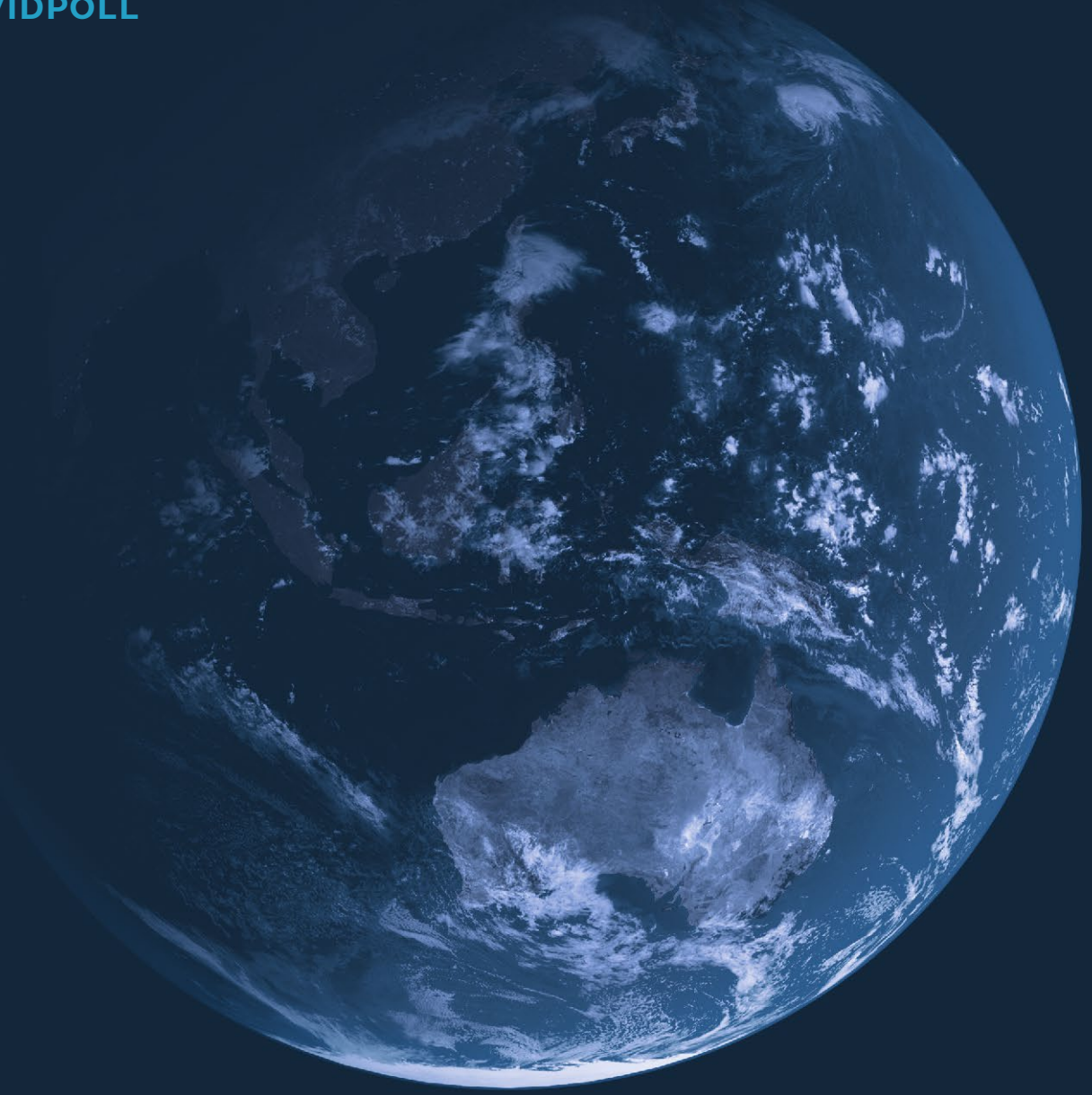


**LOWY
INSTITUTE
COVIDPOLL**



COVIDpoll 2021

NATASHA KASSAM

3 MAY 2021

COVIDPOLL 2021

The Lowy Institute is an independent policy think tank. Its mandate ranges across all the dimensions of international policy debate in Australia — economic, political and strategic — and it is not limited to a particular geographic region. Its two core tasks are to:

- produce distinctive research and fresh policy options for Australia's international policy and to contribute to the wider international debate
- promote discussion of Australia's role in the world by providing an accessible and high-quality forum for discussion of Australian international relations through debates, seminars, lectures, dialogues and conferences.

