

Item 3.2

Support for Papua New Guinea Following Landslides

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On 24 May 2024, the remote village of Kaokalam, about 600 kilometres northwest of Papua New Guinea's capital Port Moresby, was devastated by a catastrophic landslide that struck at 3am. The timing of the landslide meant most people were sleeping, with little time to escape.

The landslide slammed tons of rock and mud into locals' homes. Rescuers struggled to reach such a remote part of the country, leaving villagers to dig through the collapsed mountainside with whatever tools they had, while huge rocks and debris kept falling, and landing further beyond the original landslide area being impacted.

The ongoing search and rescue operations are facing challenges due to the hazardous terrain and the continuous threat of landslides, resulting in slower progress. The affected area remains highly unstable, which is hampering search and rescue efforts.

This is not the first fatal landslide in Papua New Guinea this year. At least 21 people died in three separate landslides across the country in mid-March and another 14 people lost their lives in April. Papua New Guinea is vulnerable to various natural disasters due to its geographical location, topography, and climate. The country's mountainous terrain and heavy rainfall patterns make it susceptible to landslides and mudslides, particularly in areas with deforestation and soil erosion.

The impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, sea level rise, and altered precipitation patterns, further exacerbate the country's vulnerability to natural disasters. These changes can intensify the frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

It remains unclear how many people died in the landslide. The Papua New Guinea government estimate 670 people have died. Locals on the ground said it was difficult to know exactly how many people were in the village when the landslide hit, because many were visiting.

On 6 June 2024, the Enga provincial government - where Kaokalam is located - announced mass evacuations of further areas around the landslide due to concerns that there could be more earth movement, displacing at least 7,200 people according to the UN International Organization for Migration. The government also ceased searching for bodies and the area has been deemed a mass burial site.

Our neighbours from the village of Kaokalam in Papua New Guinea face immense loss and grief with many losing their entire families. They have also been displaced from their homes, communities and incomes.

I therefore propose that we donate \$30,000 to CARE Australia towards meeting the immediate needs of affected communities. Council's donation will support the supply of fresh water, food items, medical assistance, household items, shelter and hygiene items to displaced people, along with the relocation of survivors to temporary care centres.

This donation complies with the City of Sydney's Support for Charities Policy adopted by Council on 21 November 2022, are in line with previous donations and align with objective 7.3.2 (2) of the City's Operational Plan 2023/24, which states that the City will support communities beyond our local area and international communities experiencing emergency situations.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the impacts of climate change and the resulting landslide that has devastated the village of Kaokalam in Papua New Guinea; and
- (B) approve a donation of \$30,000, to be sourced from the 2023/24 General Contingency Fund, to CARE Australia to use towards meeting the immediate needs of affected communities in Kaokalam Papua New Guinea.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor