

## Julie Bishop on the aid cuts: “fair and appropriate”

By Ashlee Betteridge  
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In an [interview](#) on RN Drive with Patricia Karvelas, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop discussed and defended the aid cuts in last week’s budget, backing the protection of Pacific allocations and the reductions to Africa and Indonesia.

Ms Bishop placed the blame for the cuts on Labor for refusing to pass other savings measures through the Senate, but said that since December’s MYEFO she had been able to “analyse very closely where our aid is directed” and that this process shed light on ways we could “reprioritise and refocus our aid”.

She said that the aid budget was “fair and appropriate”, particularly in light of Australian aid making up a significant proportion of GDP in some Pacific countries, and given that Southeast Asian nations were growing and wanted to become trading partners rather than aid recipients.

On the question of whether Australia had a moral responsibility to help the world’s poorest, Ms Bishop said that Africa was Europe’s responsibility, with Europe and the US the primary donors, and that “we are helping the most needy in our area of primary responsibility and that is the Pacific”.

On the Africa cuts, Bishop criticised the scale up of Australian aid to Africa during the UN Security Council bid under former Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, and said that Australia was providing assistance through other channels, such as support for peacekeeping missions.

Perhaps tellingly, given countries such as Nauru, Cambodia and PNG were mostly spared reductions in aid, the Foreign Minister skirted a question on whether political considerations to do with asylum seeker arrangements had shaped cuts to country aid allocations.

### **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.

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