COVIDpoll 2021 is a Lowy Institute Poll on Australian attitudes to the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY FINDINGS

COVIDpoll 2021: Lowy Institute polling on Australian attitudes to the COVID-19 pandemic

- The majority of Australians (59%) say the federal government has done the right amount in helping Australians overseas return home, while one third (33%) say the government has not done enough
- Australians are split over the question of Australia's closed borders, however: 41% agree with the current policy that only allows Australians with special exemptions to leave; 40% say vaccinated Australians should be able to leave; and 18% say all Australians should be free to leave
- Almost all Australian adults (95%) say that Australia has handled COVID-19 well, with a 22-point jump in those saying Australia has handled COVID-19 'very well'
- By contrast, only 19% say the United Kingdom has handled the pandemic well, and 7% say the United States has handled COVID-19 well
- More Australians in 2021 say that China has handled COVID-19 well compared with last year, with 45% saying China has handled it very or fairly well (up 14 points from 2020)
- Eight in ten (83%) say Australia should help Pacific Island countries to pay for COVID-19 vaccines, and 60% say the same about Southeast Asian countries

COVIDpoll 2021 is an early release from the annual Lowy Institute Poll, which reports the results of a nationally representative online and telephone survey conducted by the Social Research Centre between 15 and 29 March 2021, with a sample size of 2222 Australian adults. On a simple random sample of 2222 responses, the margin of error is approximately 2.1%. The 'design effect' for this survey is estimated at 1.97. Full results of the Lowy Institute Poll will be released in June 2021.

BORDER AND CONSULAR POLICIES

As thousands of Australians continue to seek repatriation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of Australians appear to support the federal government's current approach.¹ Six in ten Australians (59%) say that the federal government has done about the right amount to bring Australians home from overseas. A third of Australians (33%) say that the federal government has not done enough, while 7% say the government has done too much.²

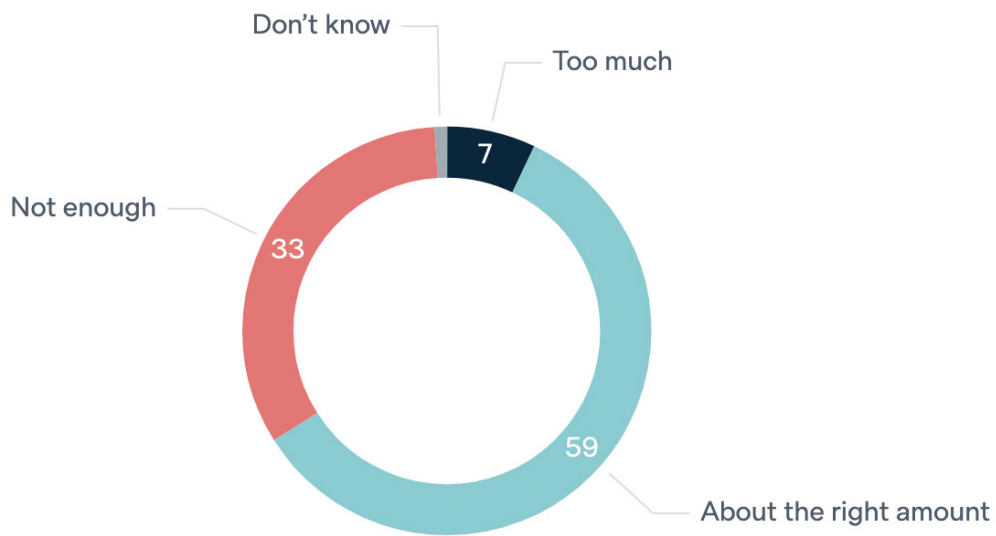
Australians hold mixed views over the question of Australia's closed borders. A travel ban has been in place since March 2020, and Australians are not able to leave the country without a special exemption from the Department of Home Affairs.³

