



# Sustainable Population Australia

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## **Ignoring the major while emphasising the minor: population increase in Pacific nations**

The emphasis which the Federal Government is placing on sea level rise affecting Pacific Island nations, swinging \$1 billion from foreign aid for adaptation purposes is seriously misplaced says environment NGO, Sustainable Population Australia (SPA).

National president of SPA, Sandra Kanck, says that greater long-term good could be achieved if this money was used to address a far more serious, immediate, as well as long-term problem affecting these people.

As an example, the population of the Pacific Island nation, Kiribati, has more than trebled, from 30,000 in 1960 to 105,000 in 2014. This means that even without climate change or sea level rise each member of that population now has access to less than one third of the land, less than one third of the fresh water and less than one third of all the other resources, such as fish stocks, than they did just 55 years ago.

Thirty four percent of Kiribati's population is under 15, still to enter their reproductive years. Without strong family planning tied to limiting the size of families the current rate of population increase of 1.25% is likely to continue for many years. At this rate the population will double by 2071 to 210,000 thereby halving the existing meagre resources available to each person compared with today. Yet only a quarter of all couples use modern contraceptive methods.

This pattern of population growth is common across most of the Pacific Island nations. It presents a far more serious and more immediate problem than sea level rise.

It would be far better use of Australia's one billion dollars if this money was used to ensure that all Pacific Island people had access to family planning, contraception and an understanding of how population growth reduces every person's share of finite resources.

As sea levels rise - as they inevitably will given the failure of governments around the world to take the necessary more stringent action - redirecting aid in this way would help to ensure that far fewer people would be impacted by this and other climate changes. Any other adaptive solutions developed would be easier to apply.

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**About Sustainable Population Australia:** SPA is an independent not-for-profit organisation formed in 1988 to promote an understanding of the effects of human population numbers on the biosphere and society.