



18 May 2017

Malcolm Turnbull MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of Australian Quakers about the decisions reflected in the Federal Budget for 2017-18 on overseas aid.

At the outset I would like to emphasise our concern that the aid program must be seen as a vital part of Australia's contribution to creating a more peaceful world. This means giving much greater attention to the alternatives to military force, and strengthening the capacity of our diplomats, trade officials and aid workers to create opportunities for peaceful initiatives. These matters are becoming increasingly urgent with the escalating effects of climate change.

We welcome the increased transparency evident in the Green and Orange books, and the humanitarian aid increases especially for Africa. We also are encouraged by the increased funding for gender related programs and access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

At the same time, we are concerned about the overall 'stalling' of overseas development assistance as evidenced by:

- A reducing trend in the total level of aid as a proportion of Gross National Income
- The failure to create a concerted, whole-of-government approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby missing an opportunity to garner public support on a more consistent basis.
- A reduction in funding for disability inclusive development before the government strategy has been completed.
- The cumulative effect on the effectiveness of specific aid programs with reductions over several years of funding.
- The confusing message given to overseas communities as a result of apparent changing of government priorities.

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We support the concern expressed by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) that “our long term engagement with Africa should be based on more than just a humanitarian flow of funds”.

We also join with ACFID in saying (in their media release on 10 May) in their reference to the overall level of aid: “The Government has struggled to sustain their commitments in this area and we call on them to set out how we will reach the target Australia has signed up to – 0.7% of gross national income by 2030.”

Quakers will continue to contribute as much as we can through our own agency Quaker Service Australia (QSA) to strengthening the impact of aid from Australia.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.R. Jordan" with a long, sweeping underline.

Jo Jordan
Presiding Clerk
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia