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# ACFID: 10 questions on international development

3 Jun 2016 [Richard Di Natale](#)

## The broader narrative for aid

### 1. What do you and your party see as the primary purpose of the Australian aid program?

Australian aid should never be diverted to subsidising Australian businesses and should always aim to provide long-term and sustainable benefit to local communities in recipient countries who are suffering the effects of poverty.

The key purpose driving the Australian aid program should always be about poverty alleviation, community empowerment and capacity-building through the Sustainable Development Goals. Australian aid funding should never contribute to the disempowerment or disadvantage of local communities and individuals.

Australia's aid funding frameworks should never prioritise our own national political and commercial interests. However currently Australia's Mining for Development or Aid for Trade frameworks are aimed at benefiting Australian corporate interests as a driving principle.

### 2. What do you and your party see Australia's role to be in contributing to peace and stability in Asia and the Pacific?

The Australian Greens believe community wellbeing is fundamental to a peaceful, stable and just society. Australia's aid program should contribute to this by building access to health, education and wellbeing services; by embedding equality, justice and humanitarian principles into every funded program; and by promoting and building long-term and sustainable frameworks to alleviate poverty, disadvantage and disempowerment for all individuals.

Australia's aid should be spent effectively to build long-term wellbeing, self-reliance and empowerment of people in local communities in aid-recipient countries. Long-term access for all to education and training, governance building and community participation is essential. Protection of terrestrial and marine biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources for and by local communities is also essential.

Our Overseas Aid policy is here: <http://greens.org.au/policies/overseas-aid> and election aid initiative here: <http://greens.org.au/policies/overseas-aid>

## Aid Volume and management

### 3. **ACFID believes that Australia should rebuild the aid budget to reach \$5.5 billion in the life of the new Parliament (by 2018-19). What will you and your party do to reinvest in the Australian aid program?**

The Greens aid policy has long called for Australia to commit 0.7% of our Gross National Income to international aid and development, and in 2013 the Greens introduced the *Overseas Aid (Millennium Development Goals) Bill* mandated a straight line increase of aid to reach 0.7% by 2020-21.

With Australia's aid commitments now falling to a historic low of 0.22% after some \$11 billion in cuts by the Coalition government – with a 33% cut in 2015-16 alone, the Greens' aid plan is to increase Australia's overseas aid contribution to 0.7% over the coming decade.

The Parliamentary Budget office has costed this at \$4.33 billion by 2018-19 over the forward estimates in a straight line, rising each year to reach the 0.7% target by 2025-26. Of course as a percentage of GNI, dollar amounts are dependent on total GNI.

### 4. **What steps would you and your party take to ensure an effective, transparent and predictable aid program?**

The Greens will be reintroducing legislation to mandate a progressive increase in our aid commitments to reach an annual 0.7% GNI over the next decade. Aid funding This should provide predictability for funded aid programs.

The Greens' believe the purpose and impact of all funded aid programs should be transparent and accountable to the Australian parliament *and* to recipient communities. Our legislation reinstates an independent department for AusAID with its own cabinet-level Minister, separate from the conflicting interests of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Minister will be required to report annually to the Parliament on how Australia is meeting its legislated annual increase in aid spending, how the aid is spent for each program, and how each funded program meets the Sustainable Development Goals with attention to how gender equality is promoted.

Environmental, social, gender, age, diversity and disability impact statements will be required for each aid program or project to ensure aid funding is not diverted to projects that do not benefit the wellbeing of local communities, or that disempower or create disadvantage for local communities.

## International Commitments

### 5. **What would you and your party do to ensure Australia fulfils its commitments under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, signed in 2015? How will you ensure Australia's aid program is working towards the commitment to 'leave no one behind'?**

The Greens policy aims towards the 1.5 degree target and our policies are aligned to get Australia to 60-80% reductions by 2030 and net zero by 2040. This will be achieved across all of Australia's pollution by getting at least 90% clean energy by 2030, investing in public transport, encouraging uptake of electric vehicles and fuel standards for vehicles, stop native forest logging and encourage land use practices to grow carbon stored in the land and changed agricultural practices and research.

## Humanitarian Response

### 6. What would you and your party do to ensure Australia fulfils its commitments to ensure the world achieves its 2C target and pursues 1.5C (as per the Paris international climate change agreement), and effectively supports developing countries that will be hardest hit by the impacts of climate change?

The Australian Greens joined [over 90 Greens parties around the world](#) in committing to implement the Paris Agreement reached at the UN climate summit, to stabilise global warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Australia is one of the world's highest per-capita emitters and exporters of coal, and as such is responsible for the impacts of climate change that are already causing so much suffering in developing countries. The Greens are committed to enabling a transition to at least 90% clean energy by 2030, and phasing out dirty fossil fuel stations and transitioning to renewables. We undertake to ban new coal and gas exploration and mining; ending \$21 billion fossil fuel subsidies to big mining companies and cut Australia's own climate pollution by 60-80% by 2020 and net zero by 2040.

