

The 2022 Australian aid transparency audit

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Blog: <https://devpolicy.org/aid-transparency-audit-20221004/>

Report: <https://devpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-Aid-Transparency-Audit-FINAL.pdf>

Overview of aid transparency audit

- A total of four aid transparency audits done in 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022
- 2022 Transparency:
 - Data collected in April and May 2022
 - A sample of 27 country and regional programs
 - Four aspects:

High-level budget data

To assess the timely provision of detailed information on the overall aid budget

Project coverage

To assess the complete disclosure of ongoing projects

Basic project information

To assess the availability of information for basic understanding of the project

Detailed project information

To assess the availability of information for in-depth analysis of the project

I. High-level budget data

- To see if information on high-level aspects of the aid budget are made available on budget night, or shortly thereafter
- Key information:
 - total overseas development assistance (ODA) estimates
 - ODA/GNI estimates
 - total country, regional and global program estimates
 - total sectoral estimates
 - estimates of total aid given via other government departments



Budget documents accessed from: [Australian Official Development Assistance budget summary 2021-22](#) | [Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(dfat.gov.au\)](#)

The Aid Program continues to provide timely budget information, but some key aspects have been missing

Table 1. Budget information contained in aid budget summaries

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23*
Total ODA estimate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
ODA/GNI estimate	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Country/regional estimates	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Total sectoral estimates	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Total OGD estimates*	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Source: From [Australia's development budget and statistical information](#). Relevant documents obtained by the Development Policy Centre on Budget night or shortly after.

Note: 2022-23* refers 2022-23 March Budget. OGD= 'Aid through other government departments'. This analysis is done by Cameron Hill.

II. Project coverage

- To see if the Aid Program details all its projects on the website
- Project coverage = the share of the total number of projects (over AU\$1 million) that are listed on the [webpages of the country and regional programs](#) (or plus a [separate project list](#))

	Managing Program	Investment Number and Name	Investment Allocation
Who we work with			
Performance assessment	Africa	INN847 - ACIAR: Climate Change Adaptation in African Agriculture	\$3,000,000.00
Development evaluation	Commonwealth Organisations	INN964 - Commonwealth of Learning	\$3,000,000.00
Australia's Development Program - Tier 2 Results	Mekong-Australia Partnership	INN878 - Resilient Urban Centres and Surrounds	\$3,000,000.00
	Pacific	INN499 - Women in Leadership in Samoa	\$3,004,111.82
New International Development Policy	Pacific	INN456 - Reducing the cost of remittances to the Pacific 2020 to 2025	\$3,098,113.09
	Fragility & Conflict and Nat Sec & Civil-Military	INN536 - Conflict Research and Analysis	\$3,100,000.00
	Humanitarian	INN619 - Anticipatory Action in the Asia Pacific	\$3,160,000.00

Development assistance in Solomon Islands



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- Bilateral security treaty
- Pacific Engagement in Solomon Islands

Pillar 1 – Health Security in Solomon Islands

Overview

This page provides an overview of how Australia is working in partnership against the Health Security pillar of *Partnerships for Recovery*. It outlines key related initiatives and summaries of programming and related documents.

As Solomon Islands' largest development partner in the health sector, Australia will support a renewed focus on funding for, and policy dialogue regarding, broader health system priorities. Australia has worked closely with Solomon Islands to secure early and equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine and, through the Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security, has extended support to Pacific health ministries – including Solomon Islands' – in the areas of infection prevention and control, training for field epidemiology, vector control and surveillance, and the deployment of health security technical resources, as required.

Australia will provide critical support for better Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services, including in health care settings, through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership and global partnerships. Climate change can compound health challenges through increased risk of disease, disaster injury and psychosocial issues. Health systems strengthening will incorporate climate change and disaster resilience measures.

