the Pacific islands on mitigating against climate change and providing adequate climate finance, as outlined in previous chapters.

3.3 Implications for Australia's Economy and Trade

Australia's failure to commit to significant reductions in domestic emissions and policies such as carbon pricing will soon lead to trade sanctions, such as carbon border adjustments, being placed on Australian exports. Economic losses will therefore be another consequence of Australia's climate policies, in addition to diplomatic and reputational losses.

Key trading partners such as the EU, US and UK have increased their level of climate ambition with knock-on effects for Australia. For example, in July 2021 the EU released details of its carbon border adjustment mechanism. The EU is implementing climate policies that involve carbon taxes on domestic businesses with significant greenhouse gas emissions, but they do not want overseas competitors - who are not paying carbon taxes - to outcompete domestic businesses. Given Australia has no carbon taxes on domestic production, it would need to pay a carbon tax on its fossil fuel intensive exports to the EU so as to not have an unfair advantage against European competitors.

A report by business lobby group the Australian Industry Group found that in the early stages of the EU's carbon border adjustment mechanism, there will be minimal impact on Australian exports to Europe.¹⁰⁶ However, in the medium-long term, as the mechanism expands to include the electricity emissions of a company, the profitability of Australian steel, aluminium and zinc would be hit even harder as these are currently coal-intensive industries.

THE TARIFF FOR AUSTRALIAN ALUMINIUM PRODUCED THROUGH COAL POWER COULD BE AS HIGH AS 700 EURO PER TONNE.¹⁰⁷

Carbon adjustment mechanisms like the EU's are also justified on the basis that there would be no net cut to greenhouse gas emissions without them. This is a phenomenon called 'carbon leakage', and refers to the site of the greenhouse gas emissions simply being moved to somewhere else in the world rather than reduced.¹⁰⁸ Carbon border adjustment mechanisms may become commonplace worldwide, as countries look to avoid carbon leakage. At the 2021 G7 meeting in Cornwall, leaders backed the introduction of carbon pricing policies partly to ensure that carbon leakage is minimised. Japan and Canada are working on similar carbon border adjustment schemes to the EU's.¹⁰⁹ In 2018-2019, Japan was Australia's second large trading partner and second-largest export market.¹¹⁰ It was Australia's largest export market for aluminium.¹¹¹ Without implementing carbon pricing at home, Australia will suffer economically from the trade sanctions of other countries.

3.4 Implications of the Global Energy Transition for Australia's Policy

Australia's biggest trading partners are also transitioning away from the use of fossil fueled powered energy, committing to more ambitious 2030 targets and net zero emissions reduction targets in the mid-century. This will require adjustment policies for Australian workers and communities dependent on coal mining. The Australian government's unwillingness to admit that coal exports are bound to decline means that such measures are not being considered and this will leave these workers and communities, as well as Australia more broadly, in economic turmoil. Many countries used the Coronavirus pandemic as an opportunity to invest in a renewables-led recovery, as part of their economic stimulus packages.

AUSTRALIA FAILED TO DO SO, SPENDING LESS THAN 2% OF ITS ECONOMIC STIMULUS MONEY ON CLIMATE SOLUTIONS.¹¹² BY COMPARISON, 74.5% OF CANADA'S RECOVERY SPENDING, 26.54% OF JAPAN'S, AND 20% OF THE UK'S, WAS ON CLIMATE SOLUTIONS.¹¹³

As the Morrison government continues to subsidise fossil fuels and touts a gas-led recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic, 3 of Australia's biggest export markets for thermal coal - Japan, South Korea and China - have pledged net-zero targets. Japan and South Korea by 2050 and China by 2060. More than 70% of Australia's two-way trade is now with countries that have committed to net zero emissions by or near mid century.¹¹⁴

On September 9 2021, Prime Minister Scott Morrison fielded a journalist's question about setting an expiration date for coal mining given these changes to other countries' climate policies. Morrison stated,

“On the issue you raised regarding the mining sector, that is absolutely critical to Australia's future. We will keep on mining, of course we'll keep on mining. We will keep on mining the resources that we are able to sell on the world market.”¹¹⁵

