

# Aid commitments welcome

**By Bob McMullan**

I was delighted to see Tim Costello and Brian Doolan, amongst others, at the [announcement](#) by Tanya Plibersek of Labor's election policy on development.

This is a sign that the development community is finally getting the message about the need to engage to influence public policy on aid.

The announcement might have been much more modest than many in the development community would have wished. But the significant fact was that it was made at all.

I welcome the fact that both major parties have recently recommitted to the 0.5% target. But this is the only money on the table at this election. In the context of a tight election in which costings will play a major part it is significant.

The significance of the aid NGOs turning out to support a politician making such a commitment is in the message it sends to the others. I assume if Julie Bishop made a similar commitment she would gain similar support, as she should. The challenge is now there for her to match or improve on the policy.

Tim Costello also did an extended interview on Sky about the announcement. He was not over the top in his support, he merely emphasised the importance of stopping the slide in aid expenditure.

The next step is to see whether some or all of the NGOs are prepared to use their mailing lists and social media connections to emphasise the differences between the parties and ask their contacts to take this into account when deciding their vote.

If commitments generate support then there is a real possibility of a contest in

future elections to win that support.

If the support is not forthcoming it would be asking a lot for a politician in a competitive environment to stick their head up at the next election.

## **About the author/s**

### **Bob McMullan**

Bob McMullan has had a long and distinguished career in the Australian Parliament as one of Australia's pre-eminent Labor politicians. He is a former Parliamentary Secretary for International Development (2007-2010) and Executive Director for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He is now Adjunct Professor at Crawford School of Public Policy and a Visiting Fellow at the Development Policy Centre.