

Item 3.2

Donation to Tonga Disaster Appeal

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On 14 January 2022, the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha’apai volcano erupted on an island in the Tongan archipelago in the southern Pacific Ocean that created a vast ash cloud across the nation. The eruption reached a powerful climax on 15 January 2022, that caused tsunamis in Tonga, Fiji, American Samoa, Vanuatu, and along the Pacific rim, including damaging tsunamis in New Zealand, Japan, the United States, the Russian Far East, Chile, and Peru. At least three people were killed, some were injured, and many remain missing in Tonga from tsunami waves that were up to 15 metres high.

On 19 January 2022, the Government of Tonga issued a State of Emergency. Water supplies are seriously affected by volcanic ash, houses are destroyed and around 60 to 70 per cent of livestock have perished because grazing land is damaged. While international communication links to Tonga are being restored, a severed undersea cable will take time to fix, and inter-island communications are challenging with limited satellite and radio links.

I extend my deepest sympathy to the families of the victims who lost their lives, as well as to all the communities who have lost their homes and livelihoods from the volcanic eruption and tsunami.

The United Nations has called on the international community to help Tonga’s people. They say they are going to need sustained support responding to a disaster of this scale. It is evident that the volcanic eruption and tsunami have caused significant damage to the remote island communities and relief supplies will be needed over the coming weeks and months. We have a close and special relationship with our Pacific neighbours, and they need our support.

I recommend that the City of Sydney donate \$50,000 to the Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited (ABN 35 060 581 437) as part of UNICEF Australia’s Tonga Recovery Appeal, and \$50,000 to Oxfam Australia (ABN 18 055 208 636) who have established an international crisis fund for Tonga. Both are registered charities on the Australian Council for International Disaster register.

Our donation to UNICEF would support emergency supplies including water, sanitation, and hygiene kits, as well as recreational kits for children that provide psychosocial recovery.

Our donation to Oxfam would be directed to their International Crisis Fund donations, to support the affected areas. Oxfam is working with local partners on the ground in Tonga to support life-saving food distributions, clean water, shelter, hygiene kits, cash assistance and other essential items.

These donations comply with the City of Sydney Humanitarian Emergency Response Guidelines, adopted by Council in August 2010, the Support for Charities Guidelines which were approved by the Chief Executive Officer in May 2018, and are in line with previous donations.

These donations are also consistent with the Draft Support for Charities Policy.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council donate:
 - (i) \$50,000 to the Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited as part of their Tonga Recovery Appeal, from the 2021/22 General Contingency Fund; and
 - (ii) \$50,000 to Oxfam Australia as part of their International Crisis Fund for Tonga, from the 2021/22 General Contingency Fund; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) use City of Sydney online communication channels to encourage additional support for Tonga recovery appeals from City communities; and
 - (ii) arrange a program for staff donations to Tonga recovery appeals and for Council to match dollar for dollar any contributions until the end of March 2022 from the 2021/22 General Contingency Fund.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor