

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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Pacific Climate Activists hold an action in
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A MESSAGE TO AUSTRALIA FROM PACIFIC ISLAND YOUTH

To Australia,

The science is clear: our reliance on fossil fuel-driven economic models and our investments into fossil fuels have put us in the position that we are today. Longer droughts and catastrophic floods, unbearable winters, scorching summers, cyclones and hurricanes. All of which are now more frequent, more severe and occur outside of well-established seasonal patterns.

These climate paradoxes are not anomalies, they are our reality.

The reality of the climate crisis is that no one is safe from its impacts. If left unchecked, all countries will continue to face the consequences of climate change. Weather extremes do not discriminate based upon socio-economic status, food shortages are not geographically fussy, and the need for freshwater supplies is something that we all share – we will all be impacted, the only difference is timing.

We cannot continue to see the climate crisis as a problem of the Global South. For far too long, the tenacity and hard work of actors in large ocean states has been rewarded with pity; the Pacific was seen as a problem to be solved – an issue that the Global North could maybe throw a little bit of money at and the noise would die down.

But problems that impact the very fabric of life don't just go away – no matter how highly you tune your brain frequency to ignorance.

There is a glimmer of hope, hope in the form of new-found urgency among our brothers and sisters in parts of the Global North. This hope must be capitalised upon.

COP27 is an opportunity to see stronger action from countries that have been commitment shy; countries who have been so focused on holding onto fossil fuel-driven economies that they have failed to invest effectively into a just transition. Australia is one of these countries. Australia is in a position to reorient its political game and invest in greener industries and technologies, whilst ensuring those whose livelihoods are bound by the shackles of the fossil fuel industry have access to upskilling opportunities.

Climate financing remains a continuous challenge. Simply put, there isn't enough of it, and we are not making it accessible to countries and communities that require it the most.

The commitments made by leaders in the space of adaptation, resilience and loss and damage are lacklustre. We demand genuinely additional and ongoing finance be made immediately available for locally-owned adaptation, resilience and loss & damage measures to ensure proper and continuous solutions that reach the most vulnerable groups and regions. We cannot continue to preach a solutions-oriented, people-centred approach if the efforts of communities are not acknowledged and the processes for their voices to be heard are tumultuous to navigate.

As an ally, Australia has not shown up to support their *vuvale*¹ in the climate fight; this is unacceptable, but not irreparable. Our values remain the same: we want to ensure that our communities continue to thrive, that our environments remain healthy, and that our people have every opportunity to lead full lives.

There is still time for Australia to be our big brother, to call out bad behaviour in the international arena, to invest in loss and damage financing, to commit to a 1.5 degree world, to invest in renewable energy and make this a viable alternative for the Pacific, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

We must ensure that we make opportunities to transition away from fossil fuels available to everyone. Communities on the frontlines, already experiencing climate-induced migration, more severe and more frequent tropical cyclones, and their lingering economic effects, cannot be expected to bear the full burden of this transition. This requires resourcing, time, and effort – unfortunately there is no magic solution. There is, however, an active global society that is ready to take action. It is incredibly important that Australia finds ways of supporting these social movements.

Although it seems that there is much going wrong in the world, we must remember that we can still change trajectory. We need leaders that are brave enough to do better and strong enough to know that they cannot do this alone but only by learning from communities.

This is a small glimmer of hope but hope is never mere, even when it is meagre.

Ernest Gibson

UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change

Don't Let My Home Sink Like the Sun. A poem by Antonia Bhagwan.

Our great pathway has been tainted with oil,
Thick and suffocating,
Trickling down from barges to pour down on our heads
Like false blessings from above
To gather in the creases along our skin
And stain our bodies
With the mark of another's sin.

There is a plague that has begun to swallow my Vanua,
Looming over our skies like a hand around my throat.
To the mountains and oceans and gifts of the land,
To the things that have grown from my soul and my hand.
Manifesting from the grey clouds that do not carry rain,
Brought by the wind from foreign lands
To consume my people.
It came in the cover of the night
As we slept on our frayed mats,
Too tired to hear the beat of the lali and the cries of war.
And the sea rose from her bed,
Unhinging her jaw and opening her mouth like the
gates of Hell
To swallow us whole.

Our ancestors were voyagers who traversed across
the vast ocean
In the hopes of finding a promised land.
We scatter to find the wood to build our canoe
As our land of blessings has withered
From under our feet and been washed away by
the hungry sea.
We are forced to sail like our ancestors
But to a land of false promises,
Leaving my heart in the land and a void in my chest
Through which cyclonic winds pass,
A voice that knows no peace.
Brothers and sisters sit together in the belly of the metal bird
Singing psalms and songs of our islands,
Crying out "Isa isa" as we pass over the ruins of our home.

Dive overboard beneath the rising tide,
Down where the light cannot reach you,
Dive down till your breath escapes you.
Sink beneath the indescribable depths
To find the spirit of the Pasifika,
The spirit which you drowned with your hand
And watched as the bubbles of its final breath
break the surface.

