



# media release

**Australian Council for International Development**

**ATTENTION: NEWS EDITORS**

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## **Pacific trade deal must deliver a development dividend**

The Australian Government needs to ensure that new negotiations for a Pacific regional trade agreement deliver a development dividend for people in the Pacific, according to a new report *The Development Dividend: Making Trade Negotiations Work for Pacific Communities* released today by the peak body for the Australian international aid and development sector, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

New negotiations for the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus) will be announced at the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Cairns this week.

ACFID is calling on the Australian Government to live up to its promise to focus on sustainable development for people in the Pacific and not just Australia's trading advantage.

ACFID urged Australia and other Pacific Islands Forum governments to ensure that the negotiations are transparent and that there is a flow of information to citizens who will be affected by any reforms as well as opportunities to have dialogue with governments. Separate to the negotiations, ACFID is calling for expansion of the pilot Pacific labour scheme which allows Pacific Islanders to work in the Australian fruit industry.

ACFID's Executive Director, Marc Purcell, said, "These trade negotiations must work for the people of the Pacific and guarantee a development dividend. They must be conducted in a transparent way with opportunities for citizens in all countries to be informed and have their say.

The World Bank estimates that 40% of Pacific Island countries' populations are aged between 0-15 and another 20% between 15-24. Creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods out of any agreement is vital.

A development dividend could be had quickly outside of the negotiations if the Government builds on the recent pilot Pacific labour scheme in the fruit industry in Victoria which enables workers to send remittances back to their families

If the global financial crisis has taught us anything, it is that the era of faith-based, free market reformism is gone. What is good for the goose is not always good for the gander in trade agreements.

Negotiators cannot simply assume that market reforms that have been good for a huge economy like Australia's, such as removing tariffs, are good for small Island states of tens of thousands of people. The evidence from the United Nations shows that developing countries need to retain policy options for economic growth and tariffs as part of their toolkit."

*For advance copies of the report call 02 6285 1816; or go to [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au) from Monday 3 August  
Interviews: Marc Purcell: 0450 961 561 or 02 6285 1816.*

The Australian Council for International Development is an independent national association of Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.

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