

MEDIA RELEASE: Micah Challenge Australia
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aussie Christians raise their voices to prevent aid cuts

Deeply concerned that the Federal Government is seriously considering breaking its promise to increase aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income by 2015, more than one thousand Micah Challenge supporters have raised their concerns with our nation's leaders in the past month.

The promise to increase Australia's overseas aid contribution from 0.35% to 0.5% of GNI was made by the Labor Government in 2007 and reaffirmed in 2010 as a bipartisan commitment. Yet speculation is rife concerning the Government's intention to renege on its promised aid contributions in favour of bringing the budget into surplus next week.

"The Government needs to understand that many Australians are strongly committed to the aid program," said Micah Challenge's Chairperson and Anglican Minister, the Rev Paul Perini.

"In the past month we've had our most responsive email action ever with over a thousand grassroots supporters across the country contacting the Treasurer, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister with their concerns. We've also heard from supporters in over 20 electorates that have expressed concern to their local MPs this past week."

Whilst individually Australians are among the world's most generous private contributors to aid, the Federal Government only ranks 13th of 23 developed country donors.

"A rich country like Australia can afford to make this investment in better health, opportunity, prosperity and security in our region and beyond", Mr Perini said.

"Keeping our promise to the 0.5% commitment (only 50c in every \$100) has huge implications for the world's poorest – it equates to saving 800,000 lives over the next four years and providing basic education for almost one million children".

Recently, the UK government maintained its commitment to increase aid to 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2015 in an even tougher budgetary environment, claiming it would not "balance its books on the backs of the poor".

"On behalf of Christians all over Australia we are calling on the Government to take the same moral and economic stance," said Mr Perini.

"I encourage any Christian who hasn't already done so to contact your local MP this week with your concern and make your voice heard on this vital issue."

Micah Challenge, a global campaign of Christian churches and aid agencies, is partnering with other prominent lobby groups this week in a national media ad campaign reminding Australians of the vital contributions we make overseas.

Micah Challenge is a global movement of Christian organisations, groups, churches and individuals that aims to deepen the engagement of people with the poor and help reduce poverty as an integral part of our faith. Micah Challenge Australia is endorsed by over 30 Christian development organisations and mission groups as well as church denominations and local faith groups."

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Available for Media Interviews:

Ben Thurley – Political Engagement Coordinator for Micah Challenge Australia

Media Enquiries:

Angela Owen – Media and Communications Coordinator, Micah Challenge Australia.

Ph: (02) 9356 8500 or E: angela.owen@micahchallenge.org.au