

New Zealand gives another \$1 million to aid Samoa and Tonga

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Murray McCully

New Zealand is contributing a further \$1 million to emergency relief efforts following the tsunami in Samoa and Tonga, Foreign Minister Murray McCully said today.

"The emergency response is now well-advanced, and the Samoan Government is doing a good job in coordinating relief efforts.

"During our recent visits to view the damage, both Prime Minister John Key and I discussed likely recovery needs with Prime Minister Tuilaepa, and reaffirmed New Zealand's commitment to working closely with Samoa to identify where additional assistance can be best directed.

"Virtually all of New Zealand's initial contribution of \$1 million has now been committed, and a further funding top-up was needed, which we have done today.

"Clearly a substantial recovery and rebuilding effort will be required in the weeks ahead. We are discussing the likely shape of a more substantial assistance package with the Samoan government and other donors, and working towards reaching decisions later in the week.

"It is clear a considerable rebuilding effort on the south coast will be required. Priorities emerging include the need for clean water and sanitation; housing, and restoration of the affected area's tourism infrastructure.

"Communities throughout New Zealand have responded to the disaster with great generosity.

"Offer of assistance continue to come in, but right now the best way New Zealanders can help is to give a cash donation - no matter what size - to one of the Pacific appeals," Mr McCully said..

Appeal information is available at www.nzaid.govt.nz

Mr McCully also urged New Zealanders who had heard from friends or family in Samoa to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 0800 432 111, to let them know they were safe.

"In the days following the tsunami, a large number of New Zealanders contacted the Ministry, concerned about friends or family in Samoa.

"Our High Commission in Apia is working hard to trace those people, and while the number is falling rapidly, there are still New Zealanders unaccounted for.

"The vast majority of those people will be safe and well now, and it is important we know as soon as possible, to focus efforts on tracing only those people who are still missing.

"It is equally important that New Zealanders in Samoa contact family at home to allay any concerns if they have not already done so," Mr McCully said.