

**\*\*\*MEDIA RELEASE\*\*\***

## **Australian politicians visit Caritas Australia's program in the Solomon Islands**

21 July 2023

This week a delegation of six Federal MPs and Senators travelled to the Solomon Islands to gain a first-hand experience of Australian aid in action.

The cross-party group of Parliamentarians, including Mr David Smith MP and Hon Kevin Hogan MP, was able to witness how local communities are dealing with the impacts of inequality, climate change and natural disasters.

Vulnerable communities are still facing the consequences of Cyclone Harold, which hit the island in 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The San Isidro Care Centre and the DIVIT Rural Training Centre, with support from Caritas Australia Solomon Islands, have helped hundreds of people gain new skills through gender and disability inclusion, vocational training, and disaster risk reduction training workshops.

"When a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck the Solomon Islands last year, one of the teachers who participated in Caritas Australia's program shared the success of the project, acknowledging that her students immediately knew how to respond," said Dennis Uba, Country Representative Solomon Islands Program, Caritas Australia.

Although the Solomon Islands is a nation surrounded by water, it still experiences drought and water shortages. Around 40% of people in rural areas do not have access to basic drinking water, which can lead to the spread of communicable diseases like cholera and typhoid.

With support from Caritas Australia Solomon Islands, water tanks and rainwater harvesting systems were installed at the San Isidro School and the DIVIT Rural Training Centre to improve sanitation and food security for local communities for many years to come.

"This is a great opportunity for politicians to develop a deeper understanding of the situation in the Pacific Islands, as well as for local communities to exchange knowledge and experience on key issues affecting their livelihoods."

The trip was part of the Australian Regional Leadership Initiative delivered by Save the Children Australia in collaboration with the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other NGOs.

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