



OVERSEAS AID AND DEVELOPMENT

Towards 0.7% of GNI

Contributing our fair share to global development

Australia, as a wealthy nation, should provide care and support for less developed countries and contribute our 'fair share' to poverty alleviation and long-term development.

Australia's overseas aid is at a record low. We are one of the world's wealthiest nations and can afford to provide assistance to disadvantaged communities in low income countries.

To meet the Sustainable Development Goals¹ to end poverty, ensure universal education and gender equity, and improve child and maternal health, the United Nations agreed that developed nations should devote 0.7 % of GNI to overseas aid. In 2000 former PM John Howard committed to reaching this target.

Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands met this target several years ago. The British Government reached 0.7% in 2013 and passed a bill in 2015 committing to an annual 0.7% GNI investment in overseas development goals each year. Australia is projected to spend only 0.22 % of GNI on overseas aid. This is Australia's lowest contribution since Australian aid records began 60 years ago, and ranks us 19th among the 28 wealthy OECD countries.

> GREENS INITIATIVE

- The Greens plan to increase overseas aid to 0.7% of GNI over the coming decade. The Parliamentary Budget Office has costed this at \$7.97 billion over the forward estimates.

- Provision has been included for additional increases in the event of natural disasters or conflicts requiring major humanitarian interventions.

¹<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

- Ensure the purpose and impact of aid is transparent and accountable.

- Establish an independent department to oversee aid delivery and effectiveness.

- Ensure aid programs are not used as a means to subsidise Australian business.

- Ensure that Australia's contribution to meet the challenge of climate change is new money, not funds redirected from existing aid programs.

- Target assistance, particularly in the Asia Pacific, for climate change adaptation measures so communities can remain in their own countries and maintain cultural cohesion.

- Provide a greater focus on strengthening health systems to address sexual and reproductive health, and the prevention and consequences of HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases.

- Reinstate programs dismantled by the Liberal/National government including in Africa and the Middle East.

- Emergency relief should be provided with impartiality and neutrality, independent from the political, economic or military objectives of the Australian government.

Not just more, but better aid

Effective aid is about more than increasing dollar amounts. It is about creating programs that are targeted to alleviate poverty and that empower recipient communities in planning and implementation. The key

purpose driving the Australian aid program should be alleviating poverty, not promoting our national political and commercial interests.

A significant percentage of Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) is delivered through other government departments, including the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Immigration Department. A few years ago, a Greens-initiated Senate Inquiry uncovered that the ADF wrongly classified almost \$190 million in military spending in Afghanistan as foreign aid and that the ADF cannot track the majority of its ODA projects in Uruzgan Province.

It is essential that Australia's aid program is transparent and accountable to the Australian government and to recipient communities. In 2006, AusAID established an Office of Development Effectiveness but this office has been a disappointment. Sitting within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it is less able to offer a robust unbiased critique of aid programs and it does not report directly to parliament. It is lacking teeth compared to Britain's Independent Commission on Aid Impact.

Gender equality is a fundamental issue with women suffering disproportionate impoverishment. It is well recognised that women can drive community change when empowered to do so, and this can be assisted with effective aid. The Greens' International Aid and Development (Promoting Gender Equality) Bill 2015 would require the Minister to report on how funds were spent, and how these funds help to promote gender equality. The assumption that simply increasing economic activity will benefit people in low income countries fails to recognise the specific historical and cultural bases for gender inequality.

> BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Greens recognise more aid is urgently required, however rebuilding Australia's aid budget from such a low current base will now take time.

This policy has been fully costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office. To reach 0.7% of GNI by 2025-26 on a straight line basis will cost \$7.97 over the forward estimates.

> OTHER PARTIES' POSITIONS

Labor

Labor has not committed to raising aid levels to 0.7% of GNI and has forgotten about its commitment to a 0.5% GNI target. Instead, Labor has only proposed to reverse the latest \$224 million of the Coalition's cuts.

Labor has not supported an independent office of aid effectiveness. While previously in government Labor announced \$375 million of the existing aid budget would be diverted to pay for onshore asylum seeker detention costs.

Liberal

The Liberal Party walked away from their commitment to increase the aid budget to 0.5 % by 2015 and has recently announced bigger cuts. Aid as a proportion of GNI is projected to fall to an historic low of 0.22%. In total, the Coalition has cut a record \$11.3b from the overseas aid and development budget.