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MEDIA RELEASE
For immediate release



Leaders of Australia's 12 Christian denominations call on Treasurer to 'stop the clock' on aid budget cuts

In an open letter to Treasurer Scott Morrison published in *The Australian* today, leaders of Australia's 12 Christian denominations called on the Turnbull Government to "Stop the Clock" on the scheduled \$224 million cut to the aid budget. Leaders voiced their concern that a failure to act now will see the aid budget fall to its lowest ever level in Australian history.

"This is an unprecedented action from leaders within Australia's Christian denominations, instigated by a scheduled further cut to the aid budget. Coming on top of more than \$11 billion in cuts to aid since coming to office, this will be the fourth time the Government has targeted Australian aid for cuts," said World Vision CEO, Tim Costello.

Mr Costello also noted British Prime Minister, David Cameron's vow to never "balance the books on the backs of the poorest".

Micah Australia's National Coordinator, Ben Thurley added that more than ten million Australians identify with the signatory churches and denominations and are united by their belief in Jesus, who calls us to "love our neighbour." Mr Thurley noted that Prime Minister Howard was the first Prime Minister to make a timetabled commitment to increase Australian aid, and that this had been a bipartisan position for almost a decade before the recent cuts.

The letter to the Treasurer said: "Australia's support for aid and the flourishing of our neighbours is fundamentally a moral question and it rises above partisan politics ... Because of our shared faith, our commitment to compassion and our common humanity, and with a resolute hope that Australia can be a better neighbour and more principled actor in the community of nations, we call on you not to proceed with the scheduled cut of \$224 million and begin, instead, to restore our commitment to Australian aid."

"Australian Aid ensures children in poorer countries are presented with equal opportunities, access to vaccinations and education. Aid provides access to safe drinking water and allows organisations to respond to humanitarian crises around the globe," said Mr Thurley.

"Time is running out to stop our nation from becoming the least generous we've ever been."

-Ends-

The church leaders' open letter can be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/churchleadersopenletter2016>.

If you'd like to arrange an interview or photo opportunity with Mr Thurley or Mr Costello please contact Sarah Cannata on 0407 536 133 or Angela Owen on 0422 985 288.

Micah Australia is a coalition of churches and Christian organisations raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty.

