

5 December 2019



The Hon Scott Morrison, MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of Australian Quakers, I write to express deep concern at the decline in resources available for diplomatic work by Australia. A recent report by *Asialink* has shown that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has reached an all-time low in its funding – 1.3% of the Federal Budget. The level of overseas aid is also at its lowest level – 0.21% of GNI. This is at a time of many international crises that require careful and sustained work in building peace and security.

It is especially disturbing that DFAT continues to be subject to the 'efficiency dividend' policy of the Government, which ensures an ongoing reduction in real terms in the funds available. We understand that the proposed 'Pacific Step Up' announced by the Government will involve a transfer of scarce DFAT resources and people from other essential work, rather than a recognition that an initiative of this kind demands more diplomatic effort and support.

The increased funding to Defence, ASIO and ASIS since the September 11th attacks in the USA, has been dramatic (almost 300% for Defence, and over 500% for the other agencies). This seems to us to place undue emphasis on military and intelligence approaches and not sufficient on the steady and long-term work of diplomacy. Aid, trade, and person-to-person links with other nations are basic to Australia's capacity to make a difference in our region and beyond.

We urge a review of the budget for DFAT to ensure that it can undertake its historically vital role for Australia in the international scene.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Zubrick".

Ann Zubrick
Presiding Clerk, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Cc: The Hon Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition
Senator Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens

Australia Yearly Meeting

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