

POLICY PROPOSAL: ALLOCATING 1% OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET IN OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)

A modest yet impactful target that aligns with Australia’s moral duty, strategic interests, and public support.

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INTRODUCTION

As Australia faces a rapidly changing global landscape marked by the ‘polycrisis’—encompassing rising conflict, climate change, global health challenges, and geopolitical tensions—our nation’s role in international development has never been more crucial. Two decades of progress in fighting infectious diseases, empowering women and girls, and improving education are now at risk. One in five children currently live in conflict zones, 700 million people endure extreme poverty, and humanitarian need has surged by 80% since 2019. This memo proposes a strategic increase in Australia’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 1% of the Federal Budget following the next Federal Election, to safeguard these critical gains and address the unprecedented challenges we face.

BACKGROUND

Australia’s aid budget has experienced a steady decline over the past decade, currently standing at just 0.68% of the Federal Budget. This reduction has not only diminished Australia’s influence in the Indo-Pacific region but has also weakened our capacity to contribute to global stability, economic security, and health resilience.

Graph: Structural Decline of Australia’s Aid Budget (2000–2024)

Australian Aid as a Percentage of the Federal Budget (2000–2024) with Prime Ministers



Source: [ANU Dev Tracker](#), ODA from DFAT statistical summaries and budget documents, federal budget from Treasury budget document

POLICY ASK:

Allocate 1% of the Federal Budget to Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the first budget following the next Federal Election, expected to be in FY26-27.

This target is achievable within the context of Australia's broader budget priorities. The proposed increase would position Australia as a leader in the region, enhancing our ability to respond to global crises and contributing to a safer, more stable world.

Table: Pathway to Achieving 1% Of The Federal Budget In ODA After The Next Election

Fiscal Year	Current ODA Budget (\$B) <small>*Based on Government forecasts</small>	Projected ODA Budget (\$B)	Percentage of Federal Budget	Additional ODA Needed (\$B)
2024-25	4.961	4.961	0.68%	0.00
2025-26	5.071	5.071	0.66%	0.00
2026-27	5.188	7.937	1.00%	2.75

Note: This is not the only way to achieve the 1% target as unpacked further in **Appendix A**.

RATIONALE AND BENEFITS

1. Strategic Interests:

- **National Security:** Investing in development aids in addressing the root causes of instability, reducing the need for costly military interventions. Twenty-two of our twenty-six nearest neighbours are developing countries.
- **Economic Security:** Supporting economic growth in our region creates markets for Australian goods and services and mitigates migration pressures. Ten of Australia's top 15 export markets today are countries where we once provided aid.

2. Moral Responsibility:

- **Global Leadership:** Australia has a moral obligation to assist the world's most vulnerable. Fulfilling this obligation not only enhances our standing as a responsible global citizen but also aligns with our commitment to international goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Humanitarian Impact:** Increased aid can deliver life-saving services, support education, and improve health outcomes in some of the world's poorest regions.

3. Public Support:

- **Research by RedBridge (Appendix C):** Indicates public backing for increased aid when framed as a small and reasonable portion of the Federal Budget. This approach resonates with key voter cohorts and can build cross-partisan support.

CALL TO ACTION AND CONCLUSION

We urge all parties to commit to achieving 1% of the Federal Budget in ODA by FY26-27. This is a reasonable ask that aligns with Australia's values and interests, and it's more than just an investment in the world's most vulnerable—it's an investment in Australia's future. Support from across the political spectrum will ensure that this initiative is sustainable, impactful, and contributes to a safer, more prosperous world for all.

NEXT STEPS

- **Cross-partisan Support:** Building broad political support for this initiative will be crucial. We encourage all stakeholders to engage with MPs, candidates, and the broader public to build consensus around the 1% target.
- **Engagement and Advocacy:** The Safer World for All campaign, led by ACFID & Micah Australia, will continue to engage MPs through constituency meetings, candidate forums, and digital campaigning to build support for this initiative.
- **Detailed Briefings:** Further briefings and research, including the findings from RedBridge, are available to provide additional context and support for this policy proposal.

