

2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission

January 2023



Introduction

Caritas Australia welcomes the opportunity to participate in the consultation for the 2023-24 Federal Budget.

Our global context has changed dramatically in the past few years. For the first time in 25 years, global poverty is rising. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact global health systems, economies, livelihoods, education and debt levels. The war in Ukraine has driven huge increases in global food and fuel insecurity as well as displacement and forced migration. The number of violent conflicts is at its highest since 1945¹ with 'medium to high-intensity' conflicts in 23 countries around the world.² Climate change continues to be an unprecedented driver of poverty, displacement and insecurity.

Combined, these intersecting factors have created a 'polycrisis' that has reversed years of development gains and exacerbated inequalities for those who were already facing marginalisation, including women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly.

The opportunity and need for Australia to play a strong leadership role in responding to today's global issues has never been greater. To maximise the impact and effectiveness of Australia's engagement on these global issues, we urge the Australian Government to invest in an enhanced international development program that places the rights of the most vulnerable people at the centre of our engagement, prioritises the mainstreaming of gender equality, disability and social inclusion across all initiatives to reflect an intersectional approach, and invests in locally-led development.

As the international aid agency of the Catholic Church in Australia, Caritas Australia works to uphold human dignity and promote justice in partnership with marginalised communities, regardless of their ethnicity, political beliefs or religion. We support long-term development programs and emergency humanitarian programs in the Pacific, Asia, Africa and Australia. In 2021-22, Caritas Australia reached over 378,435 people directly reached through our humanitarian response and 301,819 people through development programs. Over 60,000 people in Australia actively support our work through fundraising and advocacy. Our submission is based on over 55 years of experience in working with our development and humanitarian partners and with the communities we serve.

¹ UN (2022). [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals](#) - Report of the Secretary-General to the UN Economic and Social Council.

² UN (2022). [More than 100 million now forcibly displaced: UNHCR report](#). Media release, 16 June 2022.

Summary of Recommendations

Caritas Australia makes the following recommendations for the 2023-24 Federal Budget:

Greater investment in our international development program:

1. That the Australian Government commits to stepped targets for achieving 0.5 per cent ODA/GNI by 2025-26 as an interim target, and 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI by 2029-30.
2. That DFAT, in partnership with ACFID, invests in a multi-year public education campaign on global justice including the value of the Australian aid program.

Strengthening our humanitarian response:

3. That the Australian Government doubles the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to \$300 million, and within this commits an additional \$150 million for an urgent Famine Prevention Package to avert catastrophe in the worst-affected hunger hotspots.
4. That DFAT invests \$200 million annually for three years to develop and implement a long-term targeted Food Security Strategy to tackle the root causes of the global hunger crisis.

Investing in locally-led solutions and strong civil societies:

5. That DFAT co-designs with ACFID a practical roadmap to promote local leadership in Australia's development and humanitarian programs, and includes targets for local leadership in all aspects of programming.
6. That DFAT establishes a CSO Hub within DFAT to strengthen engagement with civil society across the development program and to oversee the implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance.
7. That DFAT reviews its funding requirements and mechanisms to ensure that local actors can directly access multi-year core funding.
8. That DFAT re-orientes the development cooperation program to channel 25 per cent of ODA to and through local civil society across both humanitarian and development funding.
9. That DFAT changes ANCP funding and partnership arrangements from 1-year to multiyear contracts while maintaining the flexibility of what and where ANCP funds can be used.
10. That DFAT supports and funds the implementation of existing local initiatives that will strengthen locally-led development outcomes, including a Pacific model for a Global Standard for CSO accountability and the 'Reweaving the Ecological Mat' framework.
11. That DFAT expands resourcing to deepen engagement with, and enhance support for, local church and faith-based organisations that are key development and/or humanitarian actors in their country, especially in the Pacific.

Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Intersectionality:

12. That DFAT scale up its support to women's gender equality and leadership programs, including by committing:
 - a. \$40 million over 4 years to expanding the *Pacific Women Lead* initiative and \$100 million over 4 years to expand the *Women Together* initiative to advance gender equality across the Pacific and Southeast Asia respectively.
 - b. \$20 million over 4 years to fund a second, expanded phase of the Gender Action Platform, managed in line with the existing Gender Equality Fund, to strengthen the capacity of ANGOs to achieve gender equality outcomes in the Pacific and Southeast Asia

13. That DFAT, in partnership with ANGOs, co-designs a capacity strengthening program that promotes collaboration between DFAT, ANGOs and other Australian Government departments and agencies (including the Department of Education; Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission; and Workplace Gender Equality Agency) to strengthen policies, design, and implementation standards to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence.
14. Increase DFAT's central disability allocation to a minimum of \$14.4 million per year and continue vital support to global programs including the Pacific Disability Forum and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund.

Strengthening Australia's action on climate change:

15. That the Australian Government, through DFAT, invests in additional funding to take a leadership role in supporting the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, including by:
 - a. Organising annual dialogue between Pacific civil society and government representatives to advocate for actions under the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, loss and damage funding, and actions towards inclusive climate adaptation.
 - b. Advocating in the international sphere to deliver the aims of the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration including debt restructuring, supporting Pacific economies, and addressing debt levels of Pacific countries. This is aligned to Australia's international commitment to improve access to climate finance, and to strengthen countries' capacities to access and absorb this climate finance.
 - c. Investing in strengthening ANGOs and local partner organisations' capacities to advocate for actions under the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, loss and damage funding, and actions towards inclusive climate adaptation.
 - d. Recognising and supporting the Kioa Finance Mechanism by providing funding to Pacific civil society organisations to create a platform allowing local communities to access climate adaptation finance.
16. That the Australian Government meet its fair share of the international climate finance target by:
 - a. Immediately increasing its climate finance contributions in the current 2020-25 financing period by \$1 billion, bringing Australia's climate finance to \$3 billion for 2020-25;
 - b. Committing Australia's budgeted climate finance expenditure to reach \$4 billion per annum by 2025; and
 - c. Providing this funding in addition to the existing ODA budget.
17. That the Australian Government invests \$400 million over 4 years to develop and implement a new NGO-led Climate Adaptation Program that uses the expertise and networks of NGOs to quickly deliver impacts for vulnerable communities in line with promoting gender and climate justice, human rights, and social inclusion. This should include expanded resources and support for locally-led action.
18. That the Australian Government invests in developing and implementing a roadmap to align Australia's domestic and international climate policies with our commitment to the Paris Agreement target of limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees.

Greater investment in our international development program

Australia has a long and proud history of working with other countries and partners through our international development program to transform lives and break the cycle of poverty for millions of people worldwide. Now, more than ever, Australia needs to play its part in global efforts to respond to current crises and issues. Through its international development program, Australia has the capacity to strengthen resilience, stability and human development in our region and beyond, to meet our international obligations under the Sustainable Development Goals and to strengthen our relationships with regional and global neighbours.

The former Australian Government cut the international aid budget dramatically. Australia's Official Development Assistance to Gross National Income ratio (ODA/GNI) fell from 0.29 per cent in 2015 to its current level of just 0.20 per cent. This compares poorly against the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) average of 0.32 per cent ODA/GNI and places Australia 21st out of 29 OECD DAC countries on aid generosity despite being the 9th largest OECD economy.³

The greatly reduced ODA base does not adequately enable the government to respond to current global trends and needs. We note Labor's commitment in its 2021 National Platform to achieve a funding target of at least 0.5 per cent ODA/GNI, and to increase aid as a percentage of GNI every year that it is in office. We call on the Australian Government to fulfil its commitment of putting Australia's ODA on track to meet the 0.5 per cent ODA/GNI target specified in Labor's National Platform, as well as our global commitment under the Sustainable Development Goals of 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI by 2030.

There is a strong level of public support for international aid – for example, research undertaken for Caritas Australia in 2022 found that 94 per cent of people think it is important to be a good neighbour and partner to countries in the Pacific region.⁴ Public awareness initiatives from the international aid sector as well as the government have helped raise public understanding of the value of our international aid investment, however, more funding and collaboration would enable an even greater reach to the Australian public. We encourage the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to work with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) through its Public Engagement and Campaign Committee for an enhanced public education campaign on Australian aid and development.

Recommendations:

1. That the Australian Government commits to stepped targets for achieving 0.5 per cent ODA/GNI by 2025-26 as an interim target, and 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI by 2029-30.
2. That DFAT, in partnership with ACFID, invests in a multi-year public education campaign on global justice including the value of the Australian aid program.

Strengthening our humanitarian response in the face of increased global conflict and climate change

As the effects of conflict (war and civil unrest), climate change (drought, salination, and extreme weather events) and the COVID-19 pandemic are felt throughout the world, an international development program that responds effectively to humanitarian disasters is essential for Australia's role as a good global citizen, as well as the Australian Government's development and diplomacy objectives. Australia's response to humanitarian crises should have adequate resourcing and a global focus given the current scale and global nature of humanitarian emergencies.

Currently, 50 million people globally are facing extreme hunger or famine because of skyrocketing food and fuel prices due to the war in Ukraine as well as extended drought in the Horn of Africa. In Somalia alone, 90

³ Development Policy Centre Aid Tracker. <https://devpolicy.org/aidtracker/comparisons/> Accessed 12 January 2023.

⁴ Antenna, an independent consumer research agency on behalf of Caritas Australia, conducted an online survey of 1,006 Australians between 31 October to 2 November 2022. The survey data collection was national and respondents were sourced using an accredited online research access panel. Data was weighted for representation against the 2021 Australian census.

per cent of the country's population of 17 million people is going hungry and under-nourished. We welcome the additional \$15 million committed by the government in 2022 to respond to the food crisis and the \$220 million it has provided to the World Food Program. However, the scale of the crisis calls for much more. We ask the Australian Government to double the Humanitarian Emergency Fund from \$150 million to \$300 million, and within this, to commit \$150 million for an urgent Famine Prevention Package to avert catastrophe in the worst-affected hunger hotspots such as the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen. We also ask DFAT to invest \$200 million annually for three years to develop and implement a long-term targeted Food Security Strategy to tackle the root causes of the global hunger crisis by supporting local leadership (including women's leadership) in making food production and agricultural systems more resilient and inclusive, protecting the poorest and most vulnerable, and scaling up climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding programs to address root causes of food insecurity.

Recommendations:

3. That the Australian Government doubles the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to \$300 million, and within this commits an additional \$150 million for an urgent Famine Prevention Package to avert catastrophe in the worst-affected hunger hotspots.
4. That DFAT invests \$200 million annually for three years to develop and implement a long-term targeted Food Security Strategy to tackle the root causes of the global hunger crisis.

Investing in locally-led solutions and strong civil societies

Sector-wide evaluations as well as six decades of experience in working with communities in the Pacific, Asia, Africa, Latin America and in Indigenous Australia has shown Caritas Australia that development and humanitarian programming are most effective, impactful and sustainable when they are led by local communities.

Locally-led development is an important means of decolonisation and of building the capacity of local partners to identify and address local development needs. Promoting locally-led development reflects the principle of subsidiarity, in which decisions are made by the people closest to and most affected by the issues and concerns in question. It involves the transfer of power, decision-making and ownership to local partners.

Designing a roadmap: We encourage DFAT to work with ACFID and its members to co-design a practical roadmap to promote local leadership in Australia's development and humanitarian programs, including targets for local leadership in all aspects of programming.

Strengthening local civil society: Local civil society organisations (CSOs) are unique actors because of their local networks and ability to reach communities. They play a crucial role in sustainable development and strengthening local leadership, as well as peacebuilding and keeping democratic civic spaces open. They are highly effective development and humanitarian actors and partners. Investing in relationships with and between local civil society organisations helps the Australian Government and Australian NGOs to build strong relationships with civil society in-country, foster healthy civil society spaces and support leadership in local communities.

Caritas Australia urges DFAT to implement the pillars of the OECD DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: respecting, protecting and promoting civic space; supporting and engaging with civil society; and incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability. To oversee this implementation, we ask DFAT to establish a CSO Hub within DFAT to strengthen engagement with civil society across the development program.

