

Caritas opens appeal for Pacific tsunami

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A Caritas assessment team is on route to the worst affected areas of Western Samoa following an 8.3 earthquake 200km from the capital Apia. The consequent tsunami has hit Western and American Samoa early this morning.

Caritas Australia's local partner agency has sent a team specialising in Disaster Response to the heavily affected area in the south of Upolu to conduct a needs assessment and begin the relief effort.

"While Australia and the Pacific Islands have cancelled their tsunami warnings, the risk to those in affected areas remains significant. There is particular concern for Samoa's low lying coastal communities, who remain vulnerable to sea surges after the tsunami", said Caritas Australia CEO Jack De Groot.

"It appears that while the quake itself damaged infrastructure in the city of Apia, the greatest damage has been done when the tsunami hit the southern coasts of Western Samoa and American Samoa", said Mr De Groot.

The Catholic Pastoral Centre at Logoipulotu in Savai'i has been converted to an emergency medical centre as patients have been relocated from the hospital.

"Caritas Australia has an ongoing commitment to this region with development projects in Western Samoa and we will assist in the relief effort as directed by our partner agency Caritas Samoa. After a tsunami there is an immediate need for temporary shelter while the threat of polluted water poses great risk for those temporarily displaced", said Mr De Groot.

Caritas Australia is accepting donations to the Pacific Tsunami Appeal and once immediate needs are addressed will focus on the long term rehabilitation of the affected populations.

You can support the Caritas Australia Pacific Tsunami Appeal by calling 1800 024 413 or making a donation online.

For more information call Tim O'Connor (02) 8306 3444 or 0417 284 831