APPENDICES

The following appendices provide detailed analysis, case studies, and research findings that support the recommendations made in this memo:

- [Appendix A:](#) Detailed Analysis and Projections for Achieving 1% Of the Federal Budget in ODA After the Next Election
- [Appendix B:](#) Case Studies Illustrating the Impact of Current Aid Programs and The Potential Benefits of Increased Funding
- [Appendix C:](#) Public Attitudes on Aid – Insights from RedBridge Research
- [Appendix D:](#) What Happened to ODA Targets Focused On % Of GNI?

APPENDIX A

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND PROJECTIONS FOR ACHIEVING 1% OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET IN ODA AFTER THE NEXT ELECTION

Purpose: This appendix includes the financial projections and comparative analysis necessary to achieve the proposed 1% ODA target by FY26-27. It also provides context on how this increase aligns with other major budget areas.

1. Projections for increasing to 1%

To achieve the target of 1% of the Federal Budget in ODA by the first budget after the next Federal Election (FY26-27), we project the following budget increases based on current government forecasts:

Fiscal Year	Current ODA Budget (\$B) <small>*Based on Government forecasts</small>	Projected ODA Budget (\$B)	Percentage of Federal Budget	Additional ODA Needed (\$B)
2024-25	4.961	4.961	0.68%	0.00
2025-26	5.071	5.071	0.66%	0.00
2026-27	5.188	7.937	1.00%	2.75

Key Consideration: These projections assume the current government forecast will not change, and the increase to 1% of the Federal Budget in ODA will occur entirely in FY26-27. An alternate scenario could allow a more gradual increase, starting in FY26-27 and reaching 1% of the Federal Budget in ODA by FY28-29. However, postponing the achievement of the 1% target could limit Australia's ability to respond promptly to global challenges and diminish the potential for strengthening its international influence during this critical period.

2. Comparative Analysis: ODA vs. Other Major Budget Areas (2024-2027)

Fiscal Year	Defence		Social Security & Welfare		Health		Official Development Assistance (ODA)	
	Total (\$B)	% of Federal Budget	Total (\$B)	% of Federal Budget	Total (\$B)	% of Federal Budget	Total (\$B)	% of Federal Budget
2024-25	48.0	6.53%	266.7	36.31%	112.7	15.34%	4.961	0.68%
2025-26	50.0	6.52%	282.1	36.76%	115.9	15.11%	5.071	0.66%
2026-27	51.3	6.47%	290.7	36.62%	118.5	14.93%	5.188	0.65%

Source: Figures are from Table 6.3 of Budget Paper No. 1 2024-25 setting out the estimated Federal Budget expenditures by function.

Note: Welfare and health are shared responsibilities between federal and state governments, making total spending much higher than these federal expenditure figures alone. ODA, by contrast, is solely funded by the federal budget.

3. Contextualizing the ODA Increase

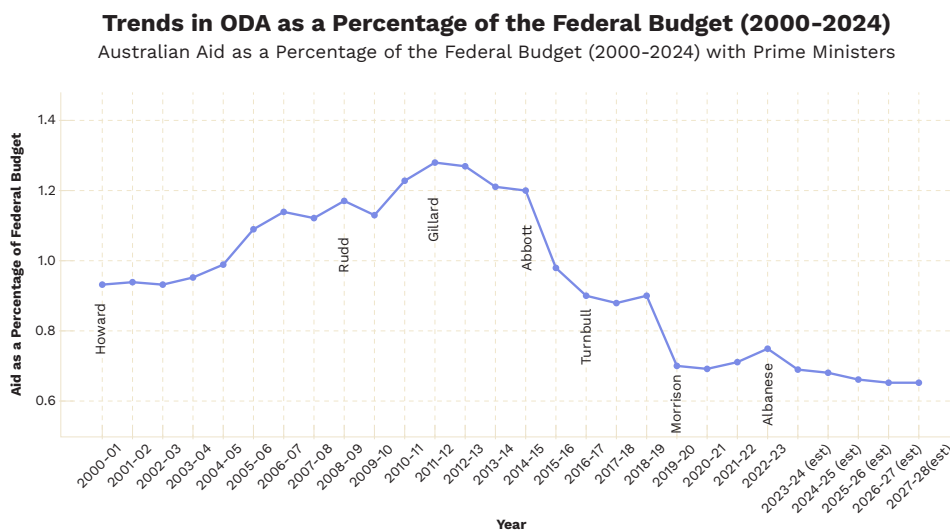
The proposed increase in ODA to 1% of the Federal Budget is modest when viewed in the context of overall government spending, yet it provides a powerful strategic return. Despite the additional \$2.75 billion required to reach this target by FY26-27, ODA will remain a small share of the budget compared to other areas such as defense and social security.