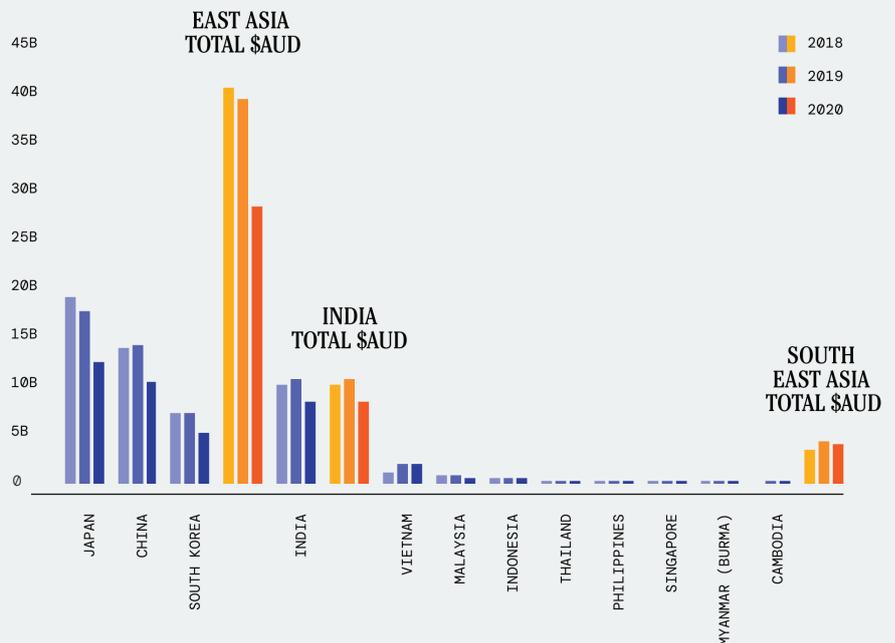
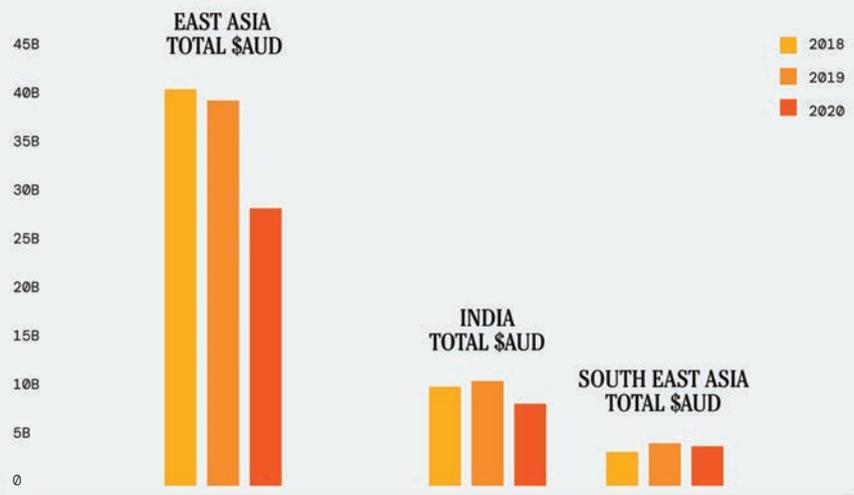
The only countries buying on the world market, however, will be developing countries for whom the renewable energy transition will be slower to achieve. This is no doubt why Morrison added that “we obviously anticipate that over time world demand for these things may change but I'll tell you the other thing we'll do, and that is work particularly with developing countries”:

“They will continue, as the current agreements already provide for, to be using the resources that Australia has exported for a long time.”¹¹⁶

On an economic level alone the Australian economy will be severely impacted when Japan, South Korea and China are no longer importing Australia’s thermal coal and gas. Greenpeace Australia Pacific crunched the numbers on the International Trade Centre’s Trade Map database.

The export value of Australian coal to Japan, China and South Korea dwarfs that of developing countries like India and those in South East Asia. For example, in 2020, the value of Australian coal exports to East Asia was \$27,501,389,000, over 3 times as much as those to India and over 6 and half times those to South East Asian countries. Morrison’s argument that the mining sector is absolutely critical to Australia’s future proves to be shaky on closer inspection. Without substantive changes to Australia’s export economy, including a science-based transition away from coal and gas to renewable energy, Australia stands to lose a lot by keeping its weak climate policies.

