

**GREENPEACE**

**LOST TIME AND  
DAMAGED REPUTATIONS:  
WHAT AUSTRALIA  
MUST DO TO GO FROM  
**BLOCKER** TO LEADER  
ON LOSS AND DAMAGE**



**GREENPEACE AUSTRALIA PACIFIC**

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### **Cover page:**

Pacific Climate Activists hold an action in  
Vanuatu for Climate Justice during COP26

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Climate leadership and expectations of Australia as an ally to Pacific islands

Swept to power in a widely heralded “climate election” the new Australian Labor Government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, promised to take decisive and effective action on climate change and repair damaged relationships with the Pacific.

To date this has included boosting development assistance to the Pacific by \$900 million between 2022–2026,<sup>1</sup> establishing a Pacific Climate Infrastructure Financing Partnership to support climate related infrastructure and energy projects,<sup>2</sup> and increasing Pacific permanent migration opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

One of the party’s most ambitious campaign promises was an intention to co-host the Conference of the Parties in in the near future with Pacific nations. Upon election, the new Government reaffirmed this commitment, with Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong stating to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Fiji that “we have proposed a bid to co-host a future UN Conference of the Parties with Pacific island countries and [look] forward to future discussions in the region about this idea”.<sup>4</sup>

Hosting a COP presents a golden opportunity for Australia to improve its international reputation on climate change, show leadership on climate diplomacy, showcase homegrown climate and sustainable solutions, boost the post-covid economy via increased tourism, and spotlight the lived experiences and resilience of both climate affected Pasifika and Australian peoples.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to these promises of climate leadership, the new Labor government has signalled its intention to continue to support the mining and export of fossil fuels, opening up 47,000 square kilometres of Australian ocean for oil and gas exploration.<sup>6</sup>

Former Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga told Greenpeace Australia Pacific:

**“I certainly hope that Australia can do much better than this. If it is hoping to host a COP they have the responsibility to seriously make up for the deficit of trust that has been caused in the past and is still being caused even after speaking to the Pacific Island Forum. In order to garner that recognition they have to do much better. Right now, I cannot support that Australia should host any COP, unless it comes up with these improvements, including a commitment to support loss and damage finance.”<sup>7</sup>**

Former Kiribati president Anote Tong and former Palau president Thomas Remengesau Jr also told *The Guardian* in September 2022 that Australia’s bid to co-host a COP is in “contradiction” with its support for new coal and gas projects.<sup>8</sup>

If the Albanese government is sincere in its intention to show climate leadership on the world stage, and to be a “different Australian government” to the Pacific, then it must deliver on a range of climate policies and commitments.

In line with the demands of representatives from 19 Pacific island nations at the Pacific Climate Justice Summit, Greenpeace Australia Pacific calls on the Labor government to:

- 1. Rule out all new coal, oil and gas projects in line with the recommendation of the UN and the International Energy Agency, and support a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, including beginning a managed decline out of fossil fuel exports over time.<sup>9</sup>**
- 2. Align Nationally Determined Contributions with a science backed 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and net zero by 2035.<sup>10</sup>**
- 3. Pay Australia’s fair share for existing international climate finance, increase the transparency of climate finance reporting, and rejoin the Green Climate Fund.<sup>11</sup>**
- 4. Unconditionally support the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on climate change and human rights led by Vanuatu and vote yes for the resolution at the UN General Assembly.<sup>12</sup>**
- 5. Stop blocking loss and damage finance negotiations, and start supporting them. This must include advocating for a dedicated Loss and Damage Finance Facility at COP27, committing funds towards loss and damage, and recognising Pacific leadership on loss and damage by engaging directly with Pacific island nations to understand their needs in the face of the climate crisis.**

The Albanese government must deliver on these commitments to be a true ally to the Pacific. Doing so will demonstrate that Australia's bid to co-host a COP with the Pacific Islands is a genuine partnership. If Australia and the Pacific Islands are not aligned on key climate policies, this could cause issues for their ability to co-host. As the UNFCCC puts it, "these conferences demand an unprecedented level of cooperation and communication within the different departments of the host country government, as well as with their secretariat counterparts".<sup>13</sup> Further, hosting a COP increases international pressure to scale up climate ambition, and as such the Albanese government can expect additional scrutiny from the international community - particularly given Australia's reputation as a climate laggard in previous years.



# Finance for loss and damage: an imperative at COP27

Loss and damage is a key issue for Pacific island nations at COP27.

Heralded as an “implementation COP”, COP27 - hosted in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt - is the first COP in 6 years to take place in the Global South.<sup>14</sup> Increasing global momentum on loss and damage finance throughout 2022 has led to shared hope among climate impacted Global South countries that establishing a Loss and Damage Finance Facility will finally be agreed upon during COP27.

In the lead up to COP27, pressure has built on Australia and other industrialised countries to move from obstructing loss and damage negotiations to supporting calls for the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility.

Since the early 1990s, Pacific island nations have fought for a funding mechanism to compensate for losses and repair damages caused by climate change. These impacts go beyond what can be avoided through mitigation and adaptation, and include damage to the human rights and social fabrics of those on the frontline of the climate crisis.

