

27 July 2009

Media release

The Pacific needs action, not words, from Australia

Australia is at risk of failing its Pacific neighbours on climate change if the Rudd Government doesn't move beyond rhetoric to concrete action on mitigation, adaptation and, ultimately, migration, according to a new report by The Australia Institute.

The report, *A fair-weather friend? Australia's relationship with a climate-changed Pacific*, finds that despite Labor's strong commitments in opposition and symbolic early steps in government, there has since been a disappointing lack of meaningful assistance to Pacific nations.

Next week's meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in Cairns will again put the spotlight on Australia's failure to deliver and its competing claim to regional leadership on tackling climate change.

"As Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Prime Minister Rudd will be expected to move beyond rhetoric and offer real solutions for this increasingly vulnerable region," according to report author Louise Collett.

"In order to secure a better future for Pacific Island communities, the government must enact deep emissions cuts at home, provide adequate adaptation assistance to the Pacific and look to the possibility of providing refuge for those displaced by climate change."

The report's recommendations include:

- That the Rudd Government fulfil its election promise and establish a 'Pacific Climate Change Alliance', which would allow it to lend its middle-power voice to the Pacific during international negotiations
- That the remainder of the \$150 million first pledged in opposition is guaranteed for adaptation-specific activities and is ring-fenced for the Pacific region
- That a percentage of revenue from the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is committed to ongoing adaptation assistance and emergency relief in the Pacific
- That the government consider establishing a new sub-class to the humanitarian intake under the Migration Act which would allow entry and residence for Pacific Islanders displaced by climate change and at risk of displacement.

"While the issue of climate change has become bogged down in political debate in Australia, for the people of the Pacific it is already threatening their way of life.

"No doubt the Pacific leaders that attend next week's Forum will be looking to Australia to prove it is more than just a fair-weather friend," concluded Ms Collett.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Serena Rogers 0421 759 262