Related initiatives

[Related initiative – Health Sector Support Program](#)

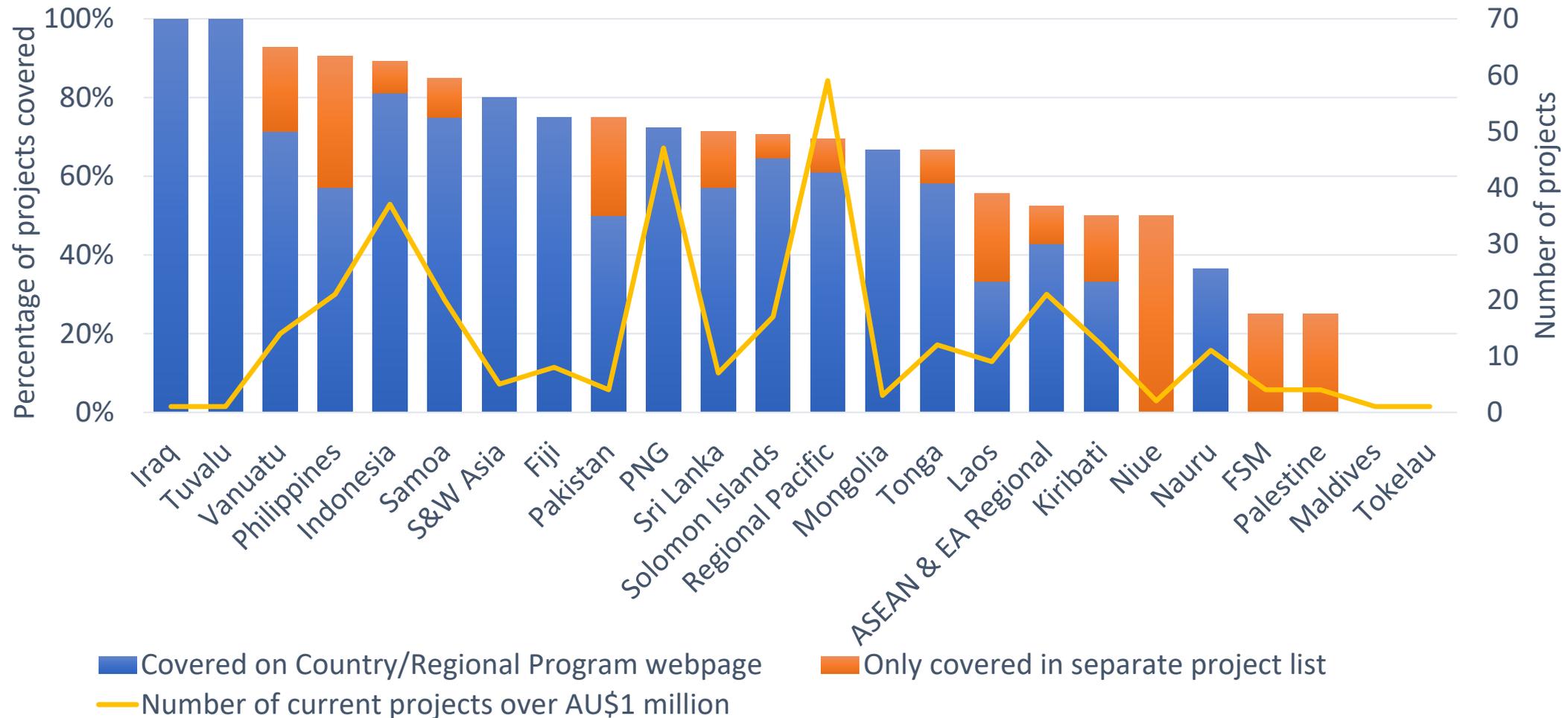
[Related initiative – COVID-19 Response](#)

Example for the Solomon Islands program. Accessed from: [Countries, economies and regions | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(dfat.gov.au\)](#)

A list of projects between AU\$ 3 to 10 million newly introduced by DFAT, accessed from: [Current ODA investments between \\$3m and \\$10m | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(dfat.gov.au\)](#)

Only 61% of aid projects (over AU\$1 million) are listed on the Aid Program

Figure 1. Percentage of projects covered on Aid Program web pages, 2022



III. Basic project information

- To quantify the extent to which simple outline information is provided on projects
- Key information:
 - Project description
 - Planned dates
 - Project budgets
 - Previous financial year expenditure
- # of projects included in the samples

2013	2016	2019	2022
225	239	246	280

Strongim Bisnis – Phase 2

Budget Dates

Up to \$32 million, 2017-2023 (Stand-alone investment since 1 January 2020; \$14 million for Phase I managed under the Solomon Islands Growth Program)

Strongim Bisnis works with the private sector and Solomon Islands Government to make a strong, positive and lasting impact through business growth. Tackling the nation's trade and investment challenges, Strongim Bisnis works to provide solutions for businesses and investors in the coconut, cocoa, tourism, horticulture, financial services, timber and waste management industries, while empowering women and youth.

