



## Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership



Vuvale is the word in the Fijian language for family – in every sense; it means 'my home is your home'. It recognises the respect and reciprocity of our partnership.

Drawing from this deep sense of belonging, the first iteration of the Fiji and Australia Vuvale Partnership was signed in 2019, signalling a commitment to closer cooperation, consultation and friendship between our two nations. This renewed and elevated Vuvale Partnership is guided by expanded key principles:

- we **engage each other with trust, respect, and understanding**;
- we **share responsibility** for delivering programs and policies to achieve our goals;
- we **listen and speak carefully** to understand our respective points of view when differences arise;
- we **acknowledge climate change** is our greatest shared threat and addressing climate change is central to our cooperation;
- we **share in the common wealth** of improved economic and social well-being;
- we **help each other to grow** as individual sovereign states and as partners;
- we **foster closer linkages** including between our people, institutions and societies; and
- we work in a **considered and sustainable** manner that achieves lasting outcomes.

Australia and Fiji are natural partners. To reflect changing priorities and challenges, in 2023 we are renewing our commitment to pass down to the next generation a partnership they will be proud to inherit, based on the following five pillars that provide the bedrock for this work:

- **strengthening our people-to-people links**, which is what makes us vuvale;
- **deepening our economic relationship** to achieve greater prosperity for our people;
- **enhancing our security cooperation** to meet common challenges and maintain a peaceful, prosperous and resilient region;
- **building our cooperation on international and regional issues**, as we safeguard our region as a zone of peace against a changing climate and geostrategic contest, representing the Pacific and its interests on the world stage; and
- **partnering to enable sustainable human development**, in areas such as healthcare, education, gender equality, social inclusion and poverty reduction.

The relationship between Fiji and Australia is underpinned by close and practical cooperation. Our work together recognises the vital importance of an enduring strategic partnership between the two governments and peoples, and responds to our shared priorities, as outlined in this partnership. Our renewed and elevated cooperation is based on trust and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, as we make our best efforts to build and maintain a Pacific region that is peaceful, prosperous and resilient.

We re-commit to this partnership not only as friends and partners, but as family, as vuvale.

Signed in Canberra on 18 October 2023.

**For the Government of Fiji**

The Hon Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka  
Prime Minister & Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate  
Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public  
Enterprises, and Veteran Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF FIJI

**For the Government of Australia**

The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister  
AUSTRALIA

## Partnership Engagement Priorities

This document sets out the commitments made under the Vuvale Partnership that Fiji and Australia agree are of mutual priority between 2023 and 2028. It outlines priority areas of engagement but does not map out all commitments or programs under the bilateral relationship. The Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership will continue to be responsive to emerging priorities and issues.

We will review progress on an annual basis during Senior Officials' Meetings.

### Pillar One: Strengthening our people-to-people links

- 1.1 We commit to frequent **high-level consultations** between our Government and Parliaments. This will include regular bilateral meetings between Prime Ministers as well as the holding of annual Ministerial consultations between our Foreign and Defence Ministers, and Senior Officials' Meetings.
- 1.2 We will promote greater people-to-people linkages, by facilitating **easier two-way travel** and through the proposed Pacific Engagement Visa program.
- 1.3 We will foster engagement between **First Nations' peoples**, recognising the shared culture and kinship of the Pacific. We will support communities and organisations to connect on issues including traditional knowledge related to climate change, health and well-being, culture and creative industries, preservation of indigenous languages, land rights and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- 1.4 We recognise the role of **cultural, social, people's and faith-based organisations** in providing vital community services in both countries. We will build on these, including through the Australian Volunteers Program, the Australian NGO Cooperation Program and the Australia-Pacific Church Partnerships Program.
- 1.5 We will build on existing **sports diplomacy** initiatives, with an emphasis on increasing participation of girls, women and people with disabilities. We will continue to develop pathways for Fijian teams to play in Australian and international competitions (including Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games), support Australian teams to increase their presence in Fiji, and create pathways for emerging Fijian athletes and coaches to benefit from Australia's high-performance coaching and training.
- 1.6 We will continue to enable **twinning arrangements** between government agencies and parliaments, and encourage twinning in civil society organisations.

### Pillar Two: Deepening our economic relationship

- 2.1 We commit to expanding opportunities for **two-way investment and support for private sector growth** in our countries and expanding our trading relationship.
- 2.2 We will continue to work together to maximise **trade and market access**, and on critical economic sectors for our countries and the region, such as banking. Australia commits to supporting Fiji to meet Australian standards and undertake market research to help promote and strengthen trade and market access for Fijian products within the region and into other international markets.
- 2.3 We will work together to support Fiji's priority **economic reform** efforts which are critical to promote long-term sustainable economic development.
- 2.4 Enhanced **labour mobility** is a shared priority in the economic relationship. We commit to work together to ensure labour mobility programs are mutually beneficial, meet the joint economic and social outcomes desired by workers, industries and both countries, and ensure a skills dividend to Fiji.
- 2.5 We will examine issues relating to **double taxation**.
- 2.6 We commit to expanding our joint activities to build prosperity, resilience and support for trade and investment in the Pacific. We commit to our continued engagement with the **Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** and to discussing Fiji's possible participation in the **Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus**.
- 2.7 We will work together, with likeminded partners and multilateral development banks, to support Fiji's nation-building priorities through quality, sustainable and transformative **infrastructure development**. The Australian

Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) will continue to pursue opportunities for project financing with the Government of Fiji, state-owned enterprises and private-sector proponents.

