

Australian aid – less generous than we think

by Julia Newton-Howes

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This is a guest post by Julia Newton-Howes of CARE Australia.

Most Australians think the Federal Government spends much more on aid than is the case, and a large majority want the Government to maintain or increase the aid program, according to research carried out by Roy Morgan on behalf of CARE Australia.

The preliminary results of this omnibus survey show that approximately 54% of Australians think we spend more than 3% of the total federal budget on aid; and 12% think aid is more than 10% of Australia’s budget.

When they learned that actually this year only 1.2% of the federal budget, or 0.33% of Australia’s GNI was spent on aid, 42% thought the Government should spend more on aid, 40% thought this amount was about right, while only 12% thought it was too much.

Australia, almost surrounded by developing countries, has more reason than most wealthy countries to invest in its aid program.



Yet we rank 16th out of 23 OECD countries in the level of aid we provide. Countries like the UK, Canada, Germany and Spain are all more generous in the levels of aid as a proportion of GNI.

Australia's aid program saves lives, helps the economies of developing countries to grow and supports peace and stability, particularly in our region: Asia and the Pacific.

The bipartisan commitment to provide 0.5% of Gross National Income by 2015 as overseas aid is a commitment to a sound investment.

Australia has the 13th largest economy in the world. As a wealthy nation, the Government can ensure prosperity for Australians whilst also playing our part in helping developing countries become more stable and prosperous.

As he prepares for the budget on Tuesday, the Treasurer should be reassured that the vast majority of Australians support the Government's commitment to aid.

Julia Newton-Howes is the Chief Executive Officer of CARE Australia. CARE Australia is an Australian charity and international humanitarian aid organisation fighting global poverty, with a special focus on empowering women and girls to bring lasting change to their communities.

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