Project description

Strongim Bisnis uses a market systems development approach to address poverty through inclusive economic growth, the first of its kind in Solomon Islands. It works with businesses and government to address market constraints for businesses and finds innovative approaches that focus on creation of business opportunities, 'value-add' and diversification of supply chains and promotes systemic changes to markets so that more people benefit.

Related documents

Name of document	Year published
Solomon Islands Growth Program Design	2017

Example of a Solomon Islands program accessed in 2022.

Availability of basic information remains high but has declined

Figure 2. Availability of basic project information

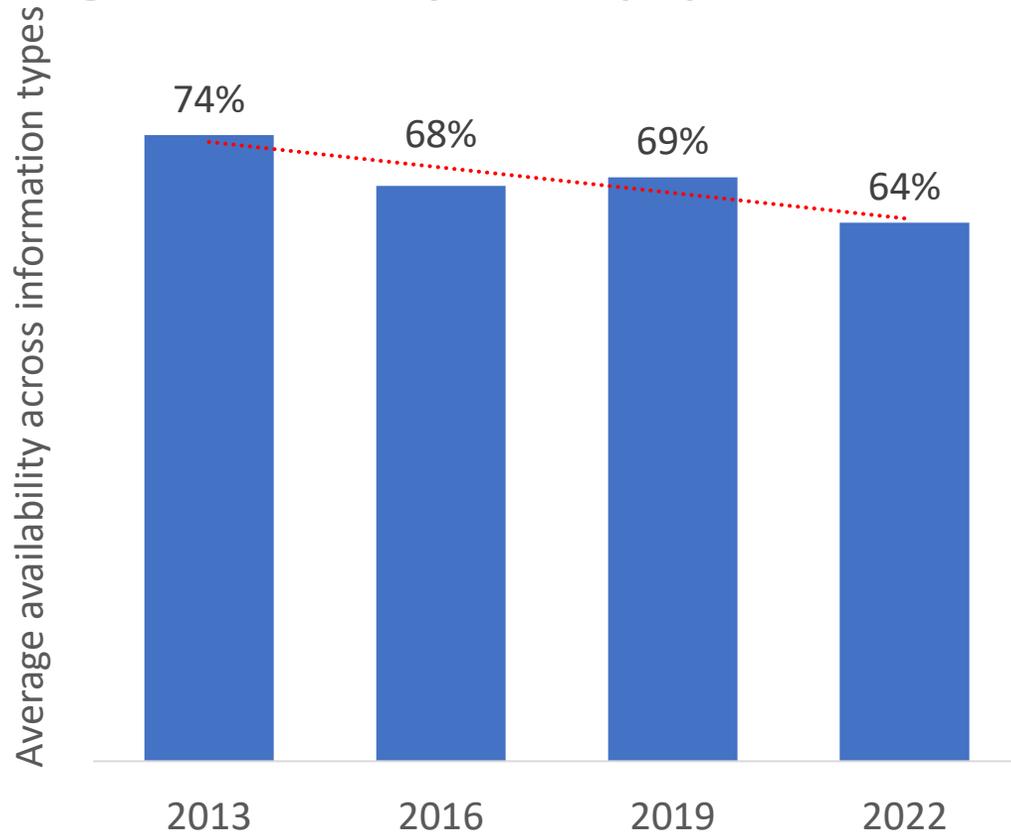


Table 2. Availability of basic project information

Year	Project description	Planned dates	Project budget	Previous financial year expenditure	Average score
2013	100.0%	100.0%	47.6%	48.9%	74.1%
2016	99.6%	86.2%	86.6%	0.0%	68.1%
2019	100.0%	88.2%	88.2%	0.0%	69.1%
2022	98.6%	79.3%	77.1%	0.0%	63.8%

