



Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership



'Vuvale' is the word in the Fijian language for 'family' - in every respect; it means 'my home is your home'.

Drawing from this deep-seated sense of belonging, Fiji and Australia aspire through this Vuvale Partnership to a new era of elevated cooperation, consultation and friendship between our two nations.

Australia and Fiji are natural partners. This Partnership affirms our shared ambition to use this connection as the basis for a new, higher level of cooperation. The Vuvale Partnership will be founded on, and guided by, a number of key principles:

- we will **engage each other with trust, respect, and understanding**;
- we will **share responsibility** for delivering programs and policies to achieve our goals;
- we will **listen and speak carefully** to understand our respective points of view when differences arise;
- we will **share in the prosperity** of improved economic and social well-being;
- we will **help each other to grow** as individual sovereign states and as partners; and
- we will work in a **considered and sustainable** manner that achieves lasting outcomes.

Together, we will endeavour to pass down to our children 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';
- **enhancing our security cooperation** to meet common challenges and maintain a secure region;
- **deepening our economic relationship** to achieve greater prosperity for our people;
- **building our cooperation on international and regional issues**, as we pledge to safeguard a sovereign region and represent the Pacific and its interests on the world stage; and
- **fostering closer institutional linkages in support of strong and inclusive societies**.

The relationship between Fiji and Australia over the coming years will be underpinned by close and practical cooperation. Our shared work will recognise the vital importance of an enduring strategic partnership between the two governments and peoples, and responds to our shared priorities, as outlined in [Annex A](#). This cooperation is based on trust and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, as we make our best efforts to build a Pacific region that is secure strategically, stable socially and economically, and sovereign politically.

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

Signed in Canberra on 16 September 2019.

For the Government of the Republic of Fiji

Rear-Admiral (Ret'd) Hon. J.V. Bainimarama

Prime Minister and
Minister for i-Taukei Affairs and the Sugar
Industry of Fiji

For the Government of Australia

The Hon Scott Morrison MP

Prime Minister and
Minister for the Public Service of Australia

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ANNEX A

Pillar One: Strengthening our people-to-people links

1. To better reflect the strength of our modern partnership, we commit to deepening bilateral political cooperation through frequent high-level consultations between the Government, Parliament and political parties of the Republic of Fiji, and the Government, Parliament and political parties of Australia. 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' Talks.
2. These regular, high-level meetings will maximise the opportunities to exchange views on issues of importance to both Australia and Fiji, including foreign affairs, trade, economics, defence, border security, policing, law and justice, science and technology, education, research and innovation, agriculture, climate change, labour mobility, heritage and arts, and tourism. These high-level meetings will assist the monitoring and implementation of this arrangement, and complement existing bilateral exchanges between our institutions of government.
3. We will promote greater people-to-people linkages through facilitating easier travel between our two countries. Australia is pleased to extend streamlined processing for Fijian political, business and sporting leaders under the Pacific Australia Card. We commit to renegotiating our Air Services Agreement to provide further opportunities for Australian and Fijian travellers, and to examine further opportunities to enhance cooperation in the tourism sector.
4. We recognise the close bonds and shared passion for sport between our countries. We will work towards the development of sports programs that focus on strengthening our people-to-people links. We will explore opportunities to develop pathways for Fijian teams to play in Australian competitions, support Australian teams to increase their presence in Fiji, and create pathways for emerging Fijian athletes to benefit from Australia's high performance coaching and training. We will explore opportunities for technical assistance including secondment and work closely together to examine further support pathways for elite sportspeople, teams and sports professionals to further build these links.
5. We also 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 in the future, including through the new Australia-Pacific Church Partnerships Program and the Australian Volunteers Program.
6. We recognise the strength of our cultural exchanges in helping to build the strong multicultural societies present in both countries today. The interactions between our countries have led to stronger and more accepting national communities and identities in both Australia and Fiji.

Pillar Two: Enhancing our security cooperation

7. We confirm Australia and Fiji share a strategic interest in ensuring the Pacific is a peaceful, stable and secure region. To this end, we reaffirm our commitment to closer defence, border security, policing, law and justice, intelligence and security cooperation. We welcome the cooperation between the Australian and Fijian defence forces, police forces and border security agencies.
8. Australia and Fiji reaffirm their enduring commitment to work together to build the professionalism, capacity and capabilities of our armed forces. Australia's Defence Cooperation Program with Fiji will continue to focus on training in maritime security, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. We are committed to the redevelopment of Fiji's Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp into a regional

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hub for peacekeeping training and pre-deployment preparation, and the provision of Guardian-class Patrol Boats to Fiji through the Pacific Maritime Security Program.

9. Australia and Fiji recognise the significant contribution, service and sacrifice of each country to global peace and security through peacekeeping missions. In acknowledgement of this, we announce our decision to enter a peacekeeping partnership. We will support joint Australian Defence Force - Republic of Fiji Military Forces deployments on peacekeeping missions, further joint training activities and intelligence cooperation during deployments. We will examine further options to support peacekeeping missions and to help keep our peacekeepers safe.
10. We welcome the strong history of cooperation and operational exchanges between the Fijian Police Force and Australian Federal Police, both bilaterally and through regional mechanisms. We will continue to examine further areas for joint police training and activities, including through the Australian Institute of Police Management's new Pacific Faculty.
11. We will continue strengthening bilateral cooperation efforts to address transnational crime, including drug smuggling, money laundering, cybercrime, human trafficking and terrorism. We will also collaborate on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We will achieve this through the exchange of operational intelligence and other information sharing, as well as training, twinning programs and exchanges on legal policy and enforcement measures.
12. Australia and Fiji affirm their intent to increase cyber security cooperation, to maximise protections and opportunities for the Pacific in the digital age. We will work to identify opportunities for cyber capacity building that promote an open, free and secure internet, while working to protect the data and privacy of its users in both of our countries.
13. Australia commits to support Fiji through delivering a comprehensive border security assistance package, including increased training and capacity building for Fijian border security agencies, advanced passenger screening and document examination tools, new equipment to support improved border capability and secondments of Australian officers to border security agencies in Fiji and vice versa. This program builds on a sustained history of mentoring and joint operational activities between Australia and Fiji to reinforce the integrity of their borders.

Pillar Three: Deepening our economic relationship

14. With the involvement of all key stakeholders, we commit to engage in deeper bilateral trade and investment through enhanced liberalisation and integration measures, including negotiating modern trade-related agreements, creating economic opportunities for women, people with disabilities and young entrepreneurs and exploring areas of social impact investment, to provide greater prosperity and financial security for the people of Fiji and Australia.
15. We welcome the establishment of annual Government-Business Working Groups and 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. We acknowledge the importance of strong institutional and business-to-business links as underpinning the trade and investment relationship, and commit to support this through further two-way trade missions between Australia and Fiji.
16. In line with the findings of a joint trade and economic scoping study, we commit to enhancing trade connectivity and market access, including examining issues relating to double taxation, developing pathways for agricultural market access and biosecurity standards. We will support new and existing initiatives to promote integration into regional and global markets, for both new and existing exporters, and to address non-tariff barriers that unreasonably restrict trade in goods

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and services. We will work together to enhance the protection of intellectual property rights for businesses operating in both countries. We will also continue to build a mutually beneficial agriculture partnership, including through joint research and technical assistance that improves our agricultural capability and competitiveness.

17. Australia recognises the significant achievements of Fiji in developing its economy, reducing poverty and moving towards high-income country status. Fiji appreciates Australia's long-standing development assistance that has focused on increased private sector development and improved human development in Fiji. We commit to moving beyond these achievements in pursuing a modern economic partnership that meets both partners' aspirations.
18. We will work together, with international partners and multilateral development banks, to support Fiji's nation-building priorities through quality, sustainable and transformative infrastructure development. This includes supporting the utilisation of increasing digital connectivity to build new businesses, diversify economies and increase inclusive access to services. The newly-established Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific will continue to explore opportunities for project financing with the Government of Fiji, state-owned enterprises and private-sector proponents.
19. Enhanced labour mobility is a shared priority in the economic relationship, providing direct benefits to both countries. Australia recognises the valued contribution of Fijian workers in meeting Australian labour demand through the Seasonal Worker Programme.
20. Australia and Fiji commit to support the inclusion of Fijian workers in the new Pacific Labour Scheme, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on 5 April 2019. The scheme allows Fijian workers to take up non-seasonal work opportunities in rural and regional Australia for up to three years, to earn income and develop skills which will benefit their families and communities back home. We commit to work together to expand the uptake of opportunities by Fijian workers into the future and to monitor the welfare of Fijian workers under these labour mobility programs. We will also work together to ensure the smooth transition and reintegration of workers and their families to ensure maximum benefits for those involved in the programs.