- 2.8 We will continue to enable enhanced engagement between the Australia-Fiji and Fiji-Australia **Business Councils** to identify opportunities to expand trade and investment links, and address economic issues as they arise.
- 2.9 Australia commits to expanding **education and skills pathways** for Fijian students and workers.
- 2.10 We recognise the significance of the **agriculture and fisheries sectors** to the economies of both countries and the livelihoods and health of our societies. We commit to expanding opportunities for collaboration on programs contributing to regional food security and strengthened rural livelihoods.

### **Pillar Three: Enhancing our security cooperation**

- 3.1 We reaffirm our commitment to closer **defence, border security, policing, cyber security, maritime security, law and justice, and intelligence cooperation**. We welcome the cooperation between the Australian and Fijian defence forces, police forces and border security agencies through enhancing interoperability, leadership training and exchanges, curriculum development and joint responses to emerging regional needs and priorities. We agree to a closer and enhanced partnership on cyber security and critical technology issues.
- 3.2 We will continue cooperation between the Australian Defence Force and Republic of Fiji Military Forces on **peacekeeping missions**, continuing joint training activities and intelligence cooperation during deployments.
- 3.3 We will continue to enable further areas for **joint police training and activities**.
- 3.4 We commit to build on a sustained history of partnership and joint operational activities between Australia and Fiji to reinforce the integrity of our **borders**.
- 3.5 We agree to supporting one another, where possible, with **key infrastructure challenges** to enable our defence, security, policing, cyber security, critical technology, and border forces to effectively manage the risks to our sovereignty and region.

### **Pillar Four: Cooperating on regional and international issues**

- 4.1 Australia and Fiji acknowledge the challenges facing our **Blue Pacific Continent** and the importance of tackling these challenges together. Noting that peace and stability in the Pacific region are interlinked with global peace and stability, we commit to working closer together to ensure a **Zone of Peace** and maximise the benefits of Pacific-led solutions to Pacific issues.
- 4.2 We resolve to continue working together, and with other Pacific countries, to strengthen the **Pacific Islands Forum**. Engagement and discussion in this Forum, respecting the Pacific's institutional architecture, and dialogue with one another is central to navigating our collective challenges, into the future. Australia recognises Fiji's role as host country of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
- 4.3 We reaffirm our shared commitment to implementing the **2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent** and the **Boe Declaration on Regional Security**, recognising the importance of Pacific solutions to Pacific challenges. We commit to provide leadership on regional security issues through regional bodies.
- 4.4 We reaffirm our joint commitment to bilateral, regional and global action on **climate change and building climate resilient societies** in both Australia and Fiji. We will meet our Paris Agreement commitments, and support global ambition on mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage. We will continue to support each other through joint training, knowledge sharing and technical assistance, particularly in relation to energy transition, carbon markets, access to climate finance, sustainable agri-food systems and marine resources. We will use opportunities in bilateral and multilateral fora to advocate for Pacific interests and in support of sustainable futures for all people of the Pacific.
- 4.5 We pledge to work closely in **regional and multilateral forums** and commit to continue advocating for small island states' appropriate access to development and climate finance, including through multilateral development banks and funds.
- 4.6 We commit to come to each other's assistance and work together following significant **disasters** in either of our countries or the region, including through the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath and the provision of support for recovery and reconstruction efforts.

- 4.7 We commit to work together to support regional efforts to attract long-term investment in **infrastructure** and critical economic sectors to the Pacific that is transparent and fair, upholds robust regional standards, creates local employment and builds local skills, meets genuine needs, and avoids unsustainable debt. Our joint infrastructure projects will be low-emission, as well as climate-focused and disaster resilient.
- 4.8 We commit to work together to uphold **international law and principles**, as reflected in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other core international human rights treaties and many other international instruments.

## **Pillar Five: Partnering to enable sustainable human development**

- 5.1 We will work together to strengthen our **health systems** through sharing best practices and strengthening capacity building and capacity development opportunities to secure long-term health outcomes and make progress towards universal health coverage – ensuring affordable, accessible and quality health services for all. Australia commits to continue aligning its health program support with Fiji's priorities.
- 5.2 Australia and Fiji recognise the significant impact of, and our ongoing support for, our **education, skills, training (including technical skills training and accreditation) and research partnerships**. We commit to strengthening cooperation between Australian and Fijian education systems and institutions to support Fiji's education and training priorities to develop the skills and technical competencies needed to drive development and economic growth. We commit to working together to improve education for all.
- 5.3 We will continue to work together to ensure that **women** are able to participate fully and freely in political, economic and social life. We commit to the implementation of our respective National Action Plans to End/Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and meeting our obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We will work together and with civil society, non-governmental organisations and the private sector to increase women's leadership and decision-making opportunities and strengthen women's economic advancement.
- 5.4 We commit to working together to strengthen Fiji's **social protection** programs and delivery systems to improve the wellbeing of groups in vulnerable situations, in particular for women, children and people living with disability during times of crisis.
- 5.5 Australia and Fiji will work together to ensure **development programs** are collaboratively designed, reflect shared priorities, are effective, efficient, and jointly evaluated.
- 5.6 We commit to strengthening our cooperation and collaboration in support of a **free and robust media**.