



Making sure we have a history, to build on.

30th Nov 2022

The region is facing unprecedented challenges to political stability brought about by fractious communities struggling within climate change disasters and Covid pandemic induced poverty. The Pacific countries and some of South East Asia have been facing sea level rises already and will continue to do so over the course of the next 2 years with the predicted rise of 40cm in the next 12 months due to the Antarctic Thwaites Glacier displacing water...

Development goals for Australia have been aligned with trade and Australia's regional goals of raising countries out of poverty to a point where we have access to new regional markets. This ambition has negated the most important issues as we continue to have a policy of development assistance based on the Millennium goals. In fact, the only thing the Pacific cares about is saving their culture, language and artifacts. The inclusion of heritage (movable and immovable) in the SDG's and the linking of this as intrinsically tied to women's autonomy as custodians, social capital, community values, building employment and skills recognition and tourism trade and other values brings heritage preservation to the centre of the development sector.

Increasingly, Australia will be asked to respond post disaster, flood and tsunamis. We know that people are willing to endanger their lives for religious icons, art, sentimental items and traditional relics. We need to have an action plan to enable the countries of the region to be empowered to act on the Hague convention 1954. We have signed it, we need to implement it across the whole of our development thinking and also assist development partners to be able to do so.

Australia needs to consider being a repository (safe keeping place for art and artefacts). We need to assist in the things that matter, like digital recording of language, oral histories and local medicinal practice.

Aid to capture this knowledge is also critical. It will be doubly sad if Samoa for instance has a cure for cancer and we didn't assist in the biodiversity capture.

- How should the new policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?

Australia spends a lot on foreign aid and this government has committed an additional billion. Yet all of it will be expended on the values we see as important. At no point has Australia sent in a cultural expert to determine what "soft diplomacy" might be used to win the hearts and minds of the region.

8 Paragon Mall
8-24 Gladstone st Fyshwick 2609
www.endangeredheritage.com
ph 62806280



Making sure we have a history, to build on.

For example. I spend on education, health and car rego, mortgages and insurance and literally if someone bought me a holiday they would be my best friend. We buy a lot of the necessary materials in the region but if China is the country fixing the church roof, paying for museums, dance and community halls and digitization of cultural material then irrespective of the dollars expended, they win the hearts and minds. We need to include fixing the roof. We need cultural experts to engage with islands and our regional partners to see what it is that they WANT, not what they need. A balance of having a 10% budget for the little things like a new school bus while we are installing a wind farm is ideal. Or an optometrist on island or medical aid for live-stock, or getting a new ferry etc. These projects are often too small and are deemed too hard to administrate but actually a simple 10% budget for social impact and social capital building including cultural preservation would win back the Pacific.

Australia continues to practice an aid delivery program through the lens of DO NO HARM... This is a lens which checks and balances to ensure there are minimized negative impacts. Australia does not administrate a program which DOES GOOD. The mindset is different, the evaluation is different and suddenly aid becomes about them and less about us and our agenda. We have been too blatant in our economic agenda in the past and it is not appreciated by our neighbours. Genuine friends DO GOOD and if we want the Pacific's UN votes and support then we need to do good and be seen to do good.

In terms of delivery, Australian companies are tendering less and less for infrastructure projects. The biggest presumed issue is that things are too good at home. The reality is that much capacity is limited by employment laws. A company has to make commitments and specifically name key staff within tenders with ADB WB and DFAT, but over the course of a 3 year project staff cannot be compelled to stay. Some projects have huge penalties for delays and Australian companies no longer have the staffing security and ability to commit personnel for years in advance. DFAT needs to engage with companies and potential consultants in more briefs to determine the limits to delivery. They are not as obvious as many economists think, again many are cultural and never funding any cultural consultants on projects means there is often an adversarial and stressful feel to every project.. Using CENVP accredited practitioners with heritage and environmental assessment skills as part of the design process could prevent the delays due to cultural mis-understanding.

I have worked for UNESCO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and continue to work with marginalized communities on what matters most to them. I am absolutely confident that Australia needs to do a lot of soul searching on the motivation of International Aid.

In the past our motivation may have been trade. Now it may well be stability. If that is the case, then we need to use culture and cultural assets as the lever to create stability as the Breton Wood Conference determined at the very establishment of the United Nations.

8 Paragon Mall
8-24 Gladstone st Fyshwick 2609
www.endangeredheritage.com
ph 62806280



Making sure we have a history, to build on.

I remain dedicated to serving Australia and the region to enhance tolerance and co-operation.

Victoria Pearce
Director and Senior Cultural Policy Advisor.

8 Paragon Mall
8-24 Gladstone st Fyshwick 2609
www.endangeredheritage.com
ph 62806280