Pillar Four: Cooperating on regional and international issues

21. The strength of the Australia-Fiji bilateral relationship is rooted in our common membership of the wider Pacific family. We acknowledge regional partnerships are necessary to achieve our shared goal of a region that is secure strategically, stable economically and sovereign politically.
22. We emphasise the centrality of the Pacific Islands Forum as the key leaders-led forum for discussing regional strategic, political and economic issues. We resolve to work together, and with other Pacific countries, to strengthen it into the future. Australia recognises Fiji's role as host country of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and is pleased to support Fiji's intention to chair the Forum again in the future.
23. We reaffirm our shared commitment to implementing the regional security framework adopted by Pacific leaders under the 2018 Boe Declaration, building upon the 2000 Biketawa Declaration. We commit to provide leadership on regional security issues through regional bodies, including the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, the Pacific Immigration Development Community, the Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network, the Oceania Customs Organization and the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre.
24. We commit to undertake joint activities to build understanding and support for multilateral and regional rules to enhance trade and investment in the Pacific. Australia welcomes Fiji's ongoing

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consideration of joining the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus, the Pacific's first comprehensive free trade agreement, covering goods, services and investment.

25. We commit to work together to support regional efforts to attract long-term investment in infrastructure to the Pacific that is transparent and fair, upholds robust standards, meets genuine need and avoids unsustainable debt.
26. We pledge to work closely in the United Nations, including during our common membership of the Human Rights Council, and other international bodies, to represent Pacific views on issues.
27. 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, other core international human rights treaties and many other international instruments.
28. We commit to continue advocating for small island states' appropriate access to development and climate change finance, including through multilateral development banks and funds.
29. As members of the Commonwealth, we also recommit to work together to strengthen cooperation within the Commonwealth family to address issues of common interest.
30. Australia recognises Fiji's global climate change leadership since its Presidency of the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change. We pledge to continue working together in line with our respective commitments under the Paris Agreement.
31. We reaffirm our joint commitment to bilateral, regional and global action on climate change, including disaster response, preparedness and risk reduction activities, and food security. We will continue to work towards building climate resilient societies in both Australia and Fiji. To achieve this we will support each other through joint training, supplies and technical assistance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to protect our blue continent, the Pacific Ocean, to enhance renewable energy production, and to increase access to finance to help communities to adapt to the impact of climate change. We will make sure future joint infrastructure projects are low-emission and climate resilient. We will support regional efforts, including the Pacific Resilience Partnership, the hosting of civilian-military workshops on disaster response and exploring ways to address marine plastics.
32. Both Australia and Fiji commit to come to the assistance of the other in response to future natural disasters that may befall either country, including through the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath and the provision of further support for recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Pillar Five: Fostering closer institutional linkages in support of strong and inclusive societies

33. Australia and Fiji recognise the importance of strong, modern civil services to improve the delivery of public services and to support the development of institutions of good governance. In support of this, we will increase twinning arrangements between government agencies and support the application of new technologies to improve the work of our governments. Australia further commits to increase the share of its development assistance to Fiji delivered as budget support for implementation of these services.
34. As signatories to the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration, we will work together to ensure that women are able to participate fully and freely in political, economic and social life. We will

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work with civil society and non-governmental organisations, government institutions and the private sector to eliminate violence against women, increase women's leadership and decision-making opportunities, and strengthen women's economic advancement.

35. We both recognise the central role a free and robust media plays in upholding the democratic principles in our societies, and commit to strengthening our cooperation and collaboration in support of this and in generating understanding of each other's cultures and people.
36. Australia and Fiji recognise the significant impact of, and our ongoing support for, our education, training and research partnerships. This includes the large number of Fijian alumni of Australian education institutions and vocational training centres, many of whom have completed their studies through the Australia Awards Program or the Australia Pacific Training Coalition. We reiterate the importance of our partnership with the University of the South Pacific and acknowledge Fiji's leadership in hosting its central campus. We commit to continue providing these support programs, including through the Fiji National University, that meet our human resource development priorities, improve the quality of teacher education, invest in the young people of our countries, and develop the skills and technical competencies needed to drive development and economic growth in an increasingly interconnected global economy.
37. We reaffirm the importance of educational exchange programs, such as the New Colombo Plan and BRIDGE School Partnerships Program, noting the importance of young people in building networks between our countries. We will examine the potential for further future exchanges, including at a secondary school level.
38. Australia commits to continue aligning its health program support with Fiji's strategic objective to improve service delivery, in particular for vulnerable groups, including the elderly and persons with a disability. We will work together to strengthen health policy, financing, planning, information systems and data, procurement and supply processes, leadership, management and workforce development in both countries through sharing best practices and strengthening capacity building opportunities. We will examine further programs to bolster regional health security outcomes.
39. We will continue to promote mutually beneficial cooperation in science and technology to promote information sharing and support for high-impact innovations.