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Aid Program continues to be treated like an 'ATM' says Tim Costello

Despite delivering a budget surplus, the Coalition has chosen to keep aid at its least generous level.

“This is not surprising from a government who have lost sight of our nation’s role as a global neighbour and treated our aid program like an ATM.” said Tim Costello, Executive Director Micah Australia.

Since 2013 the Coalition have slashed aid, taking it to its lowest level at 0.21 of GNI, which will take a further dip to 0.19 in 2021-2022 before indexation resumes in 2022-23.

“For years now the Coalition has told us that aid would be restored ‘once we returned to surplus’. Well surplus is here, yet the poor have been forgotten, and we’ve been left wondering:

“When will this government believe we have ‘enough’ to start being generous again?”

“Britain’s debt is four times that of the Australian Government, yet the UK has kept their promise to fix aid at 0.7 per cent of GNI, in stark contrast to Australia’s broken promise.”

Based on median wealth per adult, Australia is the richest country in the world, yet ranks 19th among aid donors of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

“This is at complete odds with who we are as a people – a nation that contributes its fair share, and acts in accordance with the blessings we have received and the generous spirit of the Australian people.”

“We are lagging where we should be leading,” said Tim Costello.

As expected, the budget also revealed \$500 million will be given over four years to fund the Pacific infrastructure facility, while funding will decrease to programs in countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nepal, Cambodia and more.

“While we welcome this focus on the Pacific region, infrastructure cannot come at the cost of helping the most vulnerable. The government needs to fund both.”

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 wholeheartedly with the moral and ethical case for a generous aid program, but in the face of growing calls for nationalism, the Coalition have once again retreated and turned their backs on the world’s poor.”

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. But each year the sector experiences a ‘merry-go-round’, wondering whether there will be cuts or not.

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.”

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

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