



MEDIA RELEASE

**THE HON BILL SHORTEN
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
MEMBER FOR MARIBYRNONG**

**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
SHADOW MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MEMBER FOR SYDNEY**

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

PACIFIC ISLANDS VISIT

Today, the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten will travel to the Pacific Islands with the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development, Tanya Plibersek, and the Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Richard Marles.

The dangerous consequences of climate change is no more evident than in the Pacific region.

That is why in the lead up to the Paris Summit on climate change we will be visiting our partners in the Pacific to see first-hand the impacts of dangerous climate change and call on stronger action by our government.

We will be travelling to Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, Majuro in the Marshall Islands and Tarawa in Kiribati.

We will be highlighting and assessing the impact of climate change in our region ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference which will be held in Paris later this year.

Pacific leaders have consistently identified climate change as the greatest threat to their livelihoods, food production, housing, security and well-being.

This is a serious problem that demands serious attention.

According to the World Bank, of the top 20 countries with the highest average annual losses to GDP from disasters, eight are Pacific Island countries.

As a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Australian Government needs recognise the significant challenges facing Pacific Island countries and territories, and work with local communities and national governments to support a global response.

For countries like Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands as well as individual islands within Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Solomon Islands, climate change is a threat to survival.

All of the land area of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, and 97 per cent of the land area of Kiribati, is less than five metres above sea level.

We have a responsibility to act by taking serious action on climate change, not adopt weak policies that are designed to appease the far-right of the Liberal-National parties.

The leaders of the Pacific Island nations deserve Australia's action, not insults.

A recent Oxfam report noted that in Kiribati, in February 2015, one of the nation's four hospitals were flooded, a critical causeway connecting two parts of the capital was damaged, food crops damaged, and already scarce freshwater supplies contaminated.

A very high proportion of Pacific communities— almost 90 per cent in Papua New Guinea, and around 80 per cent in the Solomon Islands – live in rural and remote areas making them especially susceptible to shifting rainfall patterns, degradation of marine ecosystems through ocean warming and acidification, and other impacts of climate change.

Significantly, evidence shows that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change and by disasters.

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