

Better little read than dead: AusAID's blog goes quiet

By Ashlee Betteridge

The poor [AusAID Engage](#) blog never really seemed to achieve a lot of audience traction, but it was at least an attempt to stimulate some sort of public discussion of the aid program. It provided a platform for staff and advisers to make comment and explain programs or development issues. Sure, it was propaganda—but it provided a sliver of insight into what an aid agency does (and had the potential to show more). It was one of the pieces of the puzzle in AusAID's transparency push and it even allowed comments, a surprisingly bold move from an agency that was notoriously risk-averse in its public communications.

The 2011 Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness actually suggested that “a permanent blog on the aid program, run by either AusAID or a trusted partner, would be a good investment in public communication”. So it was good to see AusAID take up the challenge.

But it appears that *Engage* has now faded away. Despite initially seeming to have survived the integration into DFAT, with the hasty application of austere blue branding, there have now been no new posts since the beginning of December 2013.

It's a shame that *Engage* has fizzled out, especially when other aid agencies (such as [USAID](#) and [DFID](#)) maintain a vibrant presence in the blogosphere. It's noteworthy that other Australian government departments (the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, [for example](#)) have managed to keep on blogging through the change of government.

It's also somewhat surprising, given that the Foreign Minister has so strongly

stated her support for transparency and that DFAT is striving to improve on its historically [woeful performance](#) in the area of digital diplomacy.

Maybe *Engage* will make a comeback. But four months of silence is no way to build an audience. In the meantime, if any ex-Engage bloggers are looking for a platform, we're always here—and we promise that our clearance processes are much less onerous.

About the author/s

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Ashlee Betteridge was the Manager of the Development Policy Centre until April 2021. She was previously a Research Officer at the centre from 2013-2017. A former journalist, she holds a Master of Public Policy (Development Policy) from ANU and has development experience in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. She now works as a development consultant.