Enabling direct access to multi-year core funding: An important part of enabling local leadership, and of the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, is to ensure that local actors can directly access funding. This requires funding processes that are appropriate for and accessible to local actors whilst still meeting risk management, due diligence and

safeguarding standards. Another important enabler is the provision of core funding that allows multi-year programming because it enables longer-term planning, staffing, capacity building, and ultimately more sustainable outcomes. As noted by the DAC-CSO Reference Group's thematic working group on the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society, "without core funding many local NGOs / community-based organizations can not be sustained over the longer term, which is also the time frame required for change".⁵ We ask DFAT to review its funding requirements and mechanisms to ensure that local actors can directly access multi-year funding.

Channelling more ODA to and through civil society: We also encourage DFAT to ensure that local NGOs and CSOs are included as a core component of funding packages. In 2019 Australia provided 11.9 per cent of bilateral ODA to civil society organisations, which is significantly lower than the OECD DAC donor average of 15 per cent.⁶ We ask DFAT to re-orient the development cooperation program to channel 25 per cent of ODA to and through local civil society across both humanitarian and development funding. This is consistent not only with the principles of the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, it would also meet Australia's commitment to the Grand Bargain target of providing at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible.

The Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) has delivered an efficient and effective framework for the delivery of Australian aid through civil society partners, in partnership with DFAT. This collaborative approach has built trust and cooperation between DFAT, NGOs, local partners, and the Australian public, and has been shown to be highly effective.⁷ The program can be strengthened even further through a number of changes to its funding and accreditation arrangements, identified through the ANCP Evaluation and Development Finance Review. The current annual nature of funding limits flexibility, inhibits the shift to more locally-led development approaches and can create downstream blockages of funding flows. A longer funding cycle and the ability for ANGOs to provide local partners with multi-year core funding would maximise the impact of the ANCP program. Finally, we are supportive that ANCP funds should continue to have a global reach, i.e. be able to be used in any country to support civil society in organisational development and capacity building.

Support existing local and regional initiatives: Where possible, Australia's international development program should support existing local and regional initiatives that empower locally-led development frameworks and outcomes. In the Pacific, this includes:

- An initiative by the Pacific Islands Associations of NGOs (PIANGO) and ACFID to develop a Pacific model for a Global Standard for CSO accountability. This 'presents the opportunity to strengthen accountability and transparency of civil society organisations in the Pacific and will help to align national codes of conduct to create shared language and expectations.'⁸
- The 'Reweaving the Ecological Mat' (REM) framework. This is a transformative, Pacific-wide initiative driven by Churches and faith-based groups to re-frame the Pacific development narrative into one that is uniquely Pacific and based on their own value system including placing ecology at the heart of their development. REM is led by the Pacific Theological College's Institute of Mission and Research and the Pacific Conference of Churches and is being developed in conversation with church leaders, academic institutions, governments and other civil society groups. DFAT has supported the REM project through its partnership with members of the Church Agency Network including Caritas Australia.

⁵ [Strengthening Leadership of Civil Society in Partner Countries](#): Implementing the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society Reflections and Proposals from a Southern CSO-Led Discussion May 24, 2022.

⁶ ACFID (2022). [Policy Brief: Civil Society as a Cornerstone of Effective and Inclusive Development](#).

⁷ An independent study commissioned by DFAT of the ANCP found that 'The ANCP delivers strongly on results; in 2013–14 ANCP represented around 2.7 per cent of the aid budget and delivered 18.2 percent of outputs reported in the Department's aggregate development results'. Evaluation of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). [ODE Brief, August 2015](#).

⁸ ACFID Pre-Budget Submission 2021-22.

Church-based networks as key civil society actors: Lastly, we note that churches and faith-based organisations are an integral part of civil society in many countries. This is particularly the case in the Pacific, where over 90 per cent of people identify as Christian. Pacific churches have a central role in their societies, extensive reach and long-established networks. Church and faith-based networks are often amongst the first responders in emergencies, with the ability to activate their local networks quickly and to access areas that other humanitarian responders sometimes cannot (e.g. high conflict zones) due to their respected status. Church leaders are trusted and influential messengers in the Pacific and can frame social issues in locally appropriate terms. For all these reasons they are key community and development partners in the Pacific. The Church Partnerships Program in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Church Partnerships Program (PCPP) were developed in acknowledgement of this reach.

