

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Christian Leaders Unite in Call for Aid Commitment

Leaders of Australia's Christian churches and NGOs have jointly called on the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader to remain committed to the world's poor by lifting Australia's aid contributions to 0.5% GNI with the earliest possible timetable and redoubling efforts to ensure aid effectiveness.

In an open letter to Prime Minister Julia Gillard, signatories expressed their deep disappointment that the Government broke its commitment to increase aid to 50 cents in every \$100 of national income by 2015 and called on Ms Gillard to pursue Labor's commitment to the revised timetable of 2016-17 "with all vigour".

"We are disappointed because this was a promise to the Australian people, and more importantly, a promise to the world's poorest and most vulnerable," said Micah Challenge Australia's National Coordinator John Beckett.

The letter's signatories, who are leaders from most of Australia's Christian denominations and NGOs, stated that "the Government has broken the commitment once and we do not regard it as acceptable to delay again, or to further defer the bulk of the spending into the later years of this period."

The signatories also urged Tony Abbott to reaffirm his commitment to increase aid to 0.5% GNI by 2015 or to set the earliest possible timetable to achieve this, as a step towards achieving the long-standing international aid target of 0.7% GNI.

"Despite his earlier commitment to 0.5% GNI by 2015, the Opposition Leader has not yet released a timetable to achieving this, which is concerning," said Mr Beckett. "A commitment without a timetable is really no commitment at all.

"The target of halving global poverty by 2015 has been supported by years of strong bipartisan commitment to increasing and improving Australia's aid program. In a world where there is so much suffering and inequality, we regard efforts to overcome extreme poverty as a profound moral duty for both individuals and governments and part of the task to which our elected representatives are called."

Christian leaders acknowledge in their correspondence with both parties that aid is only one component of a comprehensive solution to ending global poverty.

"Effective aid, fair trade, the removal of illegitimate debt, improved governance, transparency of tax revenues and a commitment to sustainable use of the environment all play their part in reducing global poverty," said Mr Beckett.

"However, we know that Australian aid saves lives, provides vaccines and education for vulnerable children, and helps communities recover from disasters. Australian Christians, and the Australian public in general, strongly support the goal of giving a helping hand to people who live in poverty."

Church leaders plan to meet with both parties to outline the benefits of a generous and effective aid program.

-ENDS-

Open letters to Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott can be viewed [HERE](#). Letter signatories are listed below:

## Media Release

**The Most Rev Dr Philip Aspinall** – Primate, Anglican Church in Australia | **Rev Keith Jobberns** – National Ministries Director, Australian Baptist Ministries | **Pastor Wayne Alcorn** – National President, Australian Christian Churches | **The Most Rev Denis Hart** – Archbishop of Melbourne, Catholic Church in Australia | **Rev Craig Brown** – Federal Coordinator, Churches of Christ in Australia | **Rev Alan Best** – General Secretary, Fellowship of Congregational Churches | **Rev David Jones** – Moderator General, Presbyterian Church of Australia | **Pastor Chester Stanley** – President, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Australian Union Conference | **Commissioner James Condon** – The Salvation Army, Australia Eastern Territory | **Commissioner Raymond Finger** – The Salvation Army, Australia Southern Territory | **Rev Alistair Macrae** – President, National Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia | **Rev Shayne Blackman** – National Administrator, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress | **Rev Peter Downes** – National Director, Vineyard Churches Australia

**Alistair Gee** – Executive Director, Act for Peace | **Jonathan Duffy** – CEO, ADRA Australia | **Misha Coleman** – CEO, Anglican Overseas Aid | **Peter Schirmer** – Executive Secretary, Australian Lutheran World Service | **John Hickey** – CEO, Baptist World Aid Australia | **John Jeffries** – National Director, CBM Australia | **John Beckett** – National Director, Micah Challenge | **Matthew Maury** – National Director, TEAR Australia | **Rev Dr Kerry Enright** – National Director, UnitingWorld | **Tim Costello** – CEO, World Vision

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*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](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au).*