However, this investment is crucial for Australia’s long-term strategic interests:

- **National Security:** Addressing the root causes of instability in neighboring regions reduces the need for costly military interventions, as demonstrated by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Between 2003 and 2013, RAMSI cost \$2.6 billion, a significant expenditure that could have been mitigated through earlier investments in regional stability and development.
- **Economic Growth:** Strengthening economies in the Indo-Pacific creates new markets for Australian goods and services, fostering domestic economic growth. For example, many Asian countries that were once among the world’s poorest have now experienced rapid economic expansion, with approximately 2 billion people now part of the middle class. This figure is expected to rise to 3.5 billion by 2030, offering substantial opportunities for Australian businesses. Currently, Australia exports goods and services worth over \$350 billion annually to Asia, with Southeast Asia alone accounting for \$178 billion in two-way trade in 2022.
- **Historic Aid Links:** Ten of Australia’s top 15 export markets today are countries that once received Australian aid. This highlights the transformative potential of aid in fostering development and creating economic ties that benefit Australia in the long run.

4. Historical Context

The historical trend of Australia’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) as a percentage of the Federal Budget has seen significant shifts due to changing government priorities, economic conditions, and global events.



Source: [ANU Dev Tracker](#), ODA from DFAT statistical summaries and budget documents, federal budget from Treasury budget document

- **2000-2013:** During the Howard, Rudd, and Gillard governments, there was a steady increase in ODA, reaching a peak in 2011-12, where it reached 1.28% of the Federal Budget. This period reflected a strong commitment to global development.

- **2013–2020:** The Abbott, Turnbull, and Morrison governments introduced substantial cuts to the aid budget. These reductions marked a significant decline in ODA as a percentage of the Federal Budget. Despite these cuts, the Morrison government implemented targeted and temporary aid packages in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided essential support to neighboring countries during a time of global need.
- **2020–Present:** The Albanese government has reversed some of these cuts and committed to stabilizing and modestly increasing ODA in nominal terms, including through indexation to keep pace with inflation. However, despite these efforts, ODA as a percentage of the Federal Budget is forecast to decline slightly from its current level of 0.68% to 0.65% in the coming years, continuing the trend of Australia contributing a smaller proportion of its budget to aid compared to its historical commitments.

5. Impact Analysis

Increasing ODA to 1% by FY26–27 could deliver substantial benefits across several key areas:

1. Scaling High-Performing Programs

By expanding existing successful programs, the additional funds could achieve:

- **Emergency Assistance:** Provide emergency assistance to a further 14 million people in conflict and crisis situations.
- **Health:** Immunize a further 5.9 million individuals.
- **Medical Supplies:** Make 18.6 million additional medical equipment and supplies accessible.
- **Education:** Enroll 146,500 additional children in school.
- **Social Protection:** Reach an additional 97.6 million people with social protection programs.
- **Gender Violence Support:** Provide an additional 146,839 services to women and girl victims/survivors of violence.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Support a further 288,476 women entrepreneurs with financial and/or business development services.

These figures are based on the [Performance of Australian Development Cooperation \(PADC\) Report for 2022/23](#). The projected additional funding represents a 59% increase over the 2022/23 budget, allowing us to estimate the potential scaled impact by assuming similar program efficiency and effectiveness.

2. Increasing Humanitarian Aid

Additional funding could double the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to \$300 million annually, better addressing new crises. It could also provide an additional \$350 million per year for protracted crises, disaster preparedness, and conflict prevention.

Why is this crucial? The Indo-Pacific region is the most disaster-prone in the world, with climate change exacerbating these risks. Globally, humanitarian needs are escalating due to ongoing violent conflicts and severe food crises, with an 80% increase in people requiring humanitarian assistance since 2019. However, global humanitarian funding for 2024 is only about 33% of what is required. By increasing its humanitarian aid budget, Australia can better respond to both immediate and long-term crises, reinforcing its role as a regional leader in disaster response and conflict prevention.

This is a proposal directly from the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Humanitarian Reference Group

3. New Transformative Investments in the Indo-Pacific Region*

Additional funding could enable Australia to pioneer in:

- **Basic Education for Girls:** Prioritise education for girls in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, enhancing teaching quality and access, which would uplift regional economies and foster long-term prosperity.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Invest in critical infrastructure like roads, markets, health posts, and schools across the Pacific, boosting human development and ensuring sustainability through nation-building efforts.
- **Reinvestment in Strategic Regions:** Redirect funds to strategically important but underfunded regions, such as South Asia, to bolster stability and economic growth, aligning with Australia's long-term geopolitical interests.

4. Inter-generational Investments^

Increased ODA could establish crucial capabilities that contribute to long-term stability and prosperity:

- **Technological Capabilities:** Develop serious technological capabilities in cybersecurity, transnational crime prevention, and protection against misinformation and foreign interference.
- **Conflict Prevention:** Invest in civilian-led conflict prevention capabilities to reduce the burden on Australia's defense forces and avoid costly military interventions, ensuring sustainable aid efforts in the long term.

*^ *These proposals align with recommendations from the [Development Intelligence Lab](#) and focus on ensuring that aid dollars are used effectively to build a safer and more prosperous future.*

5. Contribution to Multilateral Fund Replenishments and New Funds

Increasing ODA would enable Australia to better contribute to essential multilateral fund replenishments, particularly those focused on health, which are due between 2025-2026.

These include key global health initiatives like the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**, and **GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance**.

Additionally, Australia will be urged to meet its fair share of a new climate finance target, which will be agreed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan later this year, and to contribute to the newly established Loss and Damage Fund. Civil society has called for these contributions to be made in addition to existing aid commitments, ensuring they do not detract from the 1% of Federal Budget goal for ODA proposed here.

These funds are crucial for ensuring global stability and addressing transnational challenges. By increasing its contributions, Australia not only strengthens its leadership role and influence in these critical areas but also gains the capacity to direct more attention and resources towards the Indo-Pacific region. This approach ensures that the region remains resilient to the impacts of climate change and health crises, protecting our closest partners and safeguarding Australia's long-term strategic interests.

6. Striking a Balance between Regional and Global Aid Investment

While it is vital to address needs within our region for which we have increased responsibility, a strong proportion of Australian aid should also be directed to where it is most needed globally. Supporting the world's poorest contributes to global stability, reduces poverty, and addresses the root causes of conflict and displacement, which ultimately impact us all. A balanced approach ensures that Australia upholds its values of compassion and leadership on the global stage.

In 2024-25, Australia's aid budget of \$4.9 billion will allocate:

- A record \$2 billion in development assistance to the Pacific, reinforcing Australia's role as the region's largest and most comprehensive development partner.
- \$1.3 billion to Southeast Asia.

For context, Tuvalu's aid allocation increased from \$17 million in 2023-24 to \$87 million in 2024-25, supporting the implementation of the Australia-Tuvalu treaty. Notably, \$87 million is also the amount allocated to the entire sub-Saharan Africa region in 2023-24.

7. Costs of Inaction

- **Escalating Conflict and Instability:** Without investment in conflict prevention, regions on the brink could spiral into full-scale crises, leading to mass displacement and increased security risks.
- **Worsening Poverty and Health Crises:** Failure to fund health and development programs could exacerbate poverty and lead to the spread of preventable diseases, especially in the Indo-Pacific. The probability of another infectious disease pandemic within the next 10 years is between 22-28% (Metabiota).
- **Irreversible Environmental Damage:** Inaction on climate adaptation could accelerate ecosystem destruction, increase natural disaster frequency, and impose devastating economic and social costs.
- **Greater Long-Term Financial Burdens:** Addressing crises post-occurrence is significantly more expensive than investing in prevention, leading to higher future expenses and strained public finances.

APPENDIX B

CASE STUDIES ILLUSTRATING THE IMPACT OF CURRENT AID PROGRAMS AND THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF INCREASED FUNDING

These case studies illustrate the significant impact that Australia's aid programs have already achieved in key areas such as health, education, and agriculture. By increasing ODA to 1% of the Federal Budget, Australia has the opportunity to amplify these successes, reaching more people, addressing more challenges, and contributing to a safer and more prosperous world for all.

Case Study: Strengthening Health Systems and Disease Prevention in the Indo-Pacific

Background

Australia's aid program has been crucial in supporting health systems across the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. The focus has been on building resilient, equitable, and inclusive health systems, with a particular emphasis on gender-responsive approaches and addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as women, girls, and people with disabilities.

Current Impact

- **Immunization:** In 2022–23, Australian aid enabled the immunization of more than 10.1 million people across the Indo-Pacific region. This large-scale immunization effort has been a cornerstone in preventing the spread of communicable diseases, particularly in countries with limited access to healthcare.
- **Health System Strengthening:** Australia's development assistance has played a significant role in strengthening the health systems of 36 partner countries, enhancing their preparedness for health emergencies. This includes bolstering local capacities to respond to pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, and the health impacts of climate change.
- **Global Health Impact:** Through partnerships with global health organizations, Australia has contributed to significant health outcomes worldwide. In 2022, these efforts enabled 24.5 million people to receive antiretroviral therapy for HIV, 6.7 million people to receive treatment for tuberculosis, and 165 million people to receive treatment for malaria.

Potential Benefits of Increased Funding

- **Expansion of Immunization Programs:** With an increase in ODA to 1% of the Federal Budget, Australia could significantly expand its immunization programs. This could involve reaching an additional 5.9 million people by 2027, particularly in remote and underserved areas, further reducing the prevalence of vaccine-preventable diseases.
- **Strengthening Health Systems:** Additional funding would allow for more extensive support to health systems in partner countries, substantially increasing the number of health workers trained and increasing the resilience of these systems to health emergencies.
- **Global Health Contributions:** Increased ODA would also enhance Australia's ability to contribute to global health initiatives, potentially supporting millions more people in accessing critical treatments for HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria, and advocating for greater focus on the Indo-Pacific in global health agendas.

Source: [DFAT, Development Cooperation Fact Sheet - Health \(May 2024\)](#)

Case Study: Education Programs in the Indo-Pacific Region

Background

In 2022–23, Australia’s development assistance enabled more than 248,000 additional children and adolescents to enroll in school. Australia’s education programs in the Indo-Pacific are essential to building inclusive and resilient communities. These investments enhance the wellbeing of children and young people, preparing them for future opportunities and contributing to regional stability.

Current Impact

- **Australia Awards Scholarships:** As of April 2024, 2,106 students were studying at 46 Australian tertiary institutions through Australia Awards scholarships. Of these students, 57% were women, and 5% were supported through Australia Awards disability services. The Australia Awards program is designed to build skills and knowledge in developing countries by offering individuals from these countries the opportunity to study in Australia. The scholarships focus on areas that will contribute to the long-term development needs of Australia’s partner countries.
- **Teacher Training in Papua New Guinea:** In 2023, 3,132 early grade teachers (including 1,641 women) from 830 schools in Papua New Guinea participated in English literacy training, receiving new learning resources to improve educational outcomes.
- **Curriculum Development in Laos:** Australia’s partnership in Laos led to the implementation of a new national primary curriculum in 2023, improving the quality of education across the country.

Potential Benefits of Increased Funding

- **Expanding Educational Access:** With an increase in ODA to 1% of the Federal Budget, Australia could potentially enroll an additional 146,500 children in school across the Indo-Pacific region, providing critical educational opportunities to those most in need.
- **Teacher Training Programs:** With more resources, Australia could expand teacher training programs in Papua New Guinea and other countries, enhancing literacy and numeracy skills for thousands more students.
- **Curriculum Support:** Increased funding would allow for the continuation and expansion of curriculum development initiatives, like those in Laos, ensuring that educational standards improve across the Indo-Pacific region.

