

MEDIA RELEASE - Caritas Australia welcomes Albanese government and increased aid spending

23 May 2022

Caritas Australia congratulates Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Australian Labor Party on winning the federal election and welcomes Labor's stated commitment to foreign aid and the Uluru Statement of the Heart.

"We welcome and congratulate Anthony Albanese on his win. It is heartening for the whole sector to see Labor's commitment to increase aid spending and focus on key areas like gender issues that will really make a difference," said Kirsty Robertson, Caritas Australia's CEO.

In May 2022, Labor committed to spending an additional \$525 million over four years in the Pacific and Timor-Leste across health, education, climate change and economic growth.

"Over recent years the aid budget has been steadily reducing. Unfortunately, this has happened exactly when foreign aid has most been needed to fight the effects of COVID-19, conflict and instability. Labor's commitment to increase aid spending over the next few years, particularly in our region, will have a positive impact on communities who are in sore need of our support. Our partners are especially concerned about the impacts of climate change so it is good to see that Labor has listened to this and prioritised climate change in the aid budget."

Senator Penny Wong announced in April 2022 that at least 80 per cent of Labor's spending will support gender issues like tackling violence against women and girls.

"It is heartening to see that Labor has committed to supporting women and girls in such a tangible way. We know from our experience that supporting the most vulnerable is a highly effective way to improve outcomes for a whole community, and this is something that we welcome."

In the Pacific up to 60 per cent of women and girls have experienced violence at the hands of partners or family members, which rises to over 68 per cent in Papua New Guinea.

"The current rates of violence in the Pacific are unacceptable, and when gender-based violence is occurring at this rate it makes it incredibly tough to ensure that education, health and access to resources are accessible to everybody."

In his victory speech on May 21, Prime Minister Albanese reinforced Labor's commitment to the Uluru Statement of the Heart, a petition by First Australian leaders to change the constitution of Australia to improve the representation of Indigenous Australians and set up a process of truth-telling on national history.

"It is such an important milestone for our country that Labor will commit 'in full' to the Uluru Statement of the Heart. We believe that the best way to create positive change is to listen to those who are most impacted, and so it is vital that we bring First Australians to the forefront of any discussion of reforms and initiatives that will impact First Australian communities and lives."

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NOTE: Kirsty Robertson, Caritas Australia's CEO is available for interview.

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