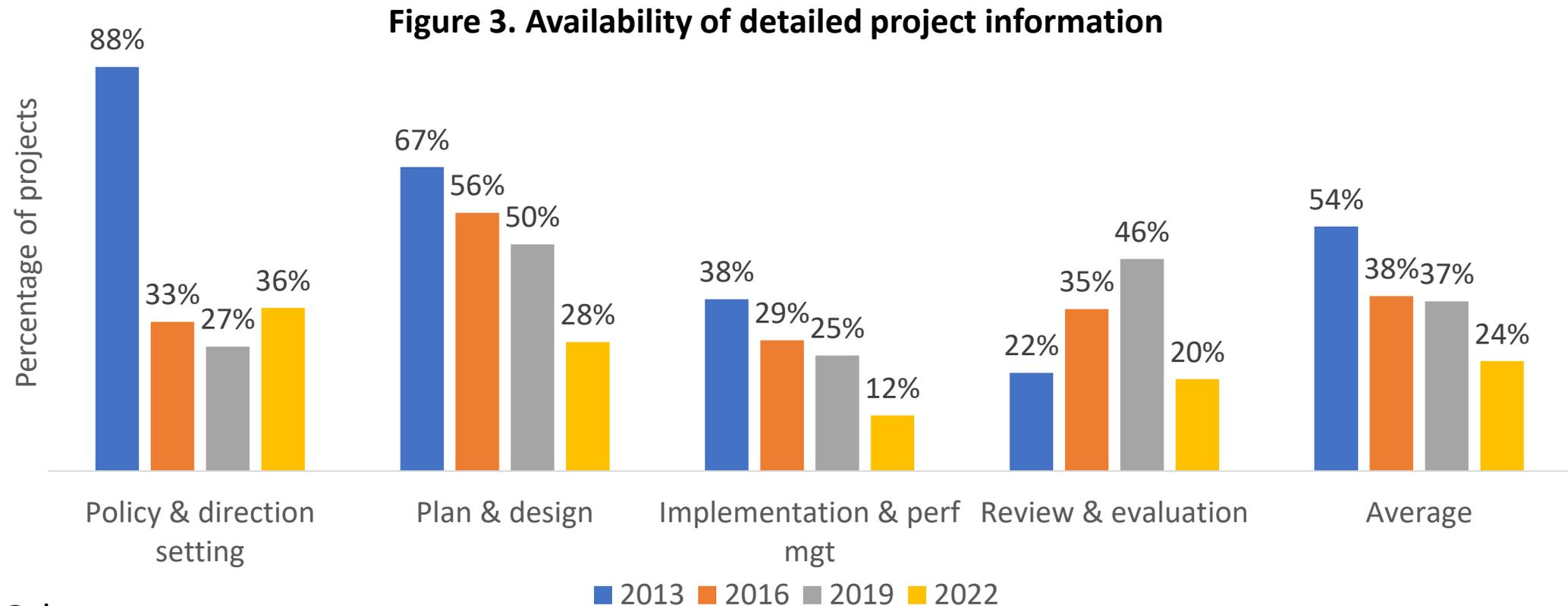
IV. Detailed project information

- To capture the extent to which in-depth information is provided on projects
- Key information (four stages of a project cycle):

Category	Criteria	Examples of supporting documents
Policy and direction setting	Documents that outline the Aid Program's approach to aid activities	Statements of commitment, baseline research, evaluations for the previous phase of a project
Plan and design	Documents that explain how the activity should be undertaken	Work plans, design documents, concept documents
Implementation and performance management	Documents that report on the outputs of aid activities and whether these outputs achieved their objectives	Monitoring reports, progress reports, analytical reports
Review and evaluation	Documents that evaluate the performance of aid activities	Mid-term reviews, final reviews, independent completion reports

- One document can only be counted once towards one category.

Document transparency is worryingly low



- Other patterns:

- Country and regional programs that were more transparency in 2019 tend to be more transparent in 2022;
- Projects that start the project cycle transparent are more likely to be transparent in the latter phases of the project cycle;
- Larger projects are often more transparent than the smaller ones.

Conclusions

- **Overall, our 2022 audit's findings are worrying:**
 - Although the Aid Program performs well in some areas, such as releasing timely high-level budget data, providing historical data, listing projects between AU\$3 to 10 million
 - Aid transparency have deteriorated since 2019 in all our assessments, and is now very low
 - COVID-19 pandemic explains some of the poor performance, but not all of it
- **To improve the aid transparency, the Australian Government should:**
 - Make a clear commitment to a transparency reset
 - Set up a transparency unit within DFAT
 - Standardise online reporting for country and regional programs
 - Return budget night aid data releases to the status of Ministerial Statements
 - Adequately resource country programs
 - Keep doing what is being done well