Making aid appeal to Australians

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https://tinyurl.com/y7agz7kj
Why the public matters...

Best international evidence (still patchy) suggests opinion plays a role in aid policy.

MPs from electorates where aid more popular more likely to meet with advocates, and more sympathetic in meetings.

Tanya Plibersek confronted with “why raise aid when public wants it cut” questions.

Public opinion not direct determinant of aid policy – but still a gentle force. Easier to go with than against.
What improves public support for aid more:

Telling people it’s in the national interest

Or

Telling them it helps people in need in developing countries
“We need to make it very clear to the Australian public why it is good for their...taxes to be used for development abroad...very importantly what is the direct benefit to the Australian public, because we need to take the Australian public with us.

We need to make very, very clear to them, why it is in their national interest for us to be spending this year $3.8 billion.”
Another approach:

From the Australian newspaper:
‘Mr Costello said Australia had an obligation to live up to the standard of devoting 70 cents to aid for every $100 dollars of gross national income.

“‘It distresses us not just because it literally costs lives and smashes hope for poor women and children...’”
The experiment
Total N ≈ 4,000
Broadly, socio-demographically representative
Randomly assigned short newspaper articles
Articles emphasised different reasons for giving aid
Articles followed by survey of views on aid
The newspaper articles pertained to the ‘Indo Pacific Centre for Health Security’.

A new (real, big & unheard of) Australian government aid Initiative – ostensibly aims to help prevent epidemics in Asia/Pacific.

Could be framed either in terms of benefits to others (saving lives overseas) or benefits to Australia (preventing epidemics from reaching Australian shores).
Treatment effects on belief Australia gives too much aid

All outperform control

None outperform basic treatment

Ramification: surprisingly easy to reduce hostility to aid, just some specific details and endorsement.
Treatment effects on belief Australia gives too little aid

Only altruism & national interest outperform control

Only national interest outperforms basic treatment

Ramification: much harder to get people to support aid increases. (Sacrifice!)

National interest probably most effective treatment (though national interest/altruism difference not statistically significant).
Not everyone bought into the narrative in the treatment!

% who believed purpose of project was that emphasised in their treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Believers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Interest</td>
<td>78%</td>
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Amongst treatment believers: Belief Australia gives **too much aid**

Amongst people who believed treatment they received, altruism outperforms the other treatments.

Ramification: If people believe your aid work is actually altruistic, treatments that emphasise benefits to others are likely to be the most effective means of increasing support for aid.
Three key lessons

First, it is possible to change people’s support for aid.

But, the best information to use is not self evident.

If we want to be as effective as possible in changing opinion we need to learn systematically about what works.
Remaining questions

We have plenty of remaining questions under the heading, “how can we be effective”. Two particularly important questions:

How would responses vary across different audiences?

Do people’s views stay changed?
FOR Q and A
What do we know about changing Australian’s views on aid?

From earlier experiments:

1. Obvious interventions don’t seem to work. Telling Australians how little aid Australia gives doesn’t change views.
2. But views can be changed (comparing Australian aid cuts, to raising aid in the UK) changes views on Australian aid volumes.
Australian aid to join the fight against epidemics

8 October 2017

CANBERRA – A new Australian government aid initiative to fight epidemics has drawn praise from aid experts.

The aid funded work is intended to stop epidemics such as Ebola and Zika from spreading in the Asia-Pacific region. Aid money will be used for medicines, health workers and international emergency responses.

Dr Terence Wood, an aid researcher from the Australian National University, said: “This is a great idea. Preventing epidemics is exactly what we should be using aid for.”
Australian aid to fight against epidemics on Australia’s doorstep

8 October 2017

CANBERRA – A new Australian government aid initiative to fight epidemics has drawn praise from aid experts as an excellent way of keeping Australia safe from disease.

The aid funded work is intended to stop epidemics such as Ebola and Zika from spreading in the Asia-Pacific region. Aid money will be used for medicines, health workers and international emergency responses.

Dr Terence Wood, an aid researcher from the Australian National University, said: “This is a great idea. Diseases do not respect borders. A major epidemic in a country like Papua New Guinea or Indonesia, right on our doorstep, would be bad news for Australia. It could easily spread here. It’s in our interest to do this. Preventing epidemics is exactly what we should be using aid for.”
Altruism:

Australian aid to join the fight against devastating epidemics in poor countries

8 October 2017

CANBERRA – A new Australian government aid initiative to fight epidemics has drawn praise from aid experts as an excellent way of preventing suffering in poorer countries.

The aid funded work is intended to stop epidemics such as Ebola and Zika from spreading in the Asia-Pacific region. Aid money will be used for medicines, health workers and international emergency responses.

Dr Terence Wood, an aid researcher from the Australian National University, said: “This is a great idea. A major epidemic somewhere like Papua New Guinea or Indonesia would cause so much suffering and loss of life. Families and communities would be devastated, and take years to recover. It’s the right thing to do. Preventing epidemics is exactly what we should be using aid for.”