You offer your other hand,
The one free from the blood of our spirit.
Use them to gather the eggshells of our hope,
Shattered onto the flood,
My hands are too shaky to pick them up myself.
You have come with the wind,

Shaking us withered and decaying leaves from our branches,
Leaving our tree behind with no way of return.
Do not offer us a place in a land where we don't belong,
Not when we have watched our brothers and sisters drown.
Do not tell us to burrow into the holes in the dirt, among the
ants and worms,
To lay and try to grow our roots in this foreign soil.

Put those hands of yours down
Before you take whatever little pieces of life we have left,
Or rip out the seeds that may grow into a hopeful future.
You toss a bag of coins at our feet
To fix what those hands of yours have broken,
To build barriers where there is no more foundation,
And towers over the graves of those we have lost.

We mourn for our home.
We mourn for our future.
The moon sinks back into the sea
Before the dawn of the new day,
We sink down into our beds as well
To rest our heads one final time
But there will be no one left to mourn for us.

These are our stories,
Our "Tears of Resilience".
You ask for songs and stories of hope
But we are tired of singing and dancing.
You, a giant among us ants,
You, who is connected to us through the great pathway
Will you sing for us?
Will you tell our story?
Will you make it your own?
Will you fight for us?

Antonia Bhagwan
Daughter of Reverend James Bhagwan

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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 2022-2026,² establishing a Pacific Climate Infrastructure Financing Partnership to support climate related infrastructure and energy projects,³ and increasing Pacific permanent migration opportunities.⁴

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”.⁵

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.⁶

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.⁷

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.”⁸

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.⁹

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.¹⁰**
- 2. Align Nationally Determined Contributions with a science backed 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and net zero by 2035.¹¹**
- 3. Pay Australia’s fair share for existing international climate finance, increase the transparency of climate finance reporting, and rejoin the Green Climate Fund.¹²**
- 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.**
- 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"¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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,¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸
- 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 \$460-921¹⁹ billion per year**, rising to **AUD \$1.6-2.9²⁰ 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.²¹ On average, a disaster reduced Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by **13.4%** in the Pacific, depending on the intensity of the disaster.²² 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.²³ 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 billion²⁴) in climate finance for mitigation and adaptation by **USD \$17 billion** (AUD \$26.7 billion²⁵). 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.²⁶

- 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.²⁷
- 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.²⁸
- 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**²⁹ billion in losses and damages.³⁰ 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 trillion³¹ was spent on fossil fuel subsidies.³² This money could cover the estimated costs of loss and damage in developing countries projected in 2030 (AUD \$460-921³³ 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.

1. INTRODUCTION

In May 2022, the Australian people elected a new government which promised to “end the climate wars.”³⁴ The Albanese government has moved quickly to deliver on that commitment, revamping Australia’s climate position internationally, introducing a new climate policy enshrined in legislation, a reinstated Climate Change Authority,³⁵ a new mega-department to drive climate policy measures,³⁶ an improved Nationally Determined Contribution from a 26-28% reduction in emissions by 2030 under the previous government to a 43% reduction in emissions, and new investments in renewables and electric vehicles.³⁷

The new government also vowed to repair damaged relations with Pacific island nations, promising to “stand shoulder to shoulder with our Pacific family” to address the climate crisis and make up for a decade of climate wrongdoing.³⁸ To date this has included boosting development assistance to the Pacific by AUD **\$900 million** between 2022-2026,³⁹ establishing a Pacific Climate Infrastructure Financing Partnership to support climate related infrastructure and energy projects,⁴⁰ and increasing Pacific permanent migration opportunities.⁴¹ During the Pacific Islands Forum in July 2022, the Australian Government also joined other Pacific island leaders in declaring a climate emergency.

As part of this renewed commitment to its Pacific neighbours, the Australian Government stated its intention to bid to host a joint Conference of the Parties (COP) with the Pacific as early as 2024, presenting an opportunity to showcase its new climate position internationally.

In previous reports and submissions, Greenpeace Australia Pacific has outlined what the Australian government must do to ensure its emissions reductions are in line with the latest climate science,⁴² and to boost the level of support it provides through increased climate finance and greater transparency of climate finance reporting.⁴³ *Lost Time and Damaged Reputations* details the opportunity for the new Albanese government in changing tack on the important issue of loss and damage finance, and how going from a global blocker to a leader is imperative to address the injustices being experienced by the Pacific who contribute the least to emissions.

