

Dear panel members,

The Australian aid program should have as its sole aim, a mission to alleviate and where possible, eliminate poverty in developing countries. In line with this objective, the reference to our “national interest” as an official objective of AusAid’s program should be removed immediately. This reference frames our aid program in a way that breeds mistrust around Australia’s intentions. This mistrust is felt by communities in developing countries, aid-recipient governments, the Australian NGO community and the Australian public. In an age where Australia is attempting to double the contribution it makes to foreign aid, building trust with the general public will be critical to achieving this goal without a major backlash. To this end, it is imperative that the Australian government **ends the practice of using aid to further Australia’s national interests**. Actions that would support this include:

- Remove reference to national interest from the objective of Australia’s aid program
- Establish AusAid as a separate department (currently under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) with a Cabinet level minister responsible for international development.

Improving the transparency, accountability and monitoring of Australian aid spending are further measures that would help build trust between AusAid and its stakeholders. Specific actions to support this would include

- Make the Office of Development Effectiveness an independent body separate from AusAid, following the example of the UK’s Independent Commission on Aid Impact.
- Publish timely, accessible and detailed information about all aid initiatives.
- Publicly release all parts of commercial aid contracts which do not satisfy the Department of Finance and Administration’s ‘Confidentiality Test’.

Recognising that the impacts of climate change will drastically undermine development prospects for low-income countries should be another key feature of AusAid’s thinking. To achieve this, AusAid should:

- Commit to at least A\$2.1 billion per year funding for climate aid, commensurate with Australia’s contribution to global ODA.
- Ensure that this climate aid is new money, not funds redirected from other development priorities and that it is aimed primarily at assisting the most vulnerable communities.

Other initiatives that could improve Australia’s aid program include:

- Reduce the proportion of aid money spent on Technical Assistance (TA) to at least the OECD average. Identification of TA needs should be led by aid recipients and use of local advisors prioritised over external advisors.
- Require all aid providers to demonstrate how their initiatives are guided by host governments, communities and civil society organisations in the planning, implementation and evaluation of aid initiatives.
- Demonstrate how Australia’s policies on trade, investment, finance, migration, security and climate change are consistent with the promotion of poverty alleviation, gender equity and sustainable development.

If you have any questions about any of these recommendations, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Sam Porter