Four in ten Australians (41%) agree with the current policy that 'only Australians granted special exemptions should be allowed to leave'. The same number (40%) say 'Australians who have been vaccinated should be free to leave'. One in five Australians (18%) say that 'all Australians should be free to leave'. Older Australians aged 60 and above are more likely to say that once vaccinated they should be able to leave the country, with 50% agreeing with this approach. By contrast, only 36% of Australians aged 18-59 say that vaccinated Australians should be free to leave now.

BRINGING AUSSIES HOME

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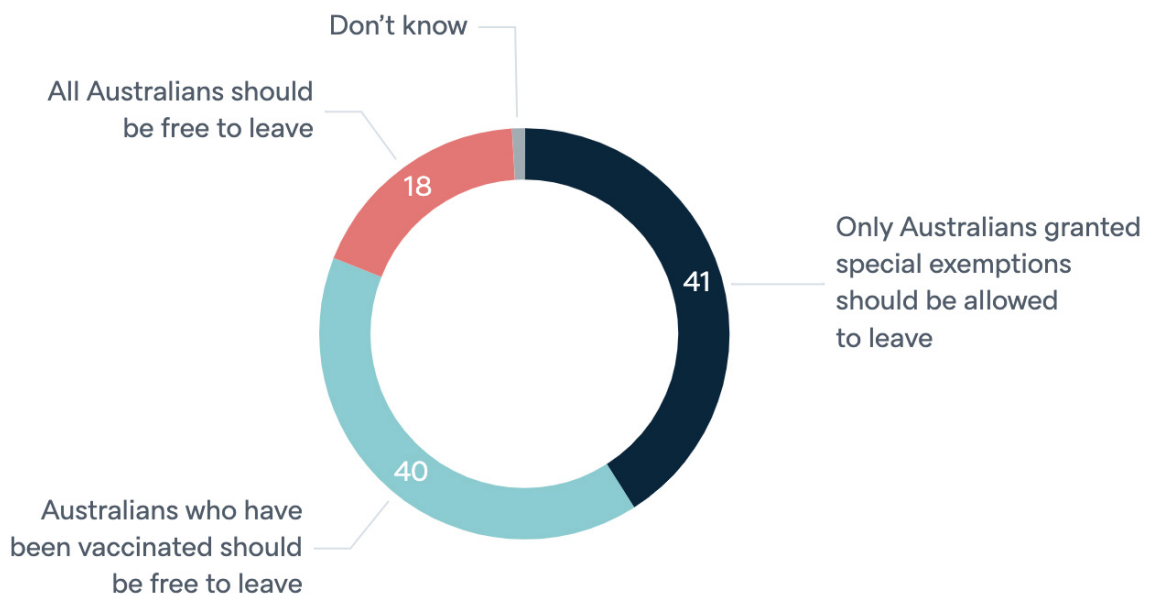
During the COVID-19 pandemic, do you think the Australian federal government has done too much, not enough or about the right amount to bring Australians home from overseas?



BORDER CLOSURES

LOWY INSTITUTE

Currently, Australians are not permitted to leave the country without applying for a special exemption. Which one of the following best describes your view?



GLOBAL RESPONSES TO COVID-19

Australians continue to be extremely confident in Australia's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, ranking Australia well ahead of five other countries included in this year's survey, including China, the United States, United Kingdom, Taiwan and India.

Almost all Australian adults (95%) say that Australia has handled COVID-19 'very well' or 'fairly well' so far. The proportion that say Australia has handled COVID-19 very well has jumped from 43% in 2020 to 65% in 2021.

Despite the tensions in the Australia-China relationship, Australian views of China's handling of COVID-19 have improved over the past year. However, fewer than half (45%) say China has handled COVID-19 fairly or very well, an increase of 14 points from 2020.

