

Motion to be put with the permission of ACFID COUNCIL
Friday 16 October 2015

Regarding:

- **The damage that cuts to Australia's aid budget have caused to people and communities around the world and to Australia's relationships and prospects.**
- **Calling on the Australian Government to rebuild Australia's aid program - a vital tool in saving lives; promoting opportunity and prosperity; combatting development challenges; and for furthering Australia's role in the world.**

Background

Australia's aid program reaches millions of poor people and communities around the world. Last year alone, Australia's aid program enabled over 1.3 million more children to enroll in school, vaccinated more than 2.3 million children, gave 2.9 million people access to safe drinking water and 1 million people access to sanitation. Australia has also responded generously and effectively to humanitarian crises in more than 20 countries in the past year.

Australia's aid program achieves all this for around 1% of our Federal expenditure. Independent evaluations at the national and international level have consistently emphasised the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's aid program.¹

Despite these achievements, the last two years have seen the largest budget cuts in the history of Australia's aid program. Since September 2013, projected aid expenditure has been reduced by more than \$11 billion over five years. This year's Federal Budget saw the single largest in-year cut to Australia's aid program ever, with a cut of \$1 billion, or 20 per cent, reducing our aid budget from around \$5 billion to \$4 billion.

For some countries, this has resulted in massive reductions in the assistance they receive from Australia. We have cut our assistance to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa by 70 per cent and have cut our assistance to fragile countries emerging from, or experiencing, conflict such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar by 40 per cent.

The decision to make successive and substantial cuts to Australia's aid program was made rapidly and without any review or deep consideration of the needs it responds to, its impact in the region and beyond, nor its impact on Australia's relationships and role in the world.

Australia's aid program is an essential component of our role in the world. Our aid program makes a vital contribution to solving the world's shared problems such as the effects of climate change, increasing conflict and stability, and global disease outbreaks. In a year where Ebola threatened the global health system, where conflict in Syria has made millions of people refugees, and where natural disasters in Vanuatu and Nepal claimed thousands of lives – it is clear that the challenges facing the world are not confined to national borders. We are, in short, all in it together.

ACFID, like many supporters of Australia's aid program, strongly believe that the first priority of our development assistance is tackling poverty – part of our moral responsibility and also our international obligations. However, at the same time, we know that our aid efforts are also

¹ See: www.oecd.org/dac/australiacanddeliveragrowingaidbudgeteffectivelyandefficiently.htm and www.aidreview.gov.au/report/

important for Australia. Our aid program not only helps us deal with issues that affect us like the spread of disease, and conflict in our region – it also establishes important international connections and opens up opportunities for collaboration, innovation and economic and cultural links in our region and globally.

Next year, a further \$200 million is scheduled to be cut from Australia's aid program, as announced by the former Treasurer in December 2014, taking the aid budget from \$4 billion to \$3.8 billion. This further cut will take Australia's aid to its lowest level ever – just 0.22 per cent of our Gross National Income, or 22 cents in every dollar we spend.

A further cut to Australia's aid program will force us to break more commitments with partner governments and organisations around the world.

It will also further hamper our efforts to tackle development challenges at a time when Australia has joined with 192 other nations to sign onto the Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals are a landmark agreement to eliminate extreme poverty and inequality up to 2030. They build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals which demonstrated the progress that can be made when nations take concerted and collaborative action to tackle development challenges.

ACFID and its members know the generosity of Australians and how they are always engaged with our world. This year, the tragedy in Vanuatu and Nepal led to an outpouring of generosity from the Australian public with over \$70 million donated to ACFID member agencies for their relief and redevelopment efforts.

We urge the Australian Government to commit to no further cuts to Australia's aid budget and to rebuilding Australia's aid program - a vital tool in saving lives, promoting opportunity and prosperity, combating development challenges and for furthering Australia's role in the world.

Motion:

- 1. ACFID Council condemns cuts to Australia's aid budget and the damage they have caused to people and communities around the world and to Australia's relationships and prospects.**
- 2. ACFID calls on the Australian Government to:**
 - Reverse the scheduled further cut to the aid budget of around \$200 million in 2016/17;**
 - Rebuild the aid budget to \$5.5 billion in the next term of Parliament; and**
 - Set Australia on a trajectory to meet its international obligation of aid as 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2030.**

Mover: Matthew Maury, CEO, TEAR Australia

Seconder: Christian Nielsen, Executive Director, Live and Learn