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Labor promise to lift foreign aid welcomed by Christians across Australia

Today's announcement that a Labor government would put a stop to the years of cuts to the aid budget, has been welcomed by Christians across the nation as a good platform from which to start the rebuilding Australia's aid program.

"This is a welcomed step in the right direction, and one that the Christian community has been advocating on passionately and persistently this year," said Tim Costello, Micah Australia's Executive Director.

It was announced today at the ALP Conference that an elected Labor Government would increase aid as a percentage of gross national income every year, with a goal of achieving a funding target of 0.5% of GNI. However, details of the exact dollar increase each year were not detailed.

Micah Australia, under the leadership of Tim Costello, has been building a coalition around a policy ask of increasing aid spending and for Australia to do its fair share in being a good global neighbour. With repeated trips to Canberra this year, Micah supporters and church leaders have been speaking to both major parties about the importance of rebuilding the aid budget.

Just two weeks ago, Micah Australia's Voices for Justice in Canberra saw 200 Christians from across the nation held 94 meetings with politicians to advocate for Australia to be a leader in helping the world's poor again.

"These Christians, young and old, from all walks of life lobbied on behalf of the world's poor who will not vote or have a voice in the next election, but whose lives depend on Aid decisions," said Tim Costello.

"As we met with politicians from all major parties, there was strong consensus that Australia had stepped back in our responsibility to our region and beyond."

"Among Coalition politicians, many were surprised that Australia had sunk to 19th on the OECD table of generosity and agreed we should be in the top half of that table at least, especially when according to Credit Suisse's recent wealth report we now have the highest median wealth in the world.

Voices for Justice came on the back of a Female Church leader's delegation to Canberra in September, who met with Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Minister Peter Dutton, Shadow Minister for Finance Jim Chalmers, and others, to raise their concerns about Australia's lack of generosity and compassion.

“Yesterday’s MYEFO would have been the perfect opportunity for the Coalition to outline its own plans to rebuild Australian aid but instead there were no details on any new aid commitments. Instead we have The Australian reporting that it understands the Coalition plans to find \$80 billion of savings through further cuts to the foreign aid budget between now and 2028-2029. If true this would be very concerning indeed,” said Mr Costello.

“For years politicians on both sides have promised to rebuild Australian Aid once the surplus was regained. With MYEFO now showing we are on track for a return to surplus in 2019-2020, there are no more excuses.”

Matt Darvas, Campaign Director said today’s announcement was the culmination of many advocates, churches and NGO’s raising their voice for the world’s most vulnerable.

“It’s encouraging to think our message is starting to get cut through. Our nation’s leaders are recognising that our agenda to be a generous global neighbor, is consistent with good foreign policy and is what is needed in our region.”

“We need strong moral leadership on both side of politics, because not only is aid the right thing to do, it’s also the smart thing to do” said Matt Darvas.

“This promise by Labor is a good start. We look forward to continuing our efforts to achieve the rebuilding of Australian aid into the future.”

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Micah Australia is a coalition of churches and Christian organisations raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty.

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