



## Australian aid to strengthen Pacific education

By Online Editor

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Australia will invest an additional \$US125 million over four years towards education programs in the Pacific.

The government says funding will help strengthen early childhood education, develop over 7,500 teachers as well as improving the school curricula and providing high-quality learning materials.

It said the money will also help strengthen over 150 local training providers, resulting in an annual stream of over 4,000 graduates.

The government said the program's aims are to ensure more children complete primary school, improve learning outcomes and make young people more employable.

Meanwhile, Australia has announced it will cut the Pacific land programme from its aid budget, saving \$90 million over four years.

The Australian Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd, said the programme was scrapped because it did not provide value for money.

The programme provided support for land tenure reform but critics say it did not focus closely enough on the traditional owners and the complexity of the customary land ownership.

Rudd said ongoing funding for land reform will be accommodated in individual country programs.

“We have stringent mechanisms in AusAID to evaluate the progress of each individual program,” he said.

“This one didn't cut the mustard and so I made no bones about it that if we're not cutting the mustard, you cut the program and you redirect those funds to other programs that are affecting.”

The government said assisting Pacific Island countries to realise the potential of their land remains a priority of the aid programme.

It said land reform needs to be pursued in a more flexible way and to reflect the unique circumstances of each country.

SOURCE: RADIO AUSTRALIA/PACNEWS