We encourage DFAT to expand resourcing to deepen their engagement with local church and faith-based organisations that are key development and/or humanitarian actors in their country, especially the Pacific. This engagement should be informed by an understanding within DFAT and its managing contractors that church structures are different to other NGOs, including in their management and governance.

Recommendations:

5. That DFAT co-designs with ACFID a practical roadmap to promote local leadership in Australia's development and humanitarian programs, and includes targets for local leadership in all aspects of programming.
6. That DFAT establishes a CSO Hub within DFAT to strengthen engagement with civil society across the development program and to oversee the implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance.
7. That DFAT reviews its funding requirements and mechanisms to ensure that local actors can directly access multi-year core funding.
8. That DFAT re-orientes the development cooperation program to channel 25 per cent of ODA to and through local civil society across both humanitarian and development funding.
9. That DFAT changes ANCP funding and partnership arrangements from 1-year to multiyear contracts while maintaining the flexibility of what and where ANCP funds can be used.
10. That DFAT supports and funds the implementation of existing local initiatives that will strengthen locally-led development outcomes, including a Pacific model for a Global Standard for CSO accountability and the 'Reweaving the Ecological Mat' framework.
11. That DFAT expands resourcing to deepen engagement with, and enhance support for, local church and faith-based organisations that are key development and/or humanitarian actors in their country, especially in the Pacific.

Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Intersectionality

Australia's development cooperation program must be informed by a broad and inclusive framework that reflects diverse and intersectional experiences of gender and gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, migration status and socio-cultural context as well as vulnerabilities that may arise from conflict, disasters, historical injustices and intergenerational trauma.

We welcome the announcement by the Minister for International Development and the Pacific in December 2022 that gender equality and disability will be integrated through the new International Development Policy.⁹ Below, we expand on some specific ways in which DFAT can implement this. As an overarching principle, we encourage DFAT to ensure that the new International Development Policy adopts an intersectional approach to equity and inclusion, in particular in addressing the compounding effects of poverty, climate change, conflict and other drivers that increase the vulnerability of people at risk including women and children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the elderly.

⁹ Conroy, P. (2022). [Towards a new development policy](#). Edited extract from the opening address delivered by the Hon Pat Conroy MP at the Australasian AID Conference, 29 November 2022.

Promoting gender equality

Globally, gender inequality is the root cause of many injustices experienced by women and girls including violence; the disproportionate impacts of poverty, food insecurity, conflict and climate change; and additional barriers to education, livelihood and decision-making opportunities. Gender inequality is perpetuated by harmful social norms which can be deeply rooted and take significant investment as well as political and social will to address.

Violence against women and girls remains alarmingly and persistently high. Globally, every 11 minutes one woman or girl in the world is killed by someone in her family¹⁰, and one in three women across their lifetime are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner.¹¹ Women and children are placed at even greater vulnerability in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises - an estimated 70 per cent of women experience gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts.

Women's participation in decision-making is not only a human right but crucial to good development outcomes. When women are empowered, their children are more likely to attend school and have better health outcomes. Evidence also shows that when women are included in decision-making, disaster preparedness and response initiatives as well as peacebuilding efforts are more likely to be durable and effective.¹² Yet in many countries, women face significant barriers to leadership and participation in decision-making at household, community, regional and national levels.

We urge the Australian Government to increase its investment in gender-transformative policies and programs.

We welcome the reintroduction by DFAT of the commitment to an 80 per cent performance target to ensure Australia's development investments effectively address gender equality, including mandating that those investments over AUD\$3 million have a gender equality objective.¹³ However, there is still a significant gap between ambition and implementation, with just 44.8 per cent of Australia's aid budget going towards programs which have gender equality as a principal or significant objective.¹⁴

Two current DFAT-funded programs that address these issues are *Pacific Women Lead* in the Pacific¹⁵ and *Women Together* in Southeast Asia¹⁶. Caritas Australia calls on the government to provide additional funding to expand these two programs to achieve greater impact, given the sheer scale of gender-based issues experienced in these two regions.

A former program that strengthened ANGOs capacities to achieve gender equality outcomes in partnership with civil society in the Pacific and Southeast Asia was the Gender Action Platform, operating from 2018-2020. We call for a second phase of the Gender Action Platform, managed in line with the existing Gender Equality Fund, that is expanded to enable more NGOs, partners and projects to participate.

