

## **Peer Review of Australia's Development Cooperation Response from the Australian Government – February 2018**

The Australian Government welcomes the publication of the Peer Review of Australia's Development Cooperation in the Pacific. As outlined in its response (attached), the Australian Government agrees to the implementation of the recommendations and the continuation of the good practices highlighted by the Peer Review.

Australia's long-standing development assistance has helped address the acute challenges facing the region over many years, including: climate change and responding to natural disasters; sustaining economic growth and boosting education, skills and jobs for growing populations; gender equality and recognising the essential role of women in achieving better development outcomes; and the threats of major disease outbreaks and transnational crime.

Since the Peer Review, and Australia's response in July 2017, the Australian Government released its Foreign Policy White Paper, confirming that the Pacific 'is of fundamental importance to Australia' and that 'Australia will engage the Pacific with greater intensity and ambition'. Stepping-up support for a more economically resilient, stable and secure Pacific is one of the five priorities for Australian foreign policy as set out in the White Paper.

One of the key recommendations in the Peer Review was for Australia to expand its Pacific Seasonal Worker Programme. At the September 2017 Pacific Islands Forum Leader's meeting, Prime Minister Turnbull announced the establishment of a new Pacific Labour Scheme which will enable citizens of Pacific island countries to take up low and semi-skilled work opportunities in rural and regional Australia for up to three years. This will commence in July 2018, with up to 2,000 workers expected to participate in the first year. Building on the 21,000 workers from the Pacific and Timor-Leste who have worked in Australia under the Seasonal Worker Programme since 2012, the Prime Minister also announced a range of measures to support participation in the programme and to improve uptake.

The White Paper further reinforced other announcements made by Prime Minister Turnbull at the Pacific Islands Forum around stronger partnerships for economic growth, enhancing security cooperation and deepening Australia's people-to-people links across the region. Australia's stepped-up engagement in the region recognises the need for deeper engagement, integrated policy and fresh ideas to drive transformative change in the region in order to address the long-term challenges it faces.

The Australian Government looks forward to continuing to work with our Pacific partners through our development cooperation program to achieve our joint goals.