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MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

One year on, Cyclone Gita devastation remains

In February 2018, the Pacific Islands were rocked by Cyclone Gita, one of the fiercest in decades to sweep through the region. Among the worst hit areas was American Samoa, where a state of emergency was declared immediately after the storm hit.

One year on, the devastation caused by Gita is still evident and its impact profound. Bishop Peter Brown of the Diocese of Pago Pago in American Samoa says urgent support is still needed. 'Our diocese was particularly devastated by Cyclone Gita which destroyed many diocesan buildings,' he wrote.

Bishop Brown says education is one of the most heavily impacted areas. 'We must rebuild the house used to host our volunteer teachers and religious sisters who work in our five diocesan schools,' he says. 'Due to the disrepair of this building, we are unable to respond to volunteers offering to come to the island and teach. The building is required urgently as it is limiting the educational opportunities of our children.'

Catholic Mission is accepting funds to support the reconstruction of the volunteer teachers' house and other Church infrastructure in Pago Pago at the request of Bishop Brown.

National Director of Catholic Mission Father Brian Lucas called for Australians to give generously. 'It is distressing to hear that, even 12 months after Cyclone Gita, some 730 children in Pago Pago diocesan schools may be left behind in their education because of the significant structural damage that remains.'

'One characteristic we share with our neighbours in the Pacific is a familiarity with natural disasters, and as we offer support to those affected in Queensland and Tasmania at this time, we should also look abroad to where disadvantage deepens the impact of catastrophic events.'

To donate, please visit <https://catholicmission.org.au/news/latest-news/cyclone-gita>

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