

To the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness Secretariat:

Submission regarding the independent review of the effectiveness of AusAID and the Australian Government's overseas aid program

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission as part of the independent review that is currently being undertaken, regarding the effectiveness of AusAID and the Australian Government's overseas aid program. I support Australia providing aid beyond its borders to those who are in need, and I believe that our country's program of aid should prioritise the needs and interests of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, as they are the most in need of aid assistance. In particular, priority should be given to those who are the most marginalised (for example, because they have a disability or mental illness, are HIV positive, are an ethnic minority, or because of their gender). One way to achieve this would be to invest in effective multilateral funds like the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS.

I consider that our aid program should focus on achieving those Millennium Development Goals that are most lagging behind (for example, child and maternal health), and in the poorest countries in our region. I think that AusAID should be established as a separate department (rather than coming under Foreign Affairs & Trade), with a Cabinet-level Minister for International Development, which is focused primarily on good outcomes for the poor. I would also like to see implemented the Paris and Accra agreements on aid effectiveness, so as to make aid more long term, aligned with country systems and needs, coordinated with all other donors, and accountable to beneficiaries.

I also consider it to be very important that our aid program empowers local communities through effective consultation and community ownership over projects, employing local people instead of large Australian corporations to implement the projects. I have seen this to be achievable and effective through aid organisations like TEAR Australia. Our aid program should reduce high-paid Western consultants and expenditure on 'technical assistance', which in 2009 consumed almost half of Australia's aid budget, and which effectively keeps this money in Australia rather than where it is most needed.

I believe that we should work through NGOs, by increasing the share of our aid delivered through NGOs to at least 10% of the aid budget. We should also improve the transparency and accountability of the aid program, by providing up-to-date information about all funded aid activities to all stakeholders, and also by engaging civil society in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the aid program. This should include relevant groups in Australia, in each country and in the communities affected by Australia's aid.

I hope that you will give serious consideration to these matters in your review. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,
Jenna Weston.