Source: [DFAT, Development Cooperation Fact Sheet - Education \(May 2024\)](#)

Case Study: Strengthening Agriculture in the Indo-Pacific

Background

Australia's agricultural development initiatives are vital for enhancing food security and building resilience against climate change in the Indo-Pacific. Nearly half of the households in the region depend on agriculture or fisheries for their livelihoods. The impacts of climate change on these sectors can be profound, affecting every stage of the food system from production to consumption.

Current Impact

- **Climate-Resilient Crops:** Australia supported the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) in conserving and distributing climate-resilient food crops across the Pacific. This initiative reached 32,684 Pacific farmers, providing them with planting materials, land preparation assistance, and training on sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Improving Food Security:** In Tuvalu and Kiribati, climate-resilient farming practices have been promoted to strengthen food security and nutrition for farmers, particularly in the atoll states where resources are scarce.
- **Livestock Disease Management:** Australia has also enhanced livestock disease surveillance, diagnosis, and management capacity in Timor-Leste, significantly improving the health and productivity of livestock in the region.

Potential Benefits of Increased Funding

- **Expansion of Climate-Resilient Agriculture:** With an increase in ODA to 1% of the Federal Budget, Australia could expand support for climate-resilient agriculture, potentially doubling the number of farmers reached with training and resources.
- **Scaling Up Biosecurity Efforts:** Additional funding would allow for more comprehensive biosecurity programs, increasing surveillance, diagnosis, and response capacity to protect against emerging threats.
- **Boosting Agricultural Innovation:** More resources could be directed towards agricultural research, particularly through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), to develop new solutions for climate adaptation and resilience in food systems across the Indo-Pacific.

Source: [DFAT, Development Cooperation Fact Sheet - Agriculture \(May 2024\)](#)

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC ATTITUDES ON AID – INSIGHTS FROM REDBRIDGE RESEARCH

1. Overview of the RedBridge Research

Objective

The RedBridge research aimed to assess public sentiment towards Australia's aid budget, particularly how framing aid as a percentage of the Federal Budget rather than Gross National Income (GNI) impacts voter attitudes. The study focused on key voter cohorts expected to influence the upcoming Federal Election and included both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Methodology

Completed in July 2024, the research combined qualitative insights from focus groups in key electorates with quantitative data from a nationwide survey of 2,029 respondents. The survey results were weighted for age and gender to ensure representativeness. The focus groups included individuals from critical demographic segments or those residing in marginal seats.

- **Group 1: Future Shock** - Age 24-34yo with a university education, who are renting, and are employed in permanent, contract or casual work; living in the Federal Electorates of Wills (VIC), Brisbane (QLD), North Sydney (NSW), and Bradfield (NSW).
- **Group 2: New Middle** - Age 24yo - 50yo with a university education, who are working in service and caring professions (e.g. health, education, public service), with a mix of those who do and do not speak a language other than English at home; living in the Federal Electorates of Reid (NSW), Swan (WA), and Boothby (SA).
- **Group 3: Progressive Middle** - age 40+yo who are a mix of homeowners with and without a mortgage, who may be retired, with a university education; living in the Federal Electorates of Goldstein (VIC), Higgins (VIC) and Wentworth (NSW).
- **Group 4: Aspirationalists** - age 25yo+ who are working in business/tech or service professions, admin/ clerical, trades/skilled labour or small business owner, who are a mix of homeowners with and without a mortgage, and a mix of those with a university and vocational/TAFE education; living in the Federal Electorates of Dunkley (VIC), Hunter (NSW), and Werriwa (NSW).
- **Group 5: Regional Progressives** - Age 24yo - 50yo with a university education who are working in service and caring professions (e.g. health, education, public service); living in the Federal Electorates of Wannon (VIC), Cowper (NSW), Paterson (NSW), and Nicholls (VIC).
- **Group 6: Outsiders** - Age 21yo+ who are working in contract, casual or gig roles (including some not working and looking for work), with a mix of less than yr12, high school, and vocational/TAFE education, and a mix of those who do and do not speak a language other than English at home; living in the Federal Electorates of Blair (QLD), McEwen (VIC), and Fowler (NSW).

