

- Australia is funding just one-tenth of its global fair share on climate
- A call to pause the Wafi-Golpu mine project
- The New Timber Barons

\*\*

**“The ocean is our life, it is not a dumping ground,  
and neither are we.”**

**~ Reverend Yasam Awara, Head of the Jabem District of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea.**

\*\*



## **AUSTRALIA IS FUNDING JUST ONE-TENTH OF ITS GLOBAL FAIR SHARE ON CLIMATE**

Australia’s investment in climate solutions for the region is falling short at a time when the new Government is seeking to rebuild its reputation with our Pacific neighbours, according to a new report.

In *[Falling Short: Australia’s role in funding fairer climate action in a warming world](#)*, an alliance led by Oxfam Australia and ActionAid Australia has called for the Australian Government to increase its ambition on climate finance, emphasising progressive climate action as vital if Australia is to fulfil its duty as a wealthy country and major polluter.

More than a decade ago, Australia and other wealthy countries promised that by 2020 they would mobilise \$US100 billion per year in climate finance to support vulnerable communities to respond to climate change.

The report highlights that Australia’s international climate funding is currently just a tenth of our international fair share. Australia’s average contributions for 2020-2025 are only AUD\$400 million per year, whereas Australia’s fair share of international commitments would be AUD\$4 billion per year.

Oxfam Australia Chief Executive, Lyn Morgain, said the Australian Government can prove it is serious about climate action and its relationship with Pacific communities by increasing climate finance and ensuring more rigorous reporting rules and definitions in the lead up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in November.

“We know the new Government wants to rebuild Australia’s reputation in our region. We can help achieve this and make a significant difference to the lives of people impacted by climate change by increasing climate finance,” said Ms Morgain.

“The energy consumption of Australians produces eight times as much carbon emissions each year as Pacific Islanders, and yet small Pacific Island states such as the Solomon Islands and Fiji are suffering the full force of the climate emergency.

“Australians value fairness and being a good neighbour, but for years our leaders have been breaking funding promises and stalling on climate action. We need to start paying our fair share and holding ourselves accountable if our statements and arguments are to carry any weight with our regional neighbours.”

The report also calls on Australia to participate more constructively in loss and damage negotiations by throwing its unequivocal support behind a proposal to COP27 from Pacific Island nations, (and 124 other low-income countries) for a stand-alone financing arm to address loss and damage.

Analysis to determine Australia’s fair share of contributions to global climate finance found that Australia should:

- immediately increase our climate finance commitments to AUD \$3 billion over 2020-25 ahead of the next global climate meeting, COP27 in Egypt in November;
- fulfil our fair share of the USD \$100b (AUD \$4b) annually in new and additional funding and honour our existing commitments by 2025;
- support the call of Pacific nations and work to establish a dedicated fund for loss and damage finance at COP27;
- stop subsidising fossil fuels and use savings for climate finance and loss and damage financing;
- ensure money gets put in the hands of those who need it most by increasing transparency and publishing on how much funding is directed to the local level;
- ensure money is given as grants, not loans, to avoid increasing debt distress in the Pacific;
- amplify the voices of those most affected by the crisis, including women, people with disability and other marginalised groups, and ensure they are at the decision-making table.

Sources: *Falling Short: Australia’s role in funding fairer climate action in a warming world* by Sophie Hardefeldt et al, September 2022, [www.oxfam.org.a](http://www.oxfam.org.a)

\*\*

## **A CALL TO PAUSE THE WAFI-GOLPU MINE PROJECT**

Following the earthquake on Sunday 11 September 2022 measuring a magnitude of 7.6, with the epicentre in Morobe Province, a coalition of civil society organisations in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia are calling for all levels of government in PNG to stop moves to progress the Wafi-Golpu mine project until this geological phenomenon is fully understood, and the people of Morobe Province have been adequately consulted, including being made aware of the risks of

deep-sea tailings placement (DSTP) to their communities, livelihoods and health. The proposed pipeline for Wafi Golpu runs through many village communities of Morobe province, through the city of Lae, crossing watercourses and agricultural land and forests, before dumping millions of tonnes of toxic mining waste (tailings) into the Huon Gulf. It would carry 360 million tonnes across the province over at least 28 years.

“This earthquake ranks among the highest of magnitudes ever recorded for an earthquake in Morobe Province. If the 130-kilometre-long DSTP pipeline proposed for Wafi Golpu had been operating on the weekend, it is unknown how many landowners would have seen their land and gardens covered in toxic mining waste, or how many streams and rivers would have been polluted,” said Peter Bosip, Executive Director, the Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights (CELCOR). “The power of the earthquake is shown in the destruction it has caused to buildings and infrastructure and the many lives tragically lost, and urgently demands an assessment of what could happen if something like the DSTP pipeline is built for Wafi Golpu.”

PNG organisations, CELCOR and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG), and Australian organisations, Jubilee Australia and the Mineral Policy Institute, made the urgent call to all levels of government for a pause on Wafi Golpu’s schedule in response to the Morobe Governor’s recent announcement that the legal cases against the Wafi Golpu Project lodged by the former Morobe Provincial Government will be withdrawn, and that the special mining lease will be signed in December this year.