We urge the Australian Government to invest in enhanced collaboration between DFAT, ANGOs, and other relevant Australian Government departments and agencies (including the Department of Education; Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission; and Workplace Gender Equality Agency) to strengthen

¹⁰ Bahous, S. (2022). ['Tackling challenges head on'](#). Keynote speech by Sima Bahous, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women.

¹¹ World Health Organisation (2021). [Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence](#). Media release 9 March 2021.

¹² Caritas Oceania (2020). Ibid.

¹³ DFAT (2022). [Australian Official Development Assistance Budget Summary 2022-23](#).

¹⁴ DFAT (2022). [Question Number 82](#), Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Additional Estimates 2021 - 2022.

¹⁵ The Pacific Women Lead program is designed to advance gender equality in the Pacific and is worth \$170 million over 5 years (2021-2026).

¹⁶ *Women Together* is a \$300 million package over five years commencing in 2022-23 to support gender equality in Southeast Asia. It focuses on building women's economic empowerment, increasing women's leadership in regional peace and stability and realise women's and girl's rights with a focus on violence prevention. Source: DFAT, [Stronger partnerships with women in Southeast Asia](#)

policies, design, and implementation standards to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence. The program should contain goals and indicators showing how the collaborations have effectively addressed gender-based violence.

Recommendations:

12. That DFAT scale up its support to women’s gender equality and leadership programs, including by committing:
 - c. \$40 million over 4 years to expanding the *Pacific Women Lead* initiative and \$100 million over 4 years to expand the *Women Together* initiative to advance gender equality across the Pacific and Southeast Asia respectively.
 - d. \$20 million over 4 years to fund a second, expanded phase of the Gender Action Platform, managed in line with the existing Gender Equality Fund, to strengthen the capacity of ANGOs to achieve gender equality outcomes in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.
13. That DFAT, in partnership with ANGOs, co-designs a capacity strengthening program that promotes collaboration between DFAT, ANGOs and other Australian Government departments and agencies (including the Department of Education; Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission; Workplace Gender Equality Agency) to strengthen policies, design, and implementation standards to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence.

Promoting disability inclusive development

Globally, around 16 per cent of the world’s population, or an estimated 1.3 billion people, live with disabilities.¹⁷ People living with disabilities, and their households, are more likely to experience poverty, and approximately 80 per cent of people living with disabilities are based in countries where communities lack the governance, infrastructure and facilities to support them.¹⁸ In addition, living with disabilities is correlated with reduced access to education and increased likelihood of harmful practices to health. People with disabilities are also less likely to have equitable access to and management of natural resources, and have lower participation rates in local markets.

We welcome the commitment by the Minister for International Development and the Pacific that Australia will develop a new disability rights and inclusion strategy as well as committing disability inclusion to be central to the new international development policy. We also welcome the restoration of the central disability allocation in Australia’s development program to \$12.9 million per year, after cuts by the previous government. However, to develop and fully implement a new disability rights and inclusion strategy, and to address the scale of need for more disability inclusive programming, we ask that DFAT’s central disability allocation is increased to a minimum of \$14.4 million per annum.

We also urge the Australian Government to continue the vital support it has provided to global programs including the Pacific Disability Forum and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund.

Recommendation:

14. Increase DFAT’s central disability allocation to a minimum of \$14.4 million per annum and continue vital support to global programs including the Pacific Disability Forum and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund.

¹⁷ World Health Organisation. [Factsheet on Disability](#). Accessed 15 December 2022.

¹⁸ UN (2018). Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Strengthen Australia's action on climate change

Climate change continues to present an immense challenge for communities across the world. The communities we support are losing their homes, food and water security, public infrastructure, health, livelihoods and even lives as a result of environmental degradation and climate-related disasters. Climate change is undermining the security, stability and economic resilience of our region and is exposing and exacerbating social, economic and ecological vulnerabilities.