EVIDENCE SHOWING THE EXPORT MARKET OF AUSTRALIAN COAL TO EAST ASIA COMPARED TO SOUTH EAST ASIA AND INDIA



3.5 Why Suffer the Costs of Climate Inaction?

The Australian government is under steadily increasing pressure from key allies and trading partners across the region and the world to strengthen its weak climate policies. In response, it continues to downplay the importance of multilateral forums. Such isolationism is not, however, a strategy without repercussions for Australia's regional and international relations in the future.

AS AUSTRALIA TAKES THE ROLE OF BAD INTERNATIONAL CITIZEN - REFUSING TO MOVE ON A KEY TRANSNATIONAL ISSUE THAT MANY NATIONS CARE DEEPLY ABOUT - IT IS SUFFERING A REPUTATIONAL AND DIPLOMATIC LOSS THAT COULD JEOPARDISE ITS ABILITY TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE FUTURE ON ISSUES IT DEEMS SALIENT.

Multilateralism is nothing to scoff at, particularly when tackling 'problems without passports'.

Economically, there is strong evidence showing that Australia needs to rapidly transition away from coal exports to goods and services with a long-term future. Currently, Australia's export economy is highly reliant on coal and gas, making up 50% of all Australian exports; however, Australia has enormous potential to diversify its export economy - particularly in services.¹¹⁷ There is not a profitable or sustainable future for fossil fuel - and fossil fuel intensive - exports beyond the next 5 years, as Australia's key trading partners carry out their own climate policies, including implementing carbon border taxes to stop 'carbon leakage' and accelerating the renewable energy transition. Unless a stubborn dedication to climate inaction is the hill Australia wants to die on, the Morrison government needs to set 2030 emissions reduction targets at least in line with comparable developed economies (50-70%) and preferably a science-based target of 75%. Australia's diplomacy, reputation, economy *and environment* depend upon it.

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CONCLUSION

Australia's role as a global climate action blocker is dangerous for our shared future. Pacific island countries are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, with more frequent and intense category 4 and 5 cyclones as well as sea level rise already causing the erosion of homes and internal migration. In Australia, we have recently experienced the severe bushfire season of 2019/2020, which decimated native wildlife, property and regional economies. Extreme heat days have also become hotter and more frequent. If Australia does not swiftly transition to renewable energy and implement stronger 2030 emissions reduction targets, these climate impacts will be more severe in Australia and contribute to the climate impacts faced by our Pacific island neighbours.

Pacific Bully and International Outcast demonstrates that Australia risks its regional relations with the Pacific if it continues to ignore and coerce Pacific island countries through its bullying climate diplomacy. The Australian government may try to detract attention from its inadequate climate change mitigation by loudly advertising its climate aid to the Pacific. However, on closer inspection, the data shows that Australia is one of the least generous OECD countries for climate finance and that many of the so-called 'climate adaptation' projects it funds are greenwashed through dishonest and inaccurate reporting.

Beyond the Pacific region and more broadly in its international relations and trade, Australia stands to lose much by continuing to subsidise fossil fuels and refusing to set more ambitious emissions reduction targets. Key allies and trading partners - including the EU, the US and the UK - have all called out Australia's climate position, pushing it further into pariah status over its embrace of coal and gas. Economically, as other countries implement carbon border tariffs and accelerate their renewable energy transitions, Australia's fossil fuel (and fossil fuel intensive) exports will no longer be profitable.

The Australian government has a decision to make. It can listen to the requests of regional and international partners, strengthen its emissions reduction policies and significantly increase its climate finance contributions to developing countries. This will improve its standing in the region and globally, and benefit Australia's reputation, soft power and economic growth. Or, it can choose climate inaction and condemn Australians to climate catastrophe, economic turmoil and a 'pariah' reputation on the world stage. This approach will have knock-on effects for our Pacific island neighbours who are running out of time in the fight to limit global warming.

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INTERVIEWS

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