

# Federal Election 2025: Australian aid responsive to the polycrisis

The Australian international development and humanitarian assistance program needs to be fit-for-purpose and responsive to the multiple compounding pressures the world is facing. From the impacts of climate-induced disaster events, increased and protracted violent conflicts, and economic shocks that are leaving millions insecure and in poverty, we are experiencing a polycrisis that requires immediate attention. People in developing countries are the most exposed to the worst effects of the polycrisis. Yet, Australian aid is at an all-time low, flat-lining at just 0.68% of the Federal Budget.

Additionally, Australia is the world's second-largest climate polluter when accounting for fossil fuel exports but has not yet implemented pathways and targets to transition away from fossil fuel exports in line with 1.5C. Instead, Australia spends over \$3.5 billion annually on subsidising fossil fuel companies via the Fuel Tax Credit Scheme at the same time as meeting less than a quarter of its fair share of the global goal to finance urgently needed climate action. The development and humanitarian sector is calling on all political parties to commit to scaling up Australian aid and to assist developing countries with urgently addressing climate change impacts.

## Our election asks

**Commit to increasing Australian aid to 1% of the Federal Budget in the first budget after being elected,** to address the growing needs of a world in polycrisis and prevent a further spiraling of inequality, instability and global poverty. Increased investment must be targeted to ensure Australia's development and humanitarian programs are effective and inclusive, as well as prioritised and resourced in a manner that is commensurate with the challenges facing Australia's region and the world.

**Commit to ending government subsidies to fossil fuel companies** through the Fuel Tax Credits Scheme and instead use this budget allocation in the billions to fund climate adaptation and mitigation activities in developing countries.

# Investments to increase Australia's aid program to 1% of the Federal Budget



## Meet our fair share on international commitments

Boost investment to **deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals** that are most off track

The Australian Government should double down on its commitment to Agenda 2030, boosting investment in development programming for the Sustainable Development Goals and regions that are furthest behind. For Small Island Developing States there has been just 5.9 per cent progress on SDGs since 2015 and just 11.5 per cent progress in Least Developed Countries. In Australia's region, climate action, access to clean water and sanitation facilities and girl's education all require urgent attention to achieve the 2030 target.

## Expand high-performing NGO programs

Increase funding delivered through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program by **\$40m annually**

The Australian NGO Cooperation program has a 50-year track record as a high-performing and high-value civil society partnership, delivering lasting change across 54 countries, working with over 2000 local partners. In 2022-23 ANCP projects collectively reached over 5.5 million people globally. Increasing funding would leverage the capacity of accredited NGOs, driving long-term sustainable local partnerships, and expanding the reach of the aid program.

## Meet humanitarian need

Double the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to **\$300m annually**

Every day Australian humanitarian organisations deliver lifesaving assistance in global emergencies. Funding must be increased to appropriately resource Australian NGOs and civil society partners to respond to emerging and protracted crises. In 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake, Australian agencies together with regional and global coordination teams responded in an average of 1.5 hours with 843 staff providing critical child protection, gender-based violence services and psychosocial care to affected communities.

## Improve health equity in our region

**Double** Australian aid spending on **health** over the next five years

Drawing on the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic, and the structural inequalities in access to quality health services in the Asia-Pacific region, it is critical Australia's aid program invests in health systems strengthening to achieve resilient regional health architecture that can deliver universal healthcare coverage. Increased investments would contribute to building a critical health workforce and primary health care infrastructure, enhancing mental health support, and ensuring all persons have equal access to quality healthcare services.

## Strengthen civil society

Channel **25% of Australian aid** to and through civil society organisations

With current global trends on shrinking civic space and democratic backsliding, there is an acute need for Australia to invest in civil society in our region. Currently just 13 per cent of Australian aid is delivered to or through civil society organisations. Increasing investment in civil society organisations is an opportunity to contribute to a strong, robust and resilient regional civic space and build critical people-to-people linkages across the Asia-Pacific.

## Achieve equality through transformative development

Invest in initiatives that **address the root causes** of inequality

Increase targeted funding and boost mainstreaming efforts to drive transformative change on gender equality, disability equity, social inclusion and LGBTQIA+ rights. Initiatives must be aimed at addressing the structural inequality and underlying social norms that contribute to the increased violence, discrimination, inequity and exclusion experienced by marginalised communities. These measures will help to ensure Australia's aid program addresses the root causes of poverty and reaches all, including the most vulnerable.

## Elevate First Nations approaches in development

Elevate the **voices of First Nations peoples** in Australia's development programming

The Australian Government should implement and strengthen the Indigenous Diplomacy Agenda, ensure adequate resourcing of the Office of the Ambassador for First Nations People, and elevate the voices of First Nations' peoples in Australia's foreign policy. In particular, Australia should ensure that First Nations' voices, expertise and knowledge systems are incorporated into Australia's international development investments, and that First Nations leaders are substantively engaged in COP31 from the planning stage onward if the bid succeeds.

## Build development and humanitarian capability

Increase investment in **DFAT capability** to manage high quality humanitarian and development programs

Increased capability will provide a pathway to scaling up direct funding to Australian and local NGOs and civil society through the development and humanitarian programs, contributing to the objectives set in Australia's International Development and Humanitarian policies. This means the delivery of more effective, high-quality and sustainable development and humanitarian assistance driven by increased internal resourcing, skills and specialist expertise.

## Invest in children and young people

Develop a **strategy for children and young people** for Australia's development program

Across the Asia-Pacific 50 per cent of the population is aged 24 and under. The region's youth offer untapped potential to drive prosperity if empowered to play a role in the decisions that will shape their and the region's future. A strategy that outlines well-designed policy for protecting and empowering children and young people through the development program is critical to achieving development progress in Australia's region and beyond.



# About ACFID

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations involved in international development and humanitarian action.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is Australia acting with compassion and fairness for a just, sustainable and equitable world.

## OUR SHARED PURPOSE

Our purpose is to lead, unite and support international development and humanitarian organisations to realise our vision.

## ABOUT ACFID

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 128 full members and 20 affiliate members operating in more than 85 developing countries. The total revenue raised by ACFID's membership from all sources amounts to \$1.89 billion (2021 - 22), \$773 million of which is raised from over 1.14 million Australians. ACFID's members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community-based groups, with a mix of secular and faith-based organisations. ACFID members must comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct, a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of signatory organisations. Covering 9 Quality Principles, 33 Commitments and 92 compliance indicators, the Code sets good standards for program effectiveness, fundraising, governance and financial reporting. Compliance includes annual reporting and checks. The Code has an independent complaint handling process.

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