Since the early 1990s, Pacific island nations, along with countries representing **85% of the world’s population**,⁴⁴ have fought for additional funding to address the losses and damages they are already experiencing as a result of climate change.⁴⁵ However, for three decades, progress on establishing a way to provide this finance has been blocked by industrialised countries - the very countries who are most responsible for the climate crisis.⁴⁶ Australia

has played a key role in blocking loss and damage negotiations at past United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conferences, alongside other major polluters like the United States.⁴⁷

This report details Australia's obligation to pay up for loss and damage finance, Australia's past blocking behaviour at loss and damage negotiations, and the potential sources of Australia's financial contributions - such as the redirection of existing fossil fuel subsidies.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific contends that if the new Australian government blocks loss and damage finance at COP27, as previous Liberal-led governments have done, then the country should not be seen as a climate leader nor an ally to the Pacific. Further, it would call into question whether the new government's bid to co-host a COP with Pacific island nations is a genuine commitment to repair the relationship between Australia and the Pacific.

Drawing upon interviews conducted by Greenpeace Australia Pacific with three United Nations climate negotiators, two former Pacific Island leaders, one international relations expert, and two climate policy experts, and an economic analysis by Professor John Quiggin, *Lost Time and Damaged Reputations* unpacks what the Albanese-led Australian government must do to become a leader on loss and damage.

As a caveat, due to the complexity and intangible nature of non-economic losses and damages such as loss of life and cultural heritage, this report focuses only on the economic losses and damages that can be more readily monetarily quantified.



Impacts of category 4 Tropical Cyclone Donna in Vanuatu, 2017.

© Pedro Armestre / Greenpeace

2. LOSS AND DAMAGE: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Every year, Pasifika communities shoulder the catastrophic impacts of climate change. This manifests as enormous losses to the economies, buildings, infrastructure, and property of Pacific island nations. It manifests as losses to huge swaths of land across low lying islands, depleting fish stocks, destruction of coral reefs, and food insecurity for Pasifika communities. And it manifests as losses of friends and family, cultural heritage, and future aspirations for Pasifika peoples.

For decades, Pasifika communities have adapted to the impacts of climate change using innovative strategies to build resilience.⁴⁸ However, the impacts we are seeing today go beyond the scope of what can be addressed through adaptation, and are only predicted to get worse.⁴⁹ This is loss and damage. This is the reality of the climate crisis.

In the lead up to COP27, loss and damage, and the delivery of funds from major polluters in the Global North to climate impacted countries in the Global South has become a top priority. This issue is of particular importance to our Pacific neighbours due to their ongoing advocacy and leadership on loss and damage finance, but also their continuing experiences of loss and damage.



An aerial view of a village submerged in sea water.
© Muhammad Amdad Hossain / Climate Visuals

2.1 Why is loss and damage a key issue for the Pacific?

Loss and damage is an existential threat, touching on every aspect of the lives and livelihoods of Pasifika peoples.⁵⁰ In an interview with Greenpeace Australia Pacific, Anote Tong, former President of Kiribati highlighted:

“What is happening and what is predicted to happen is going to be a huge challenge to people who would be losing their home and everything that they currently have... It’s about the loss of our heritage, everything that we identify with... we’re talking about huge losses, whole families. At some point in time, maybe the entire nation. Some of it you can count in monetary terms and some of it you cannot because it’s irreplaceable. That’s what Pacific countries have been trying to incorporate into the negotiations.”⁵¹

Loss and damage is a key climate justice issue for Pacific island nations. Global North countries are responsible for an incredible 92% of historical emissions.⁵² In contrast, Pacific island nations are responsible for a mere 0.03% of historical emissions.⁵³ Despite this, they are currently facing the brunt of climate induced loss and damage. Former Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga highlighted the justice elements of loss and damage in our interview:

“We cannot ignore the fact that you pollute in your own country or somewhere else, but the effects may be felt elsewhere, certainly in small island countries.”⁵⁴

Loss and damage is a direct consequence of decades of failure from industrialised countries to take adequate measures to stop using fossil fuels. A Pacific island negotiator, who wishes to remain anonymous, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific:

“This is where we have a failed climate commitment of the world. Basically we’ve allowed profit to continue to drive our policy and decision making spaces in climate change and as a result everybody is now experiencing loss and damage... This is not something that the Pacific is just pulling out of a hat. This is after 30 years of attempts to change the trajectory which have failed and have led to our loss and damage experiences every day.”⁵⁵

The costs of loss and damage are already adding up, and will only get worse. By 2030, it is estimated that loss and damage will cost developing countries between AUD **\$460-921⁵⁶ billion per year.**⁵⁷ By 2050, this cost is expected to rise to AUD **\$1.6-2.9⁵⁸ trillion per year**⁵⁹.

In the Pacific, climate related disasters wreak havoc on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and long-term growth of nations, as frequent devastation diverts economic resources for development towards reconstruction.

Between 1980 and 2020, Pacific islands experienced **152 climate related disasters**, including floods, storms, and drought, each varying in intensity.⁶⁰ On average, a disaster reduced GDP by **13.4%** in the Pacific, depending on the intensity of the disaster.⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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.

