

**Message by Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Deputy Secretary Ewen McDonald
at the Launch of the Resilience and Preparedness towards Inclusive Development (RAPID)
Programme for Yolanda-affected areas
3 July 2014, 4:30pm
Oakwood Premier, Ortigas Center, Pasig City**

Investing on improving capacities and enhancing disaster preparedness of local governments and communities

Good Afternoon

Secretary Sering, Climate Change Commission

Ambassador Bill Tweddell

Ms Carvalho, United Nations Resident Coordinator

Mr Layton Pike

Mr Dewulf, Country Director, United Nations Development Programme

Commissioner Bernardo, Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board

Undersecretary Cordero, Office of the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Rehabilitation

Commissioner Saño, Climate Change Commission

Commissioner Alvarez, Climate Change Commission

Governor Malanyaon, Province of Davao Oriental

Mayors of the partner Local Government Units of Project Climate Twin Phoenix

Mayors of the partner Local Government Units of the RAPID Program

Partners in Government and non-government sectors

My colleagues in the Australian Government

Ladies and Gentlemen

Eight (8) months since the terrible Typhoon Yolanda – our condolences for the loss of lives, livelihoods and communities.

It is a pleasure to be with you today to launch the Resilience and Preparedness towards Inclusive Development (RAPID) Programme. This project gives a big boost to our shared advocacy of building resilience and enhancing the capacities of government, its communities and people to better prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate and disasters risks.

As we have heard today, a single disaster can undermine many years of hard work. It sets back any incremental progress towards reaching development objectives and goals. We only have to look back at the recent Yolanda experience. Damages and losses due to the typhoon are a staggering AUD13 billion (PhP571 billion).

According to the Philippine Government, the disasters in 2013 have pushed an additional 1.5 million people into poverty. That is on top of the 32 million Filipinos already below the poverty line.

Australia will always be a responsive and supportive neighbor in providing humanitarian assistance in times of disasters and crisis. But beyond this, building resilience and supporting disaster risk reduction is a key priority for our partnership.

The United Nations has noted that every dollar spent on disaster risk reduction is equivalent to up to 10 dollars spent on response efforts. Money spent on disaster risk reduction is an investment to prevent and avoid potential disasters from happening in the future. Disaster risk reduction investments help save lives and protect our economic gains.

As Ambassador Tweddell said, the Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, who visited Tacloban in December to support the huge humanitarian efforts following Yolanda and was also here in February, launched two weeks ago Australian Government's new development policy "Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability." Our new aid policy affirmed Australia's focus on building resilience through humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction and social protection. And this year's Australian Aid Budget increased humanitarian expenditure from AUD264 million to about AUD340 million and includes a continued emphasis on disaster risk reduction.

Notwithstanding the substantial support to Typhoon Haiyan response and humanitarian needs, we recognize that more work needs to be done for the recovery and rehabilitation of affected areas. Local governments, especially communities and households, continue to struggle in recovering from the devastation caused by Haiyan, and at the same time prepare for future disasters. We know that the monsoon season is now upon us.

Over 2 million people in Haiyan-affected areas continue to be exposed and vulnerable to flooding and storm surges. Supporting these people and communities is critical. Strengthening their capacities on disaster preparedness will help protect the gains and ensure sustainability of our joint recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

In response to the Government's call for support, the Australian Government committed up to AUD36.3 million (PhP1.4 billion) to support the recovery of areas affected by Haiyan. This is delivered through our existing programs and partnership.

AUD20 million for construction of up to 500 classrooms through the Basic Education Support Transformation Program with the Department of Education. This was released by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop when she was here;

AUD3 million for construction of up to 75 classrooms and day care centers through the National Community Driven Development Program, which I had the privilege of launching yesterday with Secretary Dinky Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development;

AUD4 million in community small grants to help approximately 570,000 people restore their livelihoods through the Philippine-Australia Community Assistance Program – And I saw two (2) of those programs: egg laying and mat weaving in action yesterday;

AUD1 million to build 250 shelters in Palo City, which I also saw yesterday.

Australian Civilian Corps specialists are deployed to support recovery through the Office of the Presidential Assistant on Recovery and Rehabilitation; and

AUD7.3 million to help 12 local government units and up to 150 barangays (benefiting up to 90,000 households and 430,000 people) build back better through the RAPID Programme, which we are launching today.

The RAPID Programme builds on gains from other Australian supported disaster risk reduction activities in the Philippines. RAPID will:

Enable the target local government units to come up with better hazard and risk maps, land use plans, zoning ordinances, building codes, and structures such as evacuation center that take into account climate and disaster risks;

Capacitate barangays or communities on better disaster preparedness through disaster plans, early warning systems, drills and emergency response teams.

More importantly, the RAPID Programme will bring in new strategic partners such as the Department of Interior and Local Government and the National Economic and Development Authority to progress the agenda of mainstreaming disaster and climate risks in the comprehensive development plans and investment programming.

Consistent with the Whole-of-Government approach to delivering aid, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) will extend its technical expertise to the RAPID Programme in enhancing local structural resilience of public facilities. And of course, Australian Ambassador Tweddell, Minister Counsellor Layton Pike and our DFAT staff here in the Philippines, A based and LES who do a great job, will be working with you.

The Australian Government is very privileged to partner with your ongoing effort toward achieving our vision for every Filipino community to be safer and more resilient to the risks and impacts of natural disasters.

In travelling with Secretary Dinky Soliman, she highlighted the three (3) cyclones and earthquakes that have impacted on the Philippines in the last year or so. Your resilience, positive outlook and hard work is an inspiration to us all and the Australian Government is here to support you as you go forward.

All the best in the succeeding work towards making the people of Eastern Visayas better prepared and safer through the RAPID Programme.

Congratulations to everyone.