Key Areas Explored

- (a) Awareness and opinions on Australian government foreign aid,
- (b) Attitudes towards empathetic and strategic arguments for and against increasing aid,
- (c) Reactions to arguments after exposure,
- (d) Views on political figures in relation to foreign aid.

2. Key Findings

General Support for Aid

- 84.9% believe international and humanitarian aid in times of emergency or to countries with extreme poverty is somewhat or very important.
- 67% do not support reducing international and humanitarian aid, believing it is ‘about right’ or ‘needs to be increased’.
- 32% support and 13% strongly support increasing international and humanitarian aid, notably higher percentages of middle and higher income, university educated and CALD voters.

Values-Driven Support

- In a context of complex economic strains, what people seek more than anything is a sense that governments understand and care about vulnerable people. The research shows aid can help send this signal. Australians across various demographics generally support aid when framed as an expression of empathy, reciprocity, and being a “good neighbor.”

Quotes from qualitative research:

“We’re all human and we all bleed,”

“It comes down to the fact that we are capable of offering help and why wouldn’t we?”

“We’re doing pretty well. And there are lots of people who aren’t doing so well. So it’s our responsibility to look after our neighbours.”

Appeal Among Key Voter Cohorts

- Under 40, University-Educated, Higher Income Voters: The most positive responses towards increasing aid were found among voters under 40 years old, who are middle to high income, university-educated, and located in inner teal seats and outer suburban areas. This demographic is particularly receptive to messages that link aid to Australia’s role on the global stage and the moral responsibility to assist others.
- CALD Communities in Outer Suburban Areas: Outer suburban CALD communities, including migrants from developing countries, showed strong support for increasing aid. For these communities, aid is not an abstract concept but a vital support system that directly impacts their friends and family in their countries of origin. Notably, 55% of CALD respondents supported increasing international and humanitarian aid, compared to 45% of non-CALD respondents.

Quote from qualitative research: *“I’m from Sri Lanka. It’s a poor country and aid really helps. As a rich government, if you can give aid it’s great for development.”*

- Regional and Rural Voters: Regional and rural voters also demonstrated overall support for aid, aligning with the national trend. These voters embrace the empathetic values that underpin Australia’s aid contributions, recognising the broader benefits of stability and prosperity in neighboring regions.

Overestimation of Current Spending Levels:

- Many Australians overestimate the percentage of the Federal Budget currently spent on aid. When informed that aid accounts for just 0.68% of the budget, many respondents expressed surprise and embarrassment. This revelation often led to increased support for raising the aid budget, as it corrected the misconception that aid was a significant burden on the Federal Budget.

- 55.9% of respondents agreed that as a wealthy nation, Australia can share an increased – but still very small – proportion of its wealth through aid to make an enormous difference to the lives of millions of people around the world.

Quotes from qualitative research:

“Less than 1% is disgraceful!”

“less than 1%” seems like “almost nothing. Can they give more?”

“I feel like it’s not enough... I tend to lean towards, we could always do more anyway, because we are such a fortunate country.”

Addressing Concerns About Aid Competing with Domestic Priorities

- When aid is presented as just 0.68% of the overall Federal Budget, those who might otherwise prioritize domestic needs over aid are reassured that a small increase in aid spending would still leave the government plenty of resources to address domestic issues. This reframing helps to mitigate concerns that aid spending comes at the expense of funding for schools, hospitals, or other social services.
- The positive values associated with providing aid—human empathy, reciprocity, and being a ‘good neighbor’—resonated strongly across all focus groups, including among key voter cohorts who might not be expected to support aid. Respondents recalled moments when Australia stepped up, such as after the Boxing Day Tsunami, and how our neighbors have supported us in times of need, like during the Black Summer bushfires in 2019-2020, when PNG and Fiji sent troops to assist our rural communities.