Pacific island countries already experience low economic growth, and face mounting external debt. For example, Fiji’s GDP as of 2020 was AUD **\$7.27⁶³ billion**⁶⁴ and its external debt was AUD **\$2.41⁶⁵ billion**⁶⁶. Between 2010-2020, Fiji was hit by 9 cyclones costing AUD **\$1.66⁶⁷ billion** in losses and damages.⁶⁸ This does not include the losses and damages from other climate fueled disasters or slow-onset events occurring during the same period. It is clear that the economic impacts of climate induced loss and damage are financially undermining Pacific island nations.

Currently, there is no dedicated funding to address loss and damage, leaving affected countries reliant upon existing climate finance, humanitarian aid, and international development assistance. These arrangements do not provide a means to address loss and damage, and are already inadequate in meeting their own targets, with climate funding from Global North countries falling short.⁶⁹ In 2020, wealthy countries fell short of meeting their target to mobilise **USD \$100 billion per year** (AUD \$157 billion⁷⁰) until 2025 for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries by **USD \$17 billion** (AUD \$26.7 billion⁷¹)⁷².

In the absence of loss and damage finance, some Pacific island nations have turned to funding private insurance to protect their populations against climate-induced loss and damage. The Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company (PCRIC), for example, provides financing after disaster events to Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu.⁷³

These schemes mean island nations must pay annual insurance premiums which do not cover the full scope of loss and damage. The PCRIC only covers one climate related event - tropical cyclones - and has only paid out four times, totalling a meagre AUD **\$17 million**⁷⁵ since its establishment in 2013.⁷⁶ The company has been criticised for falling short of providing necessary funds to address the total cost of damage, as was the case during Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu where the insurance pay out equated to **less than half a percent** of the total damage cost.⁷⁷

To equitably address the losses and damages climate impacted countries will continue to face, a funding mechanism, referred to as a *Loss and Damage Finance Facility*, has been championed by the Global South at international climate conferences since the 1990s.

This Facility would see those most responsible for the climate crisis deliver new, additional, long-term, and predictable cash flows to support the on-the-ground needs of climate impacted countries.⁷⁸ This would ensure funding for loss and damage on a polluter pays basis - this is the principle that those who produce pollution should bear the cost of repairing damages. As Dr. Wesley Morgan from *The Climate Council of Australia* puts it:

“There’s always been the moral imperative of the argument around loss and damage – the polluters should pay for the damage they cause, and Australia is a polluter.”

Despite this opportunity, progress on establishing a Finance Facility has continuously been blocked by the industrialised countries most responsible for the climate crisis - of which Australia has played a key role.

3. THE LEGACY OF AUSTRALIA'S BLOCKING TACTICS, AND ALBANESE'S INHERITANCE

Within UNFCCC negotiations, a powerful bloc known as The Umbrella Group has stalled progress on loss and damage. This coalition of non-European Union developed countries including Australia, the US, Japan, Russia, and New Zealand among others, formed after the Kyoto Protocol. As a Pacific island nation climate negotiator told Greenpeace Australia Pacific:

“The Umbrella Group is truly the lack of ambition group within the UNFCCC process. You can be almost assured that anything that approaches real practical solutions will be blocked by The Umbrella Group, of which Australia is a part.”⁸¹

Outside The Umbrella Group, Global North countries such as the United Kingdom and countries within the EU, notably Poland, France, and Italy have been involved in blocking loss and damage negotiations historically.⁸² For the remainder of the report, this broad group, including The Umbrella Group, the EU and the UK, will be referred to as the “Global North Blockers”.

3.1 Tactics of the Global North Blockers


The new Australian government has inherited a reputation as a major blocker of progress on loss and damage finance from former Liberal-led governments. The Albanese government has the opportunity to change tack on this issue and instead become a leader.

At past climate conferences, the Global North Blockers have used tactics to ensure loss and damage finance negotiations do not progress beyond mere talk. At COP19 in 2013 when the Warsaw International Mechanism was established, The Umbrella Group, led by the US, insisted discussions of financial compensation could only occur at a later date - pushing the issue back to 2015.⁸³ In a 2013 interview with *The Guardian*, Bangladeshi scientist Saleemul Huq highlighted that “discussions were going well in a spirit of cooperation, but at the end of the session on loss and damage Australia put everything agreed into brackets (not fully agreed upon), so the whole debate went to waste.”⁸⁴ During this same COP, Australia demonstrated its disregard for loss and damage via its inappropriate behaviour in the negotiating room. One Pacific island negotiator we spoke with outlined:

“I’ve been very disappointed by Australia and in fact it was in COP19 when we were sitting in a room and the Australian delegation was laughing at some of the interventions that were being made, they were giggling to themselves ... this is totally unacceptable when we’re talking about an existential crisis like this.”⁸⁵

“I was in that exact room when that happened. The snacking, the violation of the dress code, the laughing when we were making interventions... we are expressing our disappointment around the lack of progress and all of the pushback and blocking happening and then they’re laughing at us while we’re making interventions.”⁸⁶

At COP21 in 2015, the Global North Blockers again slowed progress by refusing to sign onto the Paris Agreement if financial compensation was mentioned.⁸⁷ The US led the push for the inclusion of a paragraph in the Paris Agreement stating the Agreement did not “provide a basis



Activists march at COP23, co-hosted by Germany and Fiji in 2017.

© Greenpeace



A woman holds a sign calling for climate justice at Mt Yasur, Vanuatu during COP26.

© Greenpeace

for any liability or compensation” in relation to loss and damage.⁸⁸ In a 2015 interview with *The Guardian*, Leisha Beardmore, Chief Negotiator for the Seychelles stated “the idea of even discussing loss and damage now or in the future was off limits. The Americans told us it would kill the COP... They have always been telling us: ‘Don’t even say that.’”⁸⁹

The Global North Blockers have also attempted to place funding to address loss and damage within the realm of existing climate adaptation finance.⁹⁰ This stance means funding to address loss and damage could be sourced from existing adaptation finance, sidestepping the responsibility to pay for historical damages.⁹¹ This was highlighted by a former Pacific island negotiator we interviewed:

“We developed a text that was proposed for Article 8⁹² and that required a fair bit of work. Once the US realised that all of the developing countries supported loss and damage, they said ‘well we could incorporate it in the language associated with adaptation’ - to confuse the issue and see it not realised as a separate issue.”⁹³

However, the former Pacific island negotiator explained that this takes away from already underfunded adaptation budgets in the Pacific:

“There’s been a constant and continuous attempt to encourage countries to use adaptation financing windows, allocations and allowances to try to cover these additional and beyond adaptation costs of loss and damage. –Well, we need all of that money for adaptation in the Pacific and not a penny can be spared to go anywhere else but adaptation.”⁹⁴

These tactics are still actively used by the Global North Blockers to stall progress today. At last year’s COP26, efforts to block loss and damage finance discussions reached a boiling point when the Global North Blockers prevented the establishment of a dedicated fund for climate impacted nations, known as the Loss and Damage Finance Facility.⁹⁵ Instead, climate impacted nations were offered

The Glasgow Dialogue - a three-year process without clearly defined milestones or outcomes, which would take place at mid-year climate meetings. As a Pacific island negotiator interviewed by Greenpeace Australia Pacific put it:

“If it wasn’t for the EU and Australia and the US then we probably would have the beginnings of the Finance Facility. What we got instead was this dialogue, which for goodness sake, if we haven’t sorted it out in 30 years how do they expect this Glasgow Dialogue to do anything different. So what we’re hearing right now is that we can’t even talk about Loss and Damage finance because that would prejudge the outcomes of this talk fest which doesn’t end until 2024. The Glasgow Dialogue is a perfect example of another delay tactic by countries, including Australia, to avoid their obligation, their international legal obligation, to fund impacts for climate change in developing countries.”⁹⁶

This year, the first Glasgow Dialogue commenced at the Bonn climate talks - co-facilitated by the US, the biggest blocker of loss and damage finance.⁹⁷ At the Dialogue, discussion about loss and damage was limited to workshops and breakout groups, rather than formal negotiations.⁹⁸ During discussions, the EU and US led an attempt to prevent loss and damage from being included on the formal COP27 agenda.⁹⁹ In an interview with ABC News, Teresa Anderson from Action Aid International stated “rich countries, particularly the EU, spiked the discussion about loss and damage at every single turn... whether it was about setting up a new finance facility, providing funds, organising technical support, or even just including the issue on the agenda for discussion at COP27 later this year, rich countries continued to block, block, block.”¹⁰⁰

But why block these negotiations so vigorously despite consensus among the Global South? When asked why rich countries block, one negotiator stated the Global North Blockers have prevented loss and damage negotiations from actualising into an operational Finance Facility for one key reason - the cost. However, as detailed in Section 5 ‘What are the solutions? Innovative finance for loss and damage’, there are simple means through which Australia can source its contributions to a Loss and Damage Finance Facility that do not add pressure on public finances - including through redirecting fossil fuel subsidies.

Emissions released today do not inflict climate impacts immediately.¹⁰¹ This phenomenon is called climate inertia. Loss and damage experienced today is due to historical stocks of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere - mostly emitted by major polluters during stages of industrialisation, colonisation, and modernisation.¹⁰² Therefore, the Global North Blockers fear that if loss and damage is seriously discussed, they may be liable to pay up for historical emissions.¹⁰³ As Dr Wesley Morgan explains:

“Given the historical responsibility for climate change that wealthy nations have - the US for example, has gotten rich through carbon intensive industry, so over the last 200 years it has been a huge contributor to the loss and damage that poor nations face now.”¹⁰⁴

At COP27, the Albanese government has a clear opportunity to show leadership by supporting the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility and committing funds.



Farmers' Protest in Gerona, Philippines
© Basilio H. Sepe / Greenpeace

4. WHY SHOULD AUSTRALIA CARE ABOUT LOSS AND DAMAGE?

Finance for loss and damage can no longer be avoided. The absence of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility threatens human development gains made in climate-impacted countries, erodes the trust of the Global South in international cooperation on climate change, and puts the survival and human rights of those in developing countries at risk.