Asked about Taiwan's handling of the virus, two-thirds (66%) say that Taiwan has handled COVID-19 well. Taiwan ranks third in the world for its handling of the pandemic based on the Lowy Institute's most recent COVID Performance Index.⁴

The majority of Australians say that India has not handled COVID-19 well so far, even though fieldwork for this polling was conducted prior to the dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases in India in April 2021. Only a quarter of Australians (27%) say India has handled COVID-19 very or fairly well.

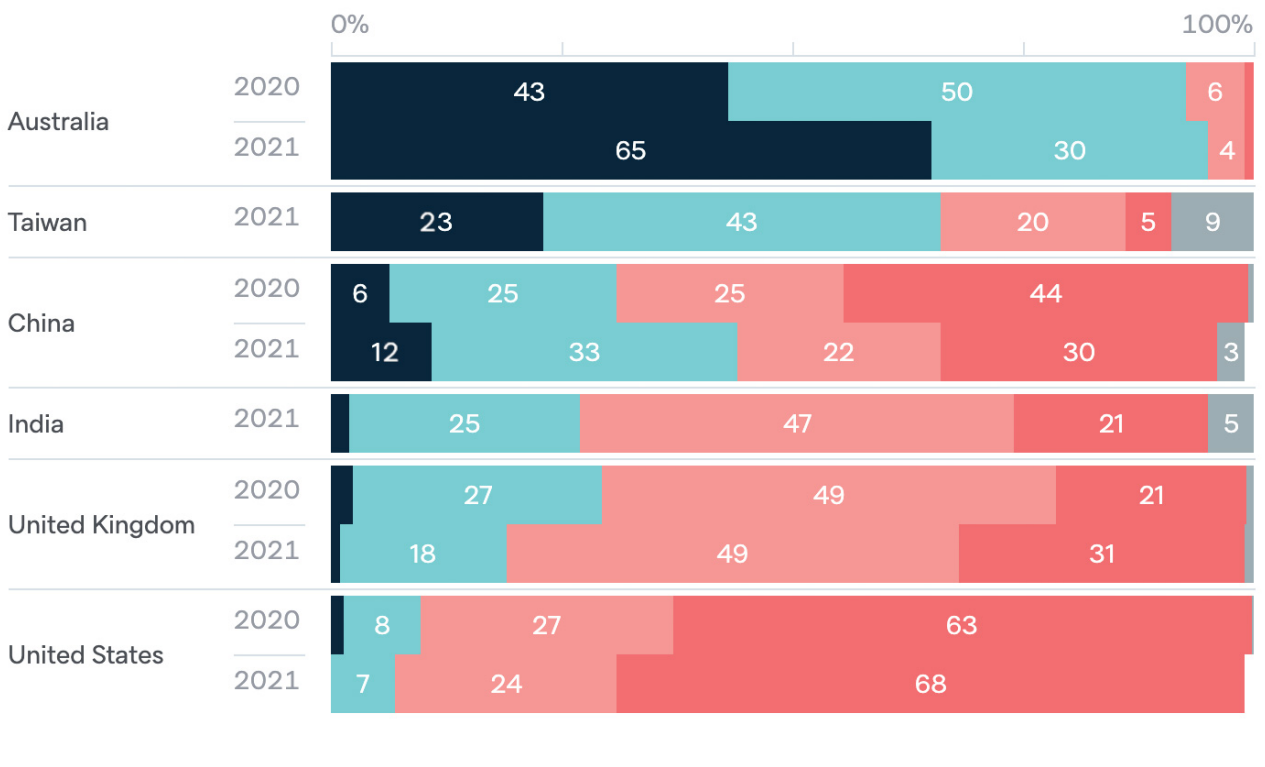
Despite strong progress in UK and American vaccine rollouts, Australian views of the United Kingdom and the United States' handling of the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened from a low base. One in five Australians (19%) say the United Kingdom has handled COVID-19 very or fairly well, an 11-point drop from 2020.

