

Attachment B

**Humanitarian Crisis Response Guidelines
2010**

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS RESPONSE GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to guide Council decisions in responding to humanitarian crises created by natural disasters.

Development

Since 2005, Council has resolved to make donations to a variety of charities in response to a number of natural disasters in India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia for the 2005 tsunami, China, Burma, Haiti and the Victorian bushfires.

On 16 August 2010, Council resolved that the CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor develop guidelines for the City's provision of support in the event of future humanitarian crises, which take into account

- (i) the scale of the crisis;
- (ii) the capacity of the domestic government and local organisations and agencies to respond to the crisis;
- (iii) the need for ongoing support once the immediate crisis has passed; and
- (iv) the impact of any such crises in our immediate region.

Staff have consulted aid agencies, researched the AUSAID website (the Australian Government's Aid program), and the requirements of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) in the development of this policy.

Values

Providing humanitarian aid assists Council to respond to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals

SCOPE

These guidelines will assist Council's decision making in relation to its response to humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters.

POLICY CONTENT

Council may determine to respond to natural disasters by making a donation to charities which provide humanitarian assistance in the relevant countries.

Council will confirm that the affected country has made an official request for assistance. To take uninvited action would breach international protocols and show a lack of respect for the affected country's sovereignty.

Council will give preference to:

- developing countries
- countries in Australia's neighbourhood, i.e. the Asia Pacific region
- other countries with whom Australia has a development partnership, as listed on AUSAID's website
- Australian natural disasters

The amount contributed will be determined by resolution of Council and will be by way of cash donation to a charity that:

- contributes to disaster recovery and re-development post crisis, and
- is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct.

Council will consider whether its donation will be directed to specific programs, or to be used at the discretion of the agency.

Council may also consider whether it will match donations by staff to the specified charity for the specified natural disaster.

As it is not possible to foresee natural disasters, funding for donations will be sourced from the General Contingency in the first instance.

Considerations

Countries

Council will consider responding to humanitarian crises created by natural disasters in developing countries in the Asia Pacific region having regard to the scale of the crisis and the capacity of the domestic government and local organisations and agencies to respond to the crisis.

This approach is congruent with the Australian Government Aid program (AUSAID) that focuses on the Asia Pacific region, where two-thirds of the world's poor (some 800 million people) live, yet they receive less than one third of global aid. Australia helps reduce the adverse impacts of natural disasters on vulnerable populations. Developing countries are also highly vulnerable to a range of natural hazards, including tropical cyclones, floods, landslides, droughts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis.

The long-term effects of disasters and crises undermine growth prospects and hard-won development gains. Where capacity to deliver services is low or insecurity prevails, vulnerability to hazards and conflict increases and poverty is exacerbated. In many cases long term relief is required after a natural disaster.

Council will consider making donations to agencies which support rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in areas that have been struck by disaster. To reduce the likelihood of a similar disaster happening again, recovery and reconstruction efforts that are underpinned by the 'build back better' principle means that steps are taken to ensure that disaster affected communities will be more resilient to future natural hazard events.

Cash donations

The most effective way Council and members of the public can support a relief effort is by cash donation to one of the many non-government agencies that are appealing for support.

Unfortunately no matter how well-intentioned, gifts of clothing, tinned food, toys, blankets, footwear, cooking supplies and medical supplies are rarely practical or appropriate. Time, money and labour are often wasted in Australia storing, sorting and throwing out donations that are inappropriate for the climate and culture and do not meet the priority needs of the populations affected. Managing such donations also causes major problems for relief authorities in-country, taking paid workers and unpaid volunteers away from the main job of helping people.

Cash allows disaster relief professionals to procure exactly what is needed in a disaster situation. It is the most efficient donation because it does not use up scarce resources,

such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space and because it can be transferred very quickly. Cash also supports the economy of the disaster-stricken region and avoids giving which is culturally, dietary, and environmentally inappropriate. Cash donations do not require transportation costs, which can outweigh the value of materials donated.

ACFID Code of Conduct

To address the issue of checking whether a charitable organisation in Australia is reputable in relation to Australian overseas aid agencies, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) actively consulted with its member organisations, as well as other non-member organisations, to develop the set of principles and standards that form the Code of Conduct (Code).

The Code of Conduct sets out standards in the fields of organisational integrity, governance, communication with the public, finances, personnel and management practice. It aims to enhance standards of operation throughout the international development community to ensure that public confidence is maintained in the use of community contributions to overseas aid.

As a self-regulatory and sector wide Code, the signing on by international development organisations is voluntary, although it is a requirement of ACFID membership. Compliance to the standards is tested predominantly through compliance monitoring of annual and financial reporting requirements, annual self assessment and the investigation of complaints.

Responsibilities

These guidelines, and any donations approved by Council, will be managed by the Manager Culture and Libraries.

REFERENCES

Related Legislation & Standards

The Local Government Act 1993.

Related Policies and Procedures

Grants and Sponsorships Policy.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Review Period

Manager Culture and Libraries will review this policy every 2 years.

Next Review Date

November 2012

TRIM Reference Number

Document number: 2010/228892-01

AUTHORISATION

Approved by Council on 18.10.2010