These escalating impacts are the direct result of the failure of major polluters like Australia to take action to mitigate climate change and support countries in the Global South to adapt to the escalating impacts.

At COP27, Australia has an enormous obligation to pay for loss and damage for the following reasons:

Australia has historically been a major emitter of greenhouse gases through its domestic and exported emissions.

Each year, Australia emits some of the highest levels of greenhouse gases in the world. The country averages 15.37 tonnes of CO₂ per person, ahead of other major polluting countries like the US.¹⁰⁵ This is a reflection of the Australian government's decades-long failure to take the necessary steps towards transitioning its energy systems, transport structures, industries, communities, cities, and regions towards greener alternatives.

This is combined with Australia's ongoing export of fossil fuels. Australia is the world's largest exporter of metallurgical coal, and is on par with Qatar as the largest exporter of liquified natural gas.¹⁰⁶ In the financial year 2021-22, Australia's profits from fossil fuel exports surged, bringing in AUD **\$422 billion**. This is forecast to reach AUD **\$450 billion** in 2022-23.¹⁰⁷ At the end of 2021, there were 114 new fossil fuel projects awaiting approval, many of which were for the export market.¹⁰⁸ If approved, these projects would release approximately **1.3 billion tonnes** of emissions per year, which is more than two and a half times Australia's annual domestic emissions for financial year 2020-2021.¹⁰⁹ When asked whether the Albanese Government would

support a moratorium on fossil fuels on ABC's 7:30 program, Prime Minister Albanese said "That's not the policy of the Labor Party and we won't be supporting it, because that would have a devastating impact on our economy."¹¹⁰ He elaborated further:

"If Australia today said we are not going to export any more coal, what you'd see is a lot of jobs lost, you would see a significant loss to our economy, significantly less taxation, revenue for education, health and other services, and that coal wouldn't lead to a reduction in global emissions, what you would see is a replacement with coal from other countries that's likely to produce higher emissions... because of the quality of the product."¹¹¹

Alarmingly, this position has also been taken by other Labor Party ministers, including Madeleine King, the Minister for Resources, who stated that:

"At the same time as we strive to reduce emissions, it must be emphasised that continued exploration for oil and gas in Commonwealth waters is central to alleviating future domestic gas shortfalls"¹¹²

And, Pat Conroy, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, who claimed that:

"If Australia stopped exporting coal and gas and it wasn't a commensurate reduction in global demand for coal and gas, there wouldn't actually be a reduction in global emissions."¹¹³

The Labor government's statements on the "quality" of Australia's fossil fuels are concerning. Through rigorous analysis, *AAP FactCheck* found the replacement of Australian coal with a lower quality product would have a small impact on global emissions and would not necessarily lead to an emissions increase as other countries who export coal to a similar or higher quality may step in to fill the gap.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, there is evidence that the continued export of fossil fuels could extend the time taken to transition to renewable energy in countries that purchase Australian exports, therefore extending

the use of fossil fuels.¹¹⁵

Continuing to extract and export fossil fuels into the future is not only harmful to the world, but is also economically unsound. The Reserve Bank of Australia found Australia's fossil fuel exports are at risk of becoming stranded assets as growing net zero pledges from key trading partners diminish demand for Australia's fossil fuels.¹¹⁶ This will have a significant impact on fossil fuel sectors, meaning workers and mining communities in rural Australia would experience heavy economic losses.¹¹⁷

This stance from the Albanese government has been disheartening for those in the Pacific who have otherwise been pleased with the new government's promises. Aote Tong, the Former President of Kiribati, told Greenpeace Australia Pacific:

“I think Australia cannot ignore with any moral consciousness its contribution to carbon emissions via the export of fossil fuels. What we were hearing is that the present government is still going ahead with opening new coal mines. That is disappointing and undermines the trust and confidence we had in what the government was willing to do, how committed it would be.”¹¹⁸

This sentiment was supported by a former Pacific island negotiator Greenpeace Australia Pacific spoke with:

“Stop exporting fossil fuels. It's the drug dealers defence that Australia uses - 'if we don't somebody else will'. It's just not acceptable.”¹¹⁹

Australia has historically been an international climate laggard.

Last year, Greenpeace Australia Pacific's *Pacific Bully and International Outcast* investigation, released during COP26, found that Australia had acted as a bully to the Pacific Family.¹²⁰ For nearly a decade, Australia used its power to weaken regional climate action in the Pacific, pulling out of international climate funds, diluting language in regional climate agreements, slashing Australia's foreign aid budget, and using what was left to buy the silence of Pacific island leaders.¹²¹

Outside of the Pacific region, Australia has historically underpaid its fair share of climate finance, despite its obligation under the

UNFCCC to contribute money to support climate action in developing countries. In 2009, developed countries agreed to mobilise USD **\$100 billion** per year (AUD \$157 billion¹²²) from 2020 through to 2025 to support climate mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

Australia has an obligation to contribute its fair share to this fund. Australia's contribution has been estimated at AUD **\$4 billion** annually,¹²³ but the country has pledged just AUD **\$2 billion** for the entire five year period between 2020–2025.¹²⁴ This works out to an average contribution of AUD **\$400 million** per year, or 10% of its fair share.¹²⁵ This is not enough to support climate mitigation and adaptation in the Global South, let alone loss and damage.

