

MEDIA RELEASE



MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC

Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

23 March 2018

ADDITIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO TONGA

Tropical Cyclone Gita hit Tonga on 12 February, damaging almost 4,000 houses and leaving 60,000 people without power.

Today we announce a \$10.5 million package of Australian support to assist Tonga's recovery and reconstruction efforts following the cyclone.

This additional package of assistance will help restore community infrastructure such as schools and water supplies, and support farmers whose crops were devastated.

The first Australian Defence Force flight arrived within 24 hours of the cyclone hitting Tonga. Since then Australia has delivered over 135 tonnes of vital Australian and partner humanitarian supplies such as kitchen goods, emergency shelters, and hygiene and dengue-testing kits.

We have observed the positive impact of Australia's assistance, including the outstanding work of electrical lines technicians made available by Australian energy companies.

Australian technicians, working alongside counterparts from Tonga and New Zealand, have played a critical role in restoring power to more than 90 per cent of affected premises. In February, Tongan authorities estimated that without external assistance restoration of power would take up to three months. Working together over five weeks, this job is now nearly complete.

The new package of assistance announced today brings the total value of Australian support to assist Tonga's recovery following Tropical Cyclone Gita to \$14 million. We will always stand by Tonga and our neighbours in the Pacific in times of need.

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