

**AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION AND THE GOVERNMENT OF TONGA  
NUKU'ALOFA**

Monday 22 April 2013  
MEDIA RELEASE

**Australia Helping Tonga Out in Hard Times**



HE Mr Brett Aldam, Australian High Commissioner to Tonga and Honourable Lisiate 'Akolo, Minister for Finance and National Planning

The Australian Government has provided the Tongan Government with AUD5 million, equivalent to TOP8.7million, to assist with the salaries of health and education and to support service delivery in these essential sectors.

This was marked by a Joint Press Conference this afternoon between the respective governments, represented by Tonga's Minister for Finance and National Planning, Honourable Lisiate 'Akolo, and Australia's High Commissioner to Tonga, HE Mr Brett Aldam, at the Ministry for Finance and National Planning Conference room.

Australia's support aims to assist the Tongan Government to provide critical education and health services in a challenging financial environment, while Tonga also delivers on its reform agenda.

“The Government of Tonga is extremely grateful to the Government of Australia for the assistance in these critical sectors. The Tongan Government applauds the Australian Government's ability to be able to provide their support through a mechanism that is both support and responsive to the

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Tongan Government's needs. This not only ensures service delivery but provides fiscal space for other Government priorities," said Hon. 'Akolo

Australia provides budget support to the Tongan Government based on the achievement of the government's reform and development agenda and in recent years, Tonga has undertaken a number of important economic reforms to address its economic and development challenges. Nevertheless, in uncertain economic times, and still to fully recover from the global economic crisis, Tonga's economic growth remains slow.

The additional budget support builds on the AUD5 million provided in budget support to education and health sector salaries in the last financial year, in accordance with the Tongan Government's budgeted appropriation.

HE Mr Brett Aldam said the budget support would contribute to Tonga's efforts to build a strong and resilient economy.

"The use of Australia's budget support for health and education sector salaries is in line with two other key priorities in Australia's development assistance program to Tonga. Health and Education are current priorities in the Australia-Tonga Partnership for Development. Australia is pleased to be able to provide a further round of budget support which recognises the Government of Tonga's reform efforts in what remains a tough global economic environment" he added.

Australia is committed to improving the quality of education and health services for all Tongans through the Australia-Tonga Partnership for Development. An estimated 32 per cent of Australia's \$16.35 million bilateral aid program to Tonga in 2012-13 is directed to these important sectors.

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For more information on Australia's budget support to Tonga, please contact Lilieta Takau, ph: 23244, or email [Lilieta.Takau@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:Lilieta.Takau@ausaid.gov.au)

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