Australia intends to bid to co-host a COP with the Pacific in the near future

During its 2022 election campaign, the Labor party announced its intention to co-host a COP gathering as early as 2024 with Pacific island nations if it was elected. Upon its election, the new Australian 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”¹²⁶

The proposal to host a COP in the near future was recently supported in the Australian government's budget announcement to spend AUD **\$45.8 million** over the next 6 years to “restore Australia's reputation and increase international engagement on climate change and energy transformation issues”¹²⁷

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.¹²⁸

As the largest international event on the United Nations calendar, hosting a COP is a serious commitment.¹²⁹ All eyes will be on the host nation and the actions it has taken to address climate change. If Australia were to co-host a COP with the Pacific, this scrutiny could be magnified. Australia has a well-documented history of being a climate laggard, and is a historical blocker of loss and damage, while the Pacific is one of the world's most climate affected regions and a historical leader on loss and damage.

If Australia and the Pacific are not aligned on key climate policies, this will cause serious issues for their ability to effectively co-host a

successful COP. 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”.

Support for a Loss and Damage Finance Facility is the latest, and perhaps most telling test. If the Australian government fails to support calls for loss and damage finance at COP27, its reputation in the Pacific, around the world, and here at home could be further damaged. Inaction on loss and damage finance at COP27, paired with inadequate ambition on ending Australia’s economic dependence on fossil fuels could damage Australia’s hopes to host a COP with the Pacific in the near future. 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.”¹³⁰

At COP27, pressure is building on the Albanese Government to demonstrate a clear break from previous climate failures and stop blocking loss and damage finance. The Albanese Government must start supporting the Pacific’s calls for a Finance Facility to be established at COP27 - particularly if Australia hopes to host a COP in the near future.

5. WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS? INNOVATIVE FINANCE FOR LOSS AND DAMAGE

To enable a funding mechanism to deliver new, additional, long-term, and predictable cash flows for loss and damage on a polluter-pays basis, innovative financial sources have been proposed by a variety of climate policy and finance experts. These financial sources vary but include:

The redirection of public money spent on subsidising fossil fuels.

With regards to fossil fuel subsidies, every year, governments channel money towards fossil fuel companies to support the ongoing production of fossil fuel products. In 2020, AUD **\$9.3 trillion**¹³¹ was spent on fossil fuel subsidies globally.¹³² This money could cover the estimated costs of loss and damage in developing countries projected in 2030 (AUD **\$460-921**¹³³ billion per year) 20 times over for the lower estimate and ten times over for the higher estimate. This money could cover the estimated costs of loss and damage in developed countries projected in 2050 (AUD **\$1.6-2.9**¹³⁴ trillion per year) five times over for the lower estimate and three times over for the higher estimate.

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.¹³⁵ This money could instead be channelled towards climate impacted countries to support solutions that address loss and damage.

For example, between 2010-2020, Fiji was hit by 9 cyclones costing AUD \$1.66¹³⁵ billion in losses and damages.¹³⁷ The AUD \$11.6 billion spent on fossil fuel subsidies in 2021-22 could fund the redress of these damages six times over.



A man stands knee deep in flood water in a mosque under arches.

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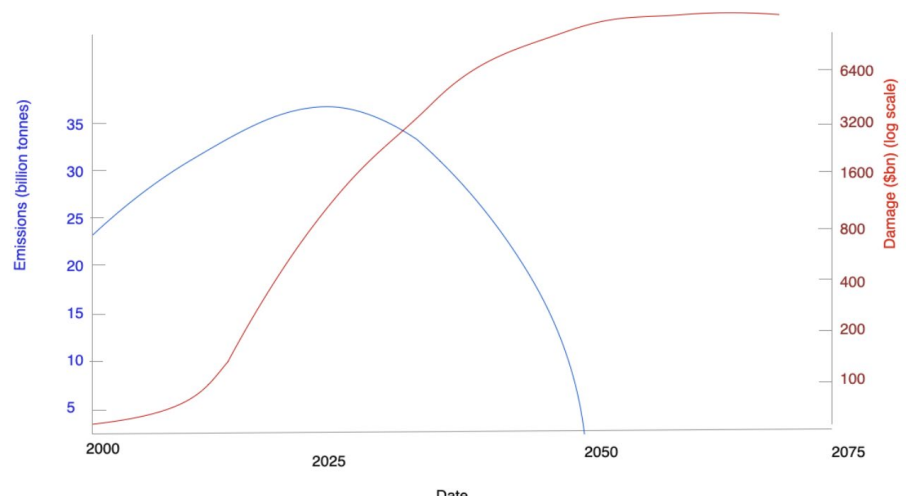
Outside of the scope of this report, climate affected communities within Australia are also not receiving adequate funding to address climate impacts, including during the 2019/20 bushfire crisis and recent Eastern Australian floods.¹³⁸ Funds could be raised using the same mechanisms proposed for a Loss and Damage Finance Facility to support impacted communities at home.

