

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Politicians face up to halving global poverty by 2015

Hundreds of Christians from across the country joined politicians at Parliament House today as they added their photos to a giant “2015” puzzle – a symbol of Australia’s commitment to halve global poverty by 2015.

Former PM Kevin Rudd, Labor MP Peter Garrett, Greens’ Senator Lee Rhiannon and powerful independent MP Rob Oakeshott were among a group of federal MPs and Senators representing most parties who added their faces to the “2015” puzzle in support of ending poverty.

They were joined by a group of anti-poverty campaigners who are in Canberra for Micah Challenge’s annual *Voices for Justice* event, and have been urging politicians to finish what Australia started when the Government signed onto the UN Millennium Development Goals in 2000.

According to Micah Challenge’s National Coordinator John Beckett, significant progress is being made towards the Millennium Development Goals in every country that receives Australian aid, which is why it is crucial to keep global poverty on the political agenda.

“It is great to see our political leaders come out in such strong support of such important goals. Goals which have, in some cases, already been achieved. In other cases many inroads have been made,” Mr Beckett said.

“In the top ten Australian aid recipients, child mortality has fallen from between 30 to 70 per cent since 1990. For example, in one of our closest neighbouring countries East Timor, one in every six children was dying but that number is now all the way down to one in every 20,” said Mr Beckett.

“Worldwide, five million more children are living to celebrate their fifth birthday than in 1990 and aid has played a significant part in that progress. We know that aid works.”

“But we are still off track when it comes to the Millennium Development Goals that target hunger, education and health, added Mr Beckett. Today is about getting the message on poverty back on the agenda and back into the minds of our decision-makers.

“We know that aid is effective for saving lives, and yet we currently give just 0.35% of national income to overseas aid – or 35c in every \$100 – which is still a far cry from the UN target of 0.7%,” said Mr Beckett.

“Over the years, both the Government and Opposition have talked about increasing overseas aid but it’s now time to turn intention into action.”

Anti-poverty campaigners held around 100 private meetings with MPs and Senators to encourage all parties to support an increase in Australia’s overseas aid.

Micah Challenge and Make Poverty History launched a new report on Millennium Development Goal progress at the *Voices for Justice* event, and all MPs and Senators were asked to pledge renewed commitment to the international goals.

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*Voices for Justice is an initiative of Micah Challenge - a global movement of aid and development agencies, churches, schools, groups and individual Christians who want to influence world leaders to meet their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals. See [www.micahchallenge.org.au](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au).*

Photos available at the following link:

**Available for Media Interviews:**

- John Beckett, National Coordinator, Micah Challenge Australia
- Voices for Justice participants from most states across Australia

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