However, for three decades, progress on establishing a mechanism to provide this finance has been blocked by the very countries most responsible for climate change - including Australia.

At past climate conferences, a coalition of non-European Union developed countries consisting of Australia, The US, Japan, Russia, and New Zealand among others known as The Umbrella Group,<sup>15</sup> along with the UK and EU, have used tactics to ensure a loss and damage finance mechanism does not progress beyond talk due to fears they will have to pay up for historical emissions.<sup>16</sup> This group of nations have been dubbed by Greenpeace Australia Pacific as ‘the Global North Blockers’. Despite its place in the Pacific, Australia has been a key member of this group.

The Albanese-led Labor government has inherited this reputation in the Pacific region, and across the world, as a major blocker on loss and damage finance. At COP27, the Albanese government has a golden opportunity to change tack from previous Liberal-led Australian governments and show leadership on loss and damage.

This report considers Australia’s shameful history on loss and damage, the obligation and opportunity for the country in supporting a Loss and Damage Finance Facility, the risks to the Pacific and the Global South in failing to do so, and how to overcome decades of obstruction at COP27.

In doing so, it found:

- The Global North Blockers, including Australia, have consistently delayed loss and damage finance discussions. At COP19 in 2013, Australia joined the US in blocking loss and damage finance discussions - pushing meaningful discussions of the issue back to 2015. However, when 2015 came around, the Global North Blockers then refused to sign onto the Paris Agreement if loss and damage compensation was mentioned, strong-arming Pacific island nations to agree to a clause that stated the Paris Agreement did not ‘provide a basis for any liability or compensation’ in relation to loss and damage.
- The Global North Blockers have attempted to sidestep responsibilities to pay for climate damages by muddying the waters on the meaning of loss and damage. This has included attempts to include finance for loss and damage within the realm of adaptation finance, despite the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stating that loss and damage goes beyond the limits of adaptation.<sup>17</sup>
- At COP26, Australia joined the US and EU in blocking the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility and instead offered The Glasgow Dialogue, a three-year discussion process without clearly defined milestones or outcomes.
- Loss and damage costs are adding up. By 2030, loss and damage is expected to cost developing countries **AUD \$460-921<sup>18</sup> billion per year**, rising to **AUD \$1.6-2.9<sup>19</sup> trillion per year by 2050**.
- Between 1980 and 2020, Pacific islands experienced **152 climate related disasters**, including floods, storms, and drought, each varying in intensity.<sup>20</sup> On average, a disaster reduced Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by **13.4%** in the Pacific, depending on the intensity of the disaster.<sup>21</sup> However, in some cases, impacts to GDP were much greater, as was the case in 2016 when Cyclone Pam wiped off **60%** of Vanuatu’s GDP.<sup>22</sup> This does not take into account the ongoing effects of slow-onset losses and damages, such as sea level rise, or non-economic losses and damages, such as loss of life.
- Existing climate funding mechanisms are already falling short of targets and have no component to address loss and damage. In 2020, wealthy countries fell short of their target to mobilise **USD \$100 billion per year** (AUD \$157 billion<sup>23</sup>) in climate finance for mitigation and adaptation by **USD \$17 billion** (AUD \$26.7 billion<sup>24</sup>). This finance gap will only widen if wealthy countries continue to fall short on promises. The soaring costs of loss and damage require urgent additional funding far exceeding what has been promised through overseas development assistance, humanitarian aid, and climate finance.<sup>25</sup>

- In some cases, the absence of loss and damage finance has led to some Pacific island nations turning to funding private insurance to protect their populations against climate-induced loss and damage. However, these schemes mean island nations must pay annual insurance premiums which do not cover the full scope of loss and damage, and payouts made through these schemes are often insufficient. For example, insurance paid out to Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam equated to **less than half a percent** of the total damage cost.<sup>26</sup>
- There are many proposed finance sources that Australia could harness to channel funds towards loss and damage. This could include introducing taxes and levies on polluting industries, introducing a tax on windfall profits of fossil fuel companies, and redirecting money spent on fossil fuel subsidies towards loss and damage.<sup>27</sup>
- In the financial year 2021-22, Australian Federal and State governments spent a total of AUD **\$11.6 billion** on subsidies for fossil fuel companies. This money could be channelled towards Pacific island nations to support solutions to address loss and damage.
- Between 2010-2020, Fiji was hit by 9 cyclones costing AUD **\$1.66**<sup>28</sup> billion in losses and damages.<sup>29</sup> The AUD **\$11.6 billion** spent on fossil fuel subsidies in 2021-22 could fund the redress of these damages **six times over**.
- Globally, in 2020, AUD \$9.3 trillion<sup>30</sup> was spent on fossil fuel subsidies.<sup>31</sup> This money could cover the estimated costs of loss and damage in developing countries projected in 2030 (AUD \$460-921<sup>32</sup> billion per year) 20 times over for the lower estimate and ten times over for the higher estimate.

To truly deliver on its promises to take strong action on climate change and support the Pacific, the Albanese Government must support the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility at COP27.



Men working on the construction of a levee with sandbags for protection against erosion in the Maldives.



A stilt village on the coastline of Tai O in Hong Kong, a traditional fishing village on Lantau island, with boats moored at low tide.  
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