The placement of levies and taxes on polluting industries.¹³⁹

Examples include a climate damages tax applied to fossil fuel companies or a tax on windfall profits of fossil fuel companies.¹⁴⁰ The climate damages tax is a charge applied to fossil fuel companies on the extraction of fossil fuels per tonne, barrel, or cubic litre, based on the amount of climate pollution embedded within the fossil fuel product. In one proposal, a tax of USD \$5 per tonne of CO2 produced commencing in 2021, increasing by USD \$5 (AUD \$7.9¹⁴¹) each year until 2030 where a tax of USD \$50 (AUD \$78.6¹⁴²) per tonne is reached could raise USD \$210 billion (AUD \$333.9¹⁴³) in its first year and would help incentivise the phase out of fossil fuels.¹⁴⁴

Based on the example above, compensation for current damage from climate-related disasters would require a tax of at least USD \$5 per tonne, and this amount would rise rapidly over time as the impacts of climate change continue to worsen. It is important to observe that, assuming the Paris goal of reducing net emissions to zero is achieved, the revenue from a climate damages tax, based on current emissions, must eventually decline to zero. As illustrated by Professor John Quiggin’s analysis in Figure 1, the majority of climate damage will be incurred after 2050, when most countries plan to have achieved net zero emissions.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, additional measures to mobilise funds will be required in the future.

Figure 1: Emissions trajectories (blue) compared to damage trajectories (red) from the year 2000 to 2075.¹⁴⁶



The proposals for the redirection of fossil fuel subsidies and a climate damages tax were recently supported in the Special Rapporteur’s report on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, along with the additional inclusion of cancelling debt for climate impacted countries and closing down tax havens in island nations.¹⁴⁷

By implementing some of these proposed financial sources, Australia could deliver genuinely additional, ongoing finance to address loss and damage that targets major polluting individuals and companies. These forms of finance do not place additional burdens on government budgets and align with the polluter pays principle.¹⁴⁸



A row of men seated on the wet sand at low tide, praying for a benevolent sea, before going fishing.

6. CONCLUSION: MOVING AUSTRALIA FROM LOSS AND DAMAGE BLOCKER TO LEADER

The Albanese government has pledged to be “a different Australian Government” for the Pacific and to take decisive and ambitious action on climate change, setting high expectations against which to be judged.

If the Albanese government wants to demonstrate genuine climate leadership and repair damaged relations with Pacific nations, 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 in October 2022, 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.¹⁴⁹**
- 2. Align Nationally Determined Contributions with a science backed 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and net zero by 2035.¹⁵⁰**
- 3. Pay Australia’s fair share for existing international climate finance, increase the transparency of climate finance reporting, and rejoin the Green Climate Fund.¹⁵¹**

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.¹⁵²**
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.**

In previous reports and papers, Greenpeace Australia Pacific has laid out our emissions reductions demands in line with the latest climate science, as well as calling for increased adaptation finance and more transparency regarding these financial flows from Australia.¹⁵³ In this report, we have focused on Australia's position and obligations regarding loss and damage finance.

Since the early 1990s, Pacific island nations have led the fight to establish a financing mechanism to remedy the surging costs and devastating human impacts of climate change beyond which they can be reasonably expected to adapt. However, for 30 years, the Global North Blockers have prevented progress on loss and damage finance due to their unwillingness to pay up for historical emissions. Sitting alongside major polluters like the US and the EU, Australia has played a key part in ensuring loss and damage negotiations do not progress beyond mere talk.

At COP27, loss and damage finance can no longer be delayed.

Australia has an obligation to pay up for loss and damage due to its historical and present day emissions, and its strong economic standing. Redirecting money from polluters, such as through the redirection of fossil fuel subsidies is a simple means through which Australia could source a large share of its contributions to a Loss and Damage Finance Facility.

To the Albanese Government, Greenpeace Australia Pacific and the wider Pacific region calls on you to be a climate leader and Pacific ally and support the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility at COP27. Doing so will demonstrate that Australia's bid to co-host a COP with the Pacific Islands is a genuine partnership



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.
© Abhishek Desai / Climate Visuals

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- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with a current Pacific Island negotiator, September 21, 2022
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with a former Asian negotiator, September 23, 2022
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with Julie-Anne Richards, September 27, 2022
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with a Former Pacific Island negotiator, September 28, 2022
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with The Hon. Anote Tong, September 28, 2022
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with Dr. Wesley Morgan, September 28, 2022
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific interview with The Hon. Enele Sopoaga, October 4, 2022

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