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Mekong-Australia Partnership

Australia and the countries of the Mekong subregion share a vision for an open, inclusive, secure and prosperous region. We are longstanding and committed neighbours and partners, with a robust economic relationship and deep government and people connections.

The recovery of the Mekong subregion from the dual economic and health challenges of COVID-19 is critical to our shared vision of stability and prosperity. To support these efforts, in November 2020 the Australian Government announced the \$232 million *Mekong-Australia Partnership* (MAP) – building on our long-standing bilateral programs with Mekong states – to enhance Australia's engagement with the subregion.

MAP forms part of Australia's approximately \$500 million landmark package of new economic, development and security measures to support Southeast Asia's COVID-19 recovery.

What the Mekong-Australia Partnership offers

MAP is a flexible program designed to respond to shared regional challenges. Australia works closely with Mekong partners to align MAP projects with their priorities. MAP funds new activities and expands on existing projects that are working well.

We are focusing on areas that matter to the Mekong, and where Australia can add value:

- investing in human capacity through scholarships, short-term training courses, dialogues, and institutional twinning
- increasing economic resilience and supporting COVID-19 economic recovery through technical assistance, private sector support pilots, and policy research and analysis
- boosting trade and investment through business-focused programs, including implementing the Australia-Vietnam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy
- building environmental resilience to strengthen water security, address riverine and marine pollution, promote clean energy and respond to climate change
- strengthening cyber and critical technology capabilities in the Mekong, particularly in telecommunications and critical infrastructure security.

Examples of MAP initiatives include:

- new Australia Awards Scholarships for emerging leaders in the Mekong subregion
- strengthening renewable energy development in Cambodia, including an initiative to help electrify the remaining unconnected parts of the country through village-level mini-grids

- support to Laos to improve public financial management and domestic resource mobilisation, including work on the state-owned enterprise reform agenda, tax administration and debt management
- work with Thailand to address long-term constraints to growth and support its post-COVID-19 economic recovery
- funding a technical assistance package for Vietnam to support capital market development and facilitate the transition to a green economy
- technical and advisory support, including workshops at the regional level, to build cyber and critical technology policy and legislative expertise.

A coordinated approach in the Mekong subregion

MAP supports Australia's Partnerships for Recovery policy, which works with regional countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. MAP is helping build relationships, as well as sharing knowledge and skills—both between Mekong countries and with Australia—for a sustainable recovery.

MAP complements Australia's \$523 million initiative to support access to COVID-19 vaccines in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, including country-specific Vaccine Response Plans.

MAP also works with Australia's other programs in the Mekong subregion, and across Southeast Asia, in areas such as economic development, the environment, infrastructure (Partnerships for Infrastructure, or P4I), security and transnational crime (Mekong-Australia Program -Transnational Crime, or MAP-TNC) – as well as incorporates and builds on the former Greater Mekong Water Resources Program (or GMWRP).

We seek opportunities for MAP to support regional architecture, including ASEAN and subregional bodies such as ACMECS, the Mekong River Commission and Friends of the Mekong. Australia continues to collaborate closely with other partners, including multilateral donors, to effectively support Mekong countries.