

Plibersek: AusAID to return only if Coalition has a single term

by Jonathan Pryke
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Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Tanya Plibersek used her [speech](#) at ACFID Council 2014 to call out the aid sector for so easily letting the government get away with [cuts](#) to the Australian aid program.

Ms Plibersek had a lot to say about the government's changes to aid, while defending Labor's track record.

"They aren't just keeping quiet about these cuts, they actually see them as a political windfall. They are crowing about them. And why shouldn't they? They can pander to the aid-sceptics in the community while at the same time being welcomed for their 'commitment to Australia's aid' – as ACFID publicly did earlier this month."

Ms Plibersek acknowledged the need for leadership from government but squared much of the blame for why so much ground has been lost on the lack of "a strong, coordinated campaign from the sector which can mobilise public sentiment."

"I remember the extraordinary energy of the Make Poverty History campaign which locked in bipartisan support for the 0.5 per cent target – I remember it not just as a moral argument, but as a political strategy for the sector to exert influence over Australia's place in the world."

Ms Plibersek also identified climate change and inequality as two of the greatest challenges facing the aid sector, again calling on the government to do more in these areas.

When asked about a time frame for Labor's commitment to reach the 0.5% of GNI

target, Ms Plibersek replied that they couldn't possibly put a timeframe in place until Labor returns to government, a statement familiarly made by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop when in opposition.

On the merging of AusAID into DFAT and what Labor would do about it when re-elected, Ms Plibersek stated that there was a lot of value in having an independent aid agency, but that if the Coalition were to stay in power for more than one term "the damage you see now will be hard to undo."

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Link:

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