As in 2020, the United States sits at the bottom of this list of six countries. No Australians (0%) say that the United States has handled COVID-19 very well. Only 7% of Australians say the United States has handled the pandemic fairly well. Nine in ten Australians (92%) say that the United States has handled COVID-19 very or fairly badly.

GLOBAL RESPONSES TO COVID-19

LOWY INSTITUTE

Overall, how well or badly do you think each of the following countries have handled the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak so far?



Very well Fairly well Fairly badly Very badly Don't know

FOREIGN AID AND COVID-19

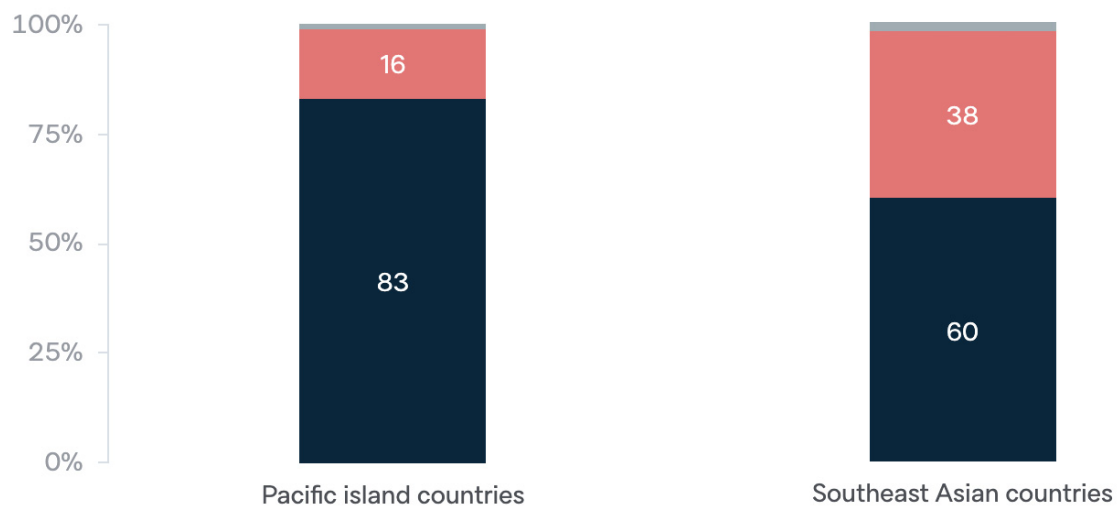
While many have been wary of Australia investing in foreign aid in the past,⁵ the vast majority in 2021 (83%) say that Australia should help Pacific Islands countries to pay for COVID-19 vaccines. Over the course of the past six months, the Australian government has pledged over \$800 million in funding for vaccines in Pacific Island and Southeast Asian countries.⁶

A strong majority (60%) also say that Australia should help Southeast Asian countries to pay for COVID-19 vaccines. Younger Australians are more likely to support vaccine assistance for Southeast Asian countries than older Australians, with seven in ten 18-29-year-olds (70%) saying that Australia should fund vaccines for Southeast Asia, compared to 56% of Australians over 30. More than 80% across all age groups polled say that Australia should fund vaccines for Pacific island countries.

FOREIGN AID FOR VACCINES

LOWY INSTITUTE

Now thinking about Australia helping other countries to access COVID-19 vaccines. Are you in favour or against each of the following?



■ In favour **■** Against **■** Don't know

METHODOLOGY

COVIDpoll 2021 is an early release of select results from the 2021 Lowy Institute Poll. The Lowy Institute Poll reports the results of a nationally representative online and telephone survey conducted by the Social Research Centre (SRC) between 15 and 29 March 2021, with a sample size of 2222 Australian adults. The order of questions in the survey was different from the order presented in this report.

The survey was conducted by the SRC, using the Life in Australia™ panel — currently the only probability-based online panel in Australia. Members of the panel were randomly recruited via their landline or mobile (rather than being self-selected volunteers) and agreed to provide their contact details to take part in surveys on a regular basis. SRC uses a mixed-mode approach for the panel, including online surveys (95% of respondents) and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (5% of respondents) to provide coverage of the offline population (households without internet access).

