

SUBMISSION TO INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AID EFFECTIVENESS

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EXPERIENCE: Worked on contract for AusAID 1991 to 1993, worked on AusAID (and other development organisations') contracts from 1993 to date.

The core objective of the Australian Aid program to date has been poverty reduction through sustainable development. The effectiveness of the aid program in achieving this objective has been hindered by AusAID's placement within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, where it is stated to be independent but in fact is compliant to the policies of Foreign Affairs and Trade where there is a conflict between poverty reduction and strategic interest. This situation is reflected in the increase in defence and policing operations which are managed through the aid program.

If the commitment of the government in power is to the maintenance and increase of the power of that government and the personal wealth of parliamentarians, public servants and favoured citizens then poverty reduction of the population is not a core objective of that government. This is the reality in many of the countries in which Australia's aid program operates.

Strategic issues cannot be ignored. They are best dealt with by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The need to act strategically e.g. to support the government in power is not necessarily the appropriate way to support poverty reduction.

Greater separation of development issues from national and strategic issues would provide greater opportunities to implement poverty reduction activities in sectors and geographic areas where they would be most effective.

To implement this approach would require greater independence for AusAID than it now has. It would require the separation of AusAID from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Such a structure would not preclude AusAID from working with Australian and overseas government personnel when AusAID deemed it necessary to do so for the purposes of implementing poverty reduction activities. Such a structure would require that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintain transparency in its funding of activities in the national or strategic interest.