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AUSTRALIA

End poverty  
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## **MEDIA RELEASE: Budget is a missed opportunity to address regional need**

11 May 2021

Caritas Australia has expressed concern that tonight's Federal Budget has delivered limited new aid commitments at a time when the need in our region is at its greatest.

"Over the past year we have welcomed vital injections of cash and support to fight COVID-19, particularly in the Pacific and Asia where cases and deaths are rising alarmingly," said Kirsty Robertson, CEO of Caritas Australia.

"This rapid response was crucial, and in many cases lifesaving, but we can't afford to decrease the overall assistance now. At a time of increasing hunger, unemployment and poverty globally, we need to step up and prevent further loss of life, and not just from COVID-19. If not now, when?"

"We recognise the valuable support provided by the Australian Government to the region since the beginning of the pandemic, which has helped countries like India, Fiji and Papua New Guinea fight the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19 over the past year."

"Without the significant contribution of PPE and medical supplies to India during the biggest global spike in COVID-19 so far, it's likely that many more lives would have been lost. We welcome its continuation with the two-year package outlined in the budget for India."

"And I am certain that the 10,000 doses of vaccines a week that the government has committed to send to the Pacific and Timor-Leste will make a serious difference to these countries, which have overwhelmed and fragile healthcare systems."

Caritas Australia is disappointed that the Australian Government has not increased funding to Africa and the Middle East where communities are facing similar challenges.

"Over the last year, we have seen devastating impact on people's lives and livelihoods on communities that we work with. We should stand by our neighbours and provide adequate support to vulnerable populations," said Ms. Robertson.

As the crisis continues to evolve worldwide, Australia's investments and support to the global community are crucial to avoid new, more virulent and deadly strains of COVID-19.

"We must look ahead as long-term assistance will be necessary for the slow road back to recovery for the region," said Ms. Robertson.

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