“We are dismayed that the new Morobe Government has taken this backwards step as one of its first,” said Peter Bosip. “Respect for the environment, and respect for the communities which this Government serves, would demand otherwise.”

“Our parishioners depend on the Huon Gulf entirely for their lives. Planning to dump millions of tonnes of mining waste into the ocean – which includes arsenic and lead – and to not adequately consult with them about it, is completely irresponsible,” said Reverend Yasam Awara, Head of the Jabem District of ELCPNG.

The organisations also called for the release of the independent review of Wafi Golpu, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which has never been made public by the national Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA).

“Further, no proper baseline of a social, environmental or economic nature has been developed of the Huon Gulf by the companies, meaning that if anything were to go wrong with Wafi Golpu DSTP, there is no proper way it could be investigated or measured,” said Peter Bosip.

Deep-sea tailings placement is used by less than a handful of countries in the world, and its impacts are still being understood by scientists.

“The message to our government is simple: don’t let the Huon Gulf become an environmental experiment for the mining industry,” said Reverend Yasam. “The legacy that we want to leave for our children, and for our grandchildren, is a simple one. We want them to be able to live in an environment that is clean, healthy and safe. We do not want them to suffer the consequences of choices we make today: to be left with an ocean full of toxic waste, sick from being exposed to heavy metals and unable to support their families. No! The ocean is our life, it is not a dumping ground, and neither are we.”

The Wafi-Golpu Joint Venture is run by Newcrest PNG2 Limited and Wafi Mining Limited, which are both subsidiaries of Australian companies: Newcrest, and an Australian subsidiary of South African company, Harmony Gold. An Environmental Permit lasting 50 years has been granted to the Wafi Golpu Joint Venture.

*Source: CELCOR and ELCPNG press release statement: ‘Say no to Wafi Golpu DSTP: All levels of government must pause the Wafi-Golpu schedule as the deadly earthquake poses catastrophic*

*risks to communities and no consent was given for DSTP by affected communities’, September 21, 2022.*

\*\*

## THE NEW TIMBER BARONS

In the February 2022 issue of the GJOP Pacific Bulletin we looked at a report from Act Now! and Jubilee Australia about the banks financing the logging industry in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Their latest report – *The New Timber Barons: the Companies Logging the Rainforests of Papua New Guinea* - finds that 70% of PNG’s round log exports between 2019 and 2021 were concentrated in the hands of just ten groups of companies, all with strong links to Malaysia.

Over those three years PNG saw 9.5 million cubic metres of round logs shipped overseas – enough logs to fill over 124,000 large shipping containers. PNG has been the world’s largest exporter of tropical round logs since 2015.

PNG’s forests are globally important. New Guinea Island (the eastern half of which is the PNG’s mainland) is home to the world’s third-largest contiguous rainforest and is the world’s most botanically diverse island. The forests of PNG are an important carbon sink and an essential part of global plans to reduce global warming. They also sustain the lives and livelihoods of millions of rural people. Despite their importance, PNG’s rainforests remain under threat from large scale logging.

While the government of PNG has announced its intention to ban round log exports on several occasions, the supporting regulatory framework has failed to materialise. Instead, new logging concessions continue to be approved, with 20 new export licenses issued since 2020. The equivalent of 113 shipping containers of logs are leaving PNG each day.

The report highlights how complex and murky corporate structures make it difficult to work out who is responsible for logging in a particular concession. This poses challenges for landowners who want to hold companies to account for their environmental and human rights obligations.

“This information is meant to be publicly available, but communities are left in the dark about who is cutting down their forests,” says Jubilee Australia Policy Director, Fyfe Strachan.

PNG’s *Forestry Act 1991* requires the PNG Forest Authority to keep a public register with information about logging concessions and the holders of logging licences. While the Act came into force more than 30 years ago, no such register has ever been put in place.

The logging sector in PNG has been criticised for its environmental and human rights record. In 2018, PNG’s Internal Revenue Commission announced a partnership with the OECD to crack down on tax evasion in the natural resource sector and, in 2021, revealed it was auditing 20 logging companies for tax non-compliance. Yet, to date, no fines or other enforcement action have been announced. Meanwhile the log exports continue at a rapid pace.

*Source: ‘The New Timber Barons: the companies logging the rainforests of Papua New Guinea’ from Act Now! and Jubilee Australia Research Centre.*

\*\*

**Pacific Outlook is produced by** the Grail Global Justice Overcoming Poverty Network (Australia). Published in Sydney with 6 issues per year. Contributions to Pacific Outlook and responses to its content are welcomed via the Editor.

**Network Coordinators:** Alison Healey ([info@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@grailaustralia.org.au)) and Mary Boyd ([maryboyd@live.ca](mailto:maryboyd@live.ca))

**Editor:** Rosamund Burton ([admin@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@grailaustralia.org.au))

**Design:** Thanks to Marian Kelly for her donation of time and talent.