

Foreign Aid Budget Raid Represents Broken Promise to Global Poor

Micah Challenge says that today's announcement that the Coalition plans to cut a further \$4.5 billion from the aid budget represents a broken promise to the global poor.

Micah Challenge's initial estimates suggest that Australia's aid under the Coalition is now set to slide backwards from a projected 0.37% Gross National Income this year to 0.32% (GNI) over the next four years.

"We're extremely disappointed to see that both parties are so preoccupied with budget cuts that they seem to have ignored the voices of the Australian people, and more significantly, have disregarded the costs this will have in terms of human lives. We estimate this \$4.5 billion could save 450,000 lives," said John Beckett, National Coordinator of Micah Challenge Australia.

In today's announcement, Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey confirmed the \$4.5 billion cut to pay for domestic infrastructure projects (particularly road building) if they are elected to Government on Saturday.

"Despite having committed the Coalition to increasing aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI), Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey are asking our poorest neighbours and the world's poorest people to bear the brunt of their election 'savings'", said Mr Beckett.

"We strongly reject the notion that a wealthy nation like Australia cannot afford to meet its international commitments to the poorest people in the world, who are dying daily from preventable causes, while also investing in growth for Australia."

"Mr Hockey refused to give a timeline and even refused to make a commitment to ramping up foreign aid if we return to surplus. A commitment without a timetable is no commitment at all."

"These significant cuts undermine the coalition's claim to be committed to the Millennium Development Goals. The cuts will see us being less generous to the global poor at a time when our economy is growing and is one of the strongest in the globe. This represents an unconscionable delay in meeting our commitment, and is a breach of faith with the Australian people who overwhelmingly support a generous and effective aid program."

This announcement comes less than a week after thousands of residents in Tony Abbott's electorate of Warringah gathered on Manly Beach to spell out the giant message "Halve Global Poverty 2015", demonstrating a clear desire to see him increase Australia's overseas aid as part of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. (See SBS News coverage of the event - <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/08/31/anti-poverty-goals-ignored-election>).

While Tony Abbott failed to attend the event on Saturday, he issued a statement read out by State Treasurer and Liberal Member for Manly that said: "Mr Rudd and his predecessor, Ms Gillard, made many promises about foreign aid - and never kept them. I would rather under promise and over deliver and in doing so, keep faith with you."

MEDIA RELEASE

“Mr Abbott has repeatedly highlighted Mr Rudd’s failure to deliver on his word. Today’s announcement represents more than an ‘under promise’; it is a broken promise,” said Mr Beckett.

“More than 80,000 Australians have signed the *Movement to End Poverty* petition calling for increases to overseas aid, and over 3,000 of them are in Abbott’s own electorate. By announcing cuts to the foreign aid budget just two days out from the federal election he is now breaking faith with the Australian people and with his own electorate.”

-ENDS-

Images from last Saturday’s Halve Poverty event in Abbott’s electorate available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kjudh6xk1a85kfv/oUYvQ6F3k8>

John Beckett, National Coordinator, Micah Challenge Australia is available for interviews.

Media Enquiries: Angela Owen – Media and Communications Coordinator, Micah Challenge

Ph: 02 9356 8500 | M: 0422 985 288 | E: angela.owen@micahchallenge.org.au

Micah Challenge is a global movement of Christians speaking out against poverty and injustice in support of the Millennium Development Goals. In Australia, more than 50 aid and development agencies, as well as churches, schools, groups and individual Christians endorse the campaign. www.micahchallenge.org.au.