On a simple random sample of 2222 responses, the margin of error is approximately 2.1%. Where a complex sample is used, the 'design effect' measures the additional variance in comparison with a simple random sample. The design effect for this survey is estimated at 1.97. A completion rate of 83.8% was achieved. Unlike other commercial online panels in Australia, the probability basis of the Life in Australia sampling method means results are generalisable to the national population and sampling errors and confidence intervals can be calculated.

For more information on the Lowy Institute Poll and methodology, go to <https://lowyinstitutepoll.lowyinstitute.org/>. The full results of the Lowy Institute Poll will be released in June 2021.

TABLES OF RESULTS

Please note that totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, do you think the Australian federal government has done too much, not enough or about the right amount to bring Australians home from overseas?

Too much	About the right amount	Not enough	Don't know
7%	59%	33%	1%

2. Currently, Australians are not permitted to leave the country without applying for a special exemption. Which one of the following best describes your view?

Only Australians granted special exemptions should be allowed to leave	41%
Australians who have been vaccinated should be free to leave	40%
All Australians should be free to leave	18%
Don't know	1%

3. Overall, how well or badly do you think each of the following countries have handled the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak so far?

Country	Year	Very well	Fairly well	Total: very well and fairly well	Fairly badly	Very badly	Don't know/no view
Australia	2020	43%	50%	93%	6%	1%	0%
	2021	65%	30%	95%	4%	1%	0%
Taiwan	2021	23%	43%	66%	20%	5%	9%
China	2020	6%	25%	31%	25%	44%	1%
	2021	12%	33%	45%	22%	30%	3%
United Kingdom	2020	3%	27%	30%	49%	21%	1%
	2021	1%	18%	19%	49%	31%	1%
India	2021	2%	25%	27%	47%	21%	5%
United States	2020	2%	8%	10%	27%	63%	0%
	2021	0%	7%	7%	24%	68%	0%

4. Now thinking about Australia helping other countries to access COVID-19 vaccines. Are you in favour or against each of the following?

	In favour	Against	Don't know
Australia helping Pacific Island countries to pay for COVID-19 vaccines	83%	16%	1%
Australia helping Southeast Asian countries to pay for COVID-19 vaccines	60%	38%	2%

NOTES

¹ Lynette Wood, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, Additional Budget Estimates, 25 March 2021, 8, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=ld%3A%22committees%2Festimate%2F0cc7fe55-035d-4bfd-aa07-044df889d14f%2F0000%22>.

² The Lowy Institute Poll is a nationally representative survey of Australian adults living in Australia. Overseas Australians would not have been included in the sample.

³ Australia's outgoing travel restrictions were amended on 21 March 2021 to allow direct travel to New Zealand.

⁴ <https://interactives.loyyinstitute.org/features/covid-performance/#rankings>, update as at 13 March 2021.

⁵ <https://poll.loyyinstitute.org/charts/budget-priorities>.

⁶ Stephen Dziedzic, "Federal Government to Ramp up Coronavirus Vaccine Diplomacy in the Pacific, South-East Asia", 31 October 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-31/federal-government-to-ramp-up-pacific-vaccine-diplomacy/12834020>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Natasha Kassam

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Natasha Kassam is Director of the Lowy Institute's Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Program. She is a former Australian diplomat, researching Australia's Indo-Pacific strategy, China's domestic politics, Taiwan, and Australia-China relations. She is also a Fellow of the ANU National Security College's Futures Council for 2020-21. Natasha is a regular contributor to Australian and international media outlets including CNN, BBC, Bloomberg, CNBC and the New York Times. Prior to joining the Lowy Institute, Natasha was responsible for government policy on human rights and legal issues in China, and she drafted the Australian government's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. Natasha was also a law and justice advisor to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in Honiara. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (Hons I) and a Bachelor of International Studies from the University of Sydney and speaks Mandarin.

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