The Greens' commitment to addressing the growing challenges and effects of climate change are integrated into our policies and social, economic and ecological responses across portfolios.

The Greens aid initiative calls for climate change adaptation to be imbedded within a long-term poverty elimination strategy, aiming to enable communities to remain in their own countries to maintain cultural cohesion, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

Our refugee and humanitarian policy calls for greater regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region to provide safer pathways for asylum seekers, with long-term planning to accommodate people displaced by ongoing conflicts and climate change.

Australian Greens Policies: <http://greens.org.au/policy-platform>

View the Greens Climate Change election initiatives: <http://greens.org.au/initiatives>

### 7. How should Australia respond to humanitarian emergencies in developing countries around the world?

The Greens believe that being a committed and active responder to emergencies in developing countries is a critical role Australia should play, particularly in our region.

Australia has consistently pledged less than our fair share of funding to global relief efforts for crises such as the conflict in Syria. This is particularly stark when compared to other developed nations, and we need to be much more generous. Ensuring that we respond to extraordinary levels of humanitarian need with our fair share of funding is essential.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief should also be a primary function of our defence force. Our defence forces provided invaluable assistance in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, and more recently to cyclone damaged Vanuatu, and enhancing these capacities is important. As the wealthiest country in our immediate region, we have a responsibility to assist in this manner.

Australia also needs to assist developing nations, particularly in our region, to be better prepared for the impacts of climate change through ensuring we fund our fair share of funding commitments to the Green Climate Fund, and focusing on supporting adaptation measures in the region.

Humanitarian emergencies can also lead to displacement, and the Greens are committed to ensuring that we provide fair and efficient assessment of people seeking asylum. The Greens will increase the number of refugees we take each year to 50,000 people, significantly increase the funding we provide the UNHCR and organisations in our region to speed up the processing time of people's claims, provide a 'dignity package' for refugees while they wait (including access to healthcare, education, English lessons and work rights), release all children from detention (including those held on Nauru), close off-shore camps in Manus Island and Nauru and abolish Temporary Protection Visas and reintroduce permanent protection for all applicants. For further detail, please see: <http://greens.org.au/refugees>.

**8. How will you and your party commit to ensuring that Australia can continue to be an effective partner to countries experiencing humanitarian crises?**

Australia has a responsibility, in our region and globally, to be an active and accountable partner to countries experiencing humanitarian crises.

As illustrated above, the Greens are committed to a number of measures that will better equip Australia to assist countries in crisis. This includes ensuring our fair share of humanitarian assistance is met, ensuring our defence force has a focus on humanitarian and disaster relief, and providing additional support and places to people seeking asylum.

**Fostering the role of civil society**

**9. What would you and your party do to foster a positive environment for civil society organisations to operate in Australia and internationally – as key actors alongside government and the private sector for poverty alleviation and sustainable development?**

Strong and independent civil society organisations are fundamental to the maintenance of transparency in a society both in Australia and overseas.

In the area of aid and sustainable development the participation of NGOs is vital to the delivery of effective aid programs to alleviate poverty. NGOs and independent civil society organisations are also fundamental for the promotion of transparent, just and fair communities with equal access of participation for all.

In this, the Greens see NGOs as important expert partners in the more transparent and coordinated planning, delivery and assessment of effective aid programs. Building capacity of local and national civil society in aid-recipient communities and countries to participate in the planning, assessment and delivery of aid programs in their communities as partners is also an important factor.

The Greens' aid initiative and legislative response helps build a framework towards a more effective delivery of projects that contributing to poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

**10. Is there anything else about international development or your vision for Australia’s role in the world that you would like to tell us?**

The Greens believe effective aid is not just about increasing dollar amounts, but should be delivered by targeted programs that alleviate the effects of poverty; provide access to health, education and wellbeing services; and build community capacity and empowerment. Aid programs should be consistent with a human rights-based approach to development to promote self-reliance, local participation, gender equity and environmental protection. Aid programs should also reduce climate change vulnerability in developing nations. The purpose and impact of all aid programs should be transparent and made accountable to the Australian parliament and to recipient communities.

The Greens would see a greater focus on strengthening access to basic health services and building health systems to address sexual and reproductive health, and the prevention and consequences of HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases.

The Greens recognise 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 assumption that simply increasing economic activity will benefit people in low income countries fails to recognise historical and cultural bases for gender inequality. The Greens’ call for aid programs to also raise the status of women, including community-based schemes, family planning and special education programs for women. The Greens’ *International Aid and Development (Promoting Gender Equality) Bill 2015* required the Minister to detail how aid is spent, and how gender equality was promoted. This requirement will be embedded into our new aid bill to be reintroduced into the new parliament.

The Greens support the introduction of a “Tobin Tax” on international financial transactions to help address global issues such as climate change and poverty alleviation.