Political Risk in Attacking Aid

- The research showed a potential risk in key contested outer suburban areas for political actors who actively campaign on reducing aid investment, with more voters unlikely to support a government that reduces international and humanitarian aid.
- While 32% would think more favourably of a Federal Government that increased international and humanitarian aid funding, 35.5% would think less favourably of a Federal Government that reduced international and humanitarian aid investment.

3. Strategic Messaging Insights

Effective Framing:

- **Percentage of Federal Budget:** Framing aid as a percentage of the Federal Budget was found to be more effective than using Gross National Income (GNI) as a reference. This approach resonates with voters, making the concept of aid more relatable and easier to understand.
- **Emphasize Human Need and Benefit:** Messaging that focuses on the humanitarian impact of aid strongly resonates across diverse voter groups. Highlighting the direct benefits of aid to vulnerable populations, particularly in times of crisis, can effectively garner support. For instance, emphasizing that a slight increase in Australia’s aid can significantly improve lives and respond to urgent needs helps to frame the issue in a compelling way.
- **Recognizing Value for Migrant Voters:** Migrants from developing countries place significant importance on aid due to personal connections and experiences. For many, increasing aid is seen as affirming Australia’s role in the global community and supporting their extended families abroad.

Reassuring Constituents:

- **Countering Domestic Priorities Concerns:** By providing clear facts about the minimal percentage of the budget that aid represents, politicians can effectively counter concerns that aid spending detracts from domestic priorities. Emphasising that more than 99% of the Federal Budget is allocated domestically can help assuage fears and foster support for increased aid.

Highlighting Reciprocity:

- **“Good Neighbor” Values:** Stressing the importance of being good regional neighbors and the concept of reciprocity—such as how Australia received international support during emergencies like the 2019-2020 bushfires—can strengthen the case for providing aid.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

A further in-depth briefing can be arranged with the RedBridge researchers. Please enquire with the individual or group who provided this memo to you to set this up.

APPENDIX D

WHAT HAPPENED TO ODA TARGETS FOCUSED ON % OF GNI?

The 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) target for international aid was established by the United Nations in 1970 as a key benchmark for international development efforts. This target remains a central element within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and continues to be a standard measure in OECD countries and international policy discussions.

Australia's Current Standing

- Australia currently allocates only 0.19% of its GNI to Official Development Assistance (ODA). This places Australia 26th out of 31 wealthy nations, well below the OECD average of 0.37% of GNI.
- While some countries include onshore refugee costs in their aid figures, which slightly inflates their ODA percentage, even with these adjustments, Australia's ranking would only improve marginally, still leaving it near the bottom of the list.

Achieving 1% of Federal Budget Target vs. Existing GNI Targets

- **Achieving the OECD Average:** Reaching the OECD average of 0.37% of GNI would equate to 1.36% of the Federal Budget.
- **Labor's Commitment:** The Labor Party has committed in its National Platform to work towards achieving an aid budget of 0.5% of Australia's GNI without a specified timeframe. This would represent approximately 1.83% of the Federal Budget. It is important to note that this is not a binding commitment.
- **Global Target of 0.7% of GNI:** Achieving the global target of 0.7% of GNI would require an allocation of approximately 2.56% of the Federal Budget.

Shift in Focus to Federal Budget Percentage

The focus for this campaign has shifted to framing aid as a percentage of the Federal Budget. This approach is based on several key considerations:

- **Effectiveness in Engagement:** Our research and experience engaging with MPs suggest that measuring aid as a percentage of the Federal Budget is more effective in illustrating Australia's aid contributions. This method aligns better with public sentiment and is easier for voters to contextualize within the broader Federal Budget.
- **Public Support:** Focusing on a target of 1% of the Federal Budget for aid has resonated more strongly with the public, as it presents a clear and achievable goal. It also helps counter the misconception that aid is a significant burden on government spending.

In Summary – We Are Asking for A Modest, Concrete Step

What we are asking for is a modest but concrete step towards the higher ambition reflected in the global OECD targets—a commitment to raise the aid budget to 1% of the Federal Budget, ideally in the first budget after the next election. This target is seen as both reasonable and achievable, with strong support from the Australian public.