

MEDIA RELEASE



Exclusive Release

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Tim Costello asks 'When will our government believe we have enough to start being generous again?'

Tim Costello, Executive Director of Micah Australia today expressed concern about the lack of care for the world's poor, saying his expectation for the aid budget is it will continue to be kept at its lowest level ever in history.

"When the first budget surplus in over a decade is delivered tonight, sadly, I don't think it will be good news for the poor."

Mr Costello said there had been no signs of the Coalition moving towards a commitment to restoring aid that has been cut over the past five years.

"Even now with a surplus at hand and as the revenue is rolling in, we are left wondering why we are not moving to a more generous Australian aid commitment.

When will our government believe we have 'enough' so we can start being generous again?"

Mr Costello said, with the ALP now committing to the restoration of the aid budget to 0.5% GNI, it was time for the Coalition to act to restore the bipartisan commitment to aid.

"Now is the time for the Government to act and restore long awaited upward trajectory for the aid budget, but I am not optimistic."

"If there is an additional cut in tonight's budget, we'd have to be asking even more serious questions about the absolute rot in our aid budget and the lack of character and moral leadership shown by this current government."

"There is no convenient time to show compassion. The people of Australia are generous, and they expect more of their government, they expect their leaders to rise to the moral and humanitarian challenges of this time."

Mr Costello said Micah recently met with the Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Pastors from his electorate of Kooyong who laid out the moral case for aid.

"Mr Frydenberg agreed with the moral and ethical case for a generous aid program, but in the face of growing nationalism, I am concerned the Coalition will once again continue to turn their backs to the world's poor."

Mr Costello said the lead up to the Budget was always difficult for NGO's in the aid and development sector.

"Each year is like a merry-go-round of emotions as the sector holds its breath to see what level aid will be cut at again."

Mr Costello said should the ALP win government he would be making a case for a better way to deal with aid.

"Good, long-term development requires stability and predictability in funding. We need proper bipartisan agreement and a clear way forward, and I will be advocating strongly for this."

"Australia is at its best when we are helping those in need, not retreating inwards. Our region needs a generous Australia."

Media Contact: Beck Wilesmith | 0403 569 773 | beck.wilesmith@micahaustralia.org

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

www.micahaustralia.org