Supporting Pacific-led climate change action

Climate change is at the forefront of challenges and concerns held by our Pacific neighbours, whose countries are highly vulnerable to climate-related extreme weather events, sea level rise, salinization of land and drinking water, and ocean warming. In October 2022, Pacific civil society organisations came together to develop the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration.¹⁹ The Declaration calls for multi-faceted action on climate change, including greater action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, urgent action on climate adaptation including financing and support for community-led initiatives, urgent progress on the issue of Loss and Damage, guaranteed access to climate finance and the creation of more equitable finance arrangements.

The civil society organisations behind the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, including Caritas Australia, have pledged to develop and sustain a Kioa Finance Mechanism - a platform to bring together the resources and expertise of these organisations to support Pacific communities to access funding and resources for the projects needed in their homes, villages and islands.

Recommendations:

15. That the Australian Government, through DFAT, invests in additional funding to take a leadership role in supporting the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, including by:
 - a. Organising annual dialogue between Pacific civil society and government representatives to advocate for actions under the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, loss and damage funding, and actions towards inclusive climate adaptation.
 - b. Advocating in the international sphere to deliver the aims of the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration including debt restructuring, supporting Pacific economies, and addressing debt levels of Pacific countries. This is aligned to Australia's international commitment to improve access to climate finance, and to strengthen countries' capacities to access and absorb this climate finance.
 - c. Investing in strengthening ANGOs and local partner organisations' capacities to advocate for actions under the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, loss and damage funding, and actions towards inclusive climate adaptation.
 - d. Recognising and supporting the Kioa Finance Mechanism by providing funding to Pacific civil society organisations to create a platform allowing local communities to access climate adaptation finance.

Contributing our fair share of global climate finance

Under the Paris Agreement, Australia and other Annex 1 Parties agreed to a global climate finance goal of \$100 USD billion per annum from 2020-2025 to support low-income countries to adapt to climate change and reduce emissions. This global goal remains unmet.

¹⁹ [Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration 2022](#)

Australia's fair share of the global goal is approximately \$4 AUD billion per annum (\$3.2 billion USD). At COP26 in 2021, Australia announced a \$500 million increase in its climate finance commitment, bringing its total commitment to \$2 billion over 2020-2025. This remains well below Australia's international fair share

Recommendations:

16. That the Australian Government meet its fair share of the international climate finance target by:
 - a. Immediately increasing its climate finance contributions in the current 2020-25 financing period by \$1 billion, bringing Australia's climate finance to \$3 billion for 2020-25;
 - b. Committing Australia's budgeted climate finance expenditure to reach \$4 billion per annum by 2025; and
 - c. Providing this funding in addition to the existing ODA budget.

Investing in locally-led climate solutions

Effective climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction calls for a localised approach. We encourage the Australian Government to ensure that climate finance is made accessible to local communities and civil society organisations, and that it prioritises the most vulnerable. For this reason, Caritas Australia recommends that alongside the vital work of mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction across all development programming, DFAT also provides a dedicated funding stream for local community-led climate adaptation initiatives.

The former Community-Based Climate Change Action Grants Program was a three-year pilot program that supported community-based climate adaptation and mitigation activities in vulnerable countries in partnership with NGOs. It led to strong, positive advances in climate change adaptation and could offer valuable insights for a new initiative program.²⁰

Recommendation:

17. That the Australian Government invests \$400 million over 4 years to develop and implement a new NGO-led Climate Adaptation Program that uses the expertise and networks of NGOs to quickly deliver impacts for vulnerable communities in line with promoting gender and climate justice, human rights, and social inclusion. This should include expanded resources and support for locally-led action.

Taking stronger action to reduce emissions

Finally, no preventative or restorative climate adaptation strategy will be effective without addressing the root causes of climate change – greenhouse gas emissions. We urge the Australian Government to do more to tackle the root cause of climate change, which disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable members of our societies. We call on the Australian Government to invest in developing and implementing a roadmap to align Australia's domestic and international climate policies with our commitment to the Paris Agreement target of limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees.

Recommendation:

18. That the Australian Government invests in developing and implementing a roadmap to align Australia's domestic and international climate policies with our commitment to the Paris Agreement target of limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees.

²⁰ Griffin NRM (2016). [Independent evaluation of the Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation Grants Program – main evaluation report.](#)