



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
NUKU'ALOFA

PRESS RELEASE

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Tongan families being supported by Australia during COVID-19 impacts

Australia has committed an additional AUD203, 000 to address the needs of women and children through the responses to COVID-19 in Tonga.

The additional funding is being provided to the Women and Children's Crisis Centre (WCCC), Tonga National Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC) and the Family Protection Legal Aid Centre (FPLAC) through the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) program.

This builds on the existing partnerships between Australia and the two organisations and will support the ongoing provision of essential counselling services and economic empowerment programs for women in Tonga. The funding is also investing in awareness raising on the issue of violence against women and children.

The Australian High Commissioner, Adrian Morrison, stated that 'during a crisis, an increase in violence against women and children occurs. In responding to this crisis in Tonga, it is critical we find ways to respond to increases in gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, hence Australia's additional support during these times.'

With the additional funds, WCCC will re-establish its operations in 'Eua and supplement its Client Support Fund that is distributing essential goods to their clients affected during this time. This also includes surge support to the community-based counsellor plus the renovation and refurbishment of a new building in 'Eua.

TNCWC will be able to provide additional support to the participants of its Women's Economic Empowerment program, one adapted to the COVID-19 context. This support includes providing training via social media and training resources for the participants.

The FPLAC is utilising the support to facilitate their work under COVID-19 impacts which also includes additional staff to help with increased workloads.

WCCCs' Responding to Violence Against Women in Tonga project, TNCWC's Women's Economic Empowerment project and the FPLAC